

CRIES AND WHISPERS ABOUT LOVE IN METAMODERNISM: A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH

This article develops an interdisciplinary investigation into how contemporary metamodern philosophy conceptualizes love by integrating corpus linguistics with socio-philosophical analysis. While scholars of metamodernism often posit a cultural “return of love” grounded in renewed sensitivity, relationality, and ethical openness, we argue that these claims require empirical verification. Drawing on the work of 12 leading thinkers associated with speculative realism, new materialism, and accelerationism, we conduct a systematic examination of explicit references to love across their published works. Our findings reveal a far more heterogeneous and uneven landscape than is typically assumed: only a minority of philosophers – most notably Graham Harman, Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett, and Maya B. Kronic – develop robust or conceptually rich accounts of love, whereas others mention the term only in passing, metaphorically, or not at all.

Methodologically, the article combines four approaches: postcritical “reading as love,” corpus-linguistic analysis through concordances, collocations, and dispersion plots, theoretical, methodological and sociological triangulation, and also an interpretive model of philosophy as “talking to oneself.” This multi-layered design allows us to reconstruct how various metamodernist philosophical perspectives imagine love as an ontological, ethical, aesthetic, or political force. The range spans from posthuman, zoe-centered vitality (Braidotti), ecological enchantment and material kinship (Bennett), and dantean object-love grounded in autonomy (Harman), to darker visions of dissolution, erotic catastrophe, and cosmic decay (Nick Land, Reza Negarestani).

To contextualize these philosophical positions, we triangulate them with large-scale sociological data on romantic satisfaction, loneliness, parasocial bonds, and “social love” as defined in global indices. This reveals that metamodernist reconfigurations of love resonate with shifting affective structures worldwide yet remain conceptually fragmented. We conclude by proposing a “metamodern formula of love” as a wide spectrum – from indifference and destructive passion to a balanced, responsible, post-anthropocentric ethos of care – while arguing that such models must be supplemented by explicitly political and institutional forms of solidarity necessary for ecological and planetary survival.

Keywords: *metamodernism, love, corpus linguistics, new materialism, accelerationism, speculative realism.*

*When you've been loved
When you know it holds such bliss
Then the lover that you kissed
Will comfort you when there's no hope in sight*
George Michael

*I love to talk to you
It's not every day that a man can find a woman that
That he just loves talking to*

*You are my hope-to-die woman
Needing you is a part of what I feel for you*

*I can't believe that you love me
Barry White*

1. Why does metamodernism (re)turn to love?

Reciprocity in love is the very foundation of believing that revolution can succeed.

Love is one of those rare affects that binds the human being to the world in a radically transformative way. It is not merely an emotional surge or a private, subjective episode – it is a

mode of relation, a way of experiencing oneself as woven into a web of connections that extend far beyond the personal. Above all, love links one person to another. And when this link becomes reciprocal, when it is realized in the experience of mutual, dyadic love, that success becomes a prototype for any other successful form of connection. In this sense, love is not only an intimate existential event but also a kind of ontological test: evidence that connection is possible at all, that between “I” and “you” there may be not a void but a bridge. Such an experience – even when entirely private – generates trust in the world and in the very principle of relatedness. At the same time, we must acknowledge that this articulation of love may reflect our own cognitive-affective distortion (positivity bias), given that the authors are themselves in a state of romantic attachment [Mizrahi, Lemay Jr, Maniaci & Reis, 2022; Cavanaugh, Bettman and Luce, 2015].

However, our intuitions and lived experience find partial support in the literature. As Bruno Latour argues, love (and religion) strives toward nearness, intimacy, the acknowledgment of presence in the here and now; it aims at the renewal of human existence and mutual affection, at the restoration and coherence of human bonds. Love operates analogously to religion: the recognition of love, the gesture of attention, produces an emotional connection between people, overcoming alienation and renewing the world. Words of love possess the power to shape the self and to generate a sense of presence, genuine existence, and connection to another person [Latour, 2013, pp. 51–58, 78–79]. Extending this logic further, one may say that successful personal love fosters confidence in the possibility of successful communication and cooperation – and, ultimately, in the success of revolution, collective life, and the emergence of a new, more solidaristic and more just form of coexistence. Following this logic, love becomes a primordial form of social and political ontology: it grounds any possible “we.” In essence, everything begins with the smallest of things – childhood attachment, the emotional investment a child receives from a mother or another close caregiver. This attachment later transforms into the experience of romantic love, into the choice of a partner, into the formation of a durable bond between two autonomous beings. Yet love does not end there. On the contrary, its true wonder lies in its capacity to exceed the human, to exceed the couple, to exceed the personal, emerging as a form of political love – an acknowledgment of solidarity with the nation and with other political communities [Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 220, 381, 386].

In the context of metamodernism, one observes a return of modernist conceptions of the subject, of history, and of love – yet a return tempered by the tragic experiences and critical reassessments introduced by postmodernism. Alexandra Dumitrescu argues that femininity, sensitivity, and empathy constitute essential elements of metamodern consciousness, opening the self toward the other, while simultaneously demanding a balance of affect and reason within the metamodern personality [Dumitrescu, 2014, p. 40]. Metamodern understandings of love rest on the acknowledgment of its givenness and immediacy, but also on its deconstruction and inherent tragic tension, without lapsing into the postmodern skepticism that renders love inaccessible or illusory. Unlike modernity, which framed love as something self-evident, objective, and rationally comprehensible, and unlike postmodernity, which subjected it to complete deconstruction – love as a projection of male desire onto the female object, love as domination and subjugation, a field where “I,” “love,” and “you” dissolve into historically contingent, irrational, or power-laden structures – metamodernism recognizes these problems without allowing them to eliminate the very possibility of love. Metamodernism is disillusioned with postmodern disillusionment: it seeks a return to the naïveté of modernity while fully acknowledging the conflictuality, paradoxes, and simultaneous unity-disunity of love. Hanzi Freinacht shows that the paradoxes of love arise from human nature itself: men often lose confidence before the women they desire most, while women gravitate toward confident men; both sexes tend to seek partners slightly “above” themselves in the hierarchy, setting themselves up for disappointment. Even when a man finds stable, reciprocal love, he still harbors the ancient impulse – the desire for passionate sex with a beautiful stranger, the call of chaos inscribed in biology; and this chaos can neither be denied nor accepted uncritically, for it is precisely what renders us vulnerable yet capable of genuine love

[Freinacht, 2019]. Thus, love is perceived as movement between the longing for unity and the recognition of the subject's fragmentation. Instead of absolutizing either wholeness or rupture, metamodernism integrates these opposites, creating a deeper understanding of love [Pappis, 2019]. Love is no longer naïve, yet neither does it become an impossible utopia. Crucially, metamodernism reduces love neither to biochemistry nor to social construction, acknowledging both but exceeding them. It returns love to culture, thought, and politics. From Zachary Stein's perspective, metamodern love is rooted in the recognition of a cosmic force – Eros – which joins and recombines matter, of which human love is its privileged manifestation. This intimate love between persons cannot serve as an escape from a troubled world but must contribute to its healing: it bridges the intimate and the universal, overcomes hatred, undermines the logic of profit and economic growth, and transforms care and justice into practices of planetary co-creation and cohabitation [Stein, 2018].

We are indeed living in an era of urgent rediscovery – and even rebirth – of love against the backdrop of profound disappointments and cascading catastrophes of an unfinished, capitalist modernity, at a moment when the necessity of collective, planetary survival has become impossible to ignore. It is telling that, amid this landscape, humanity demonstrates unprecedented gestures of mutual support: according to the World Giving Index, 4.3 billion people – approximately 73% of the world's adult population – donated money, volunteered time, or helped strangers in 2023, with Ukraine ranking a notably high seventh place [Charities Aid Foundation, 2024]. Simultaneously, the world is swept by a wave of resistance and struggles for justice: over the past twelve months, more than 159 major anti-government protests have taken place across 71 countries (as of September 25, 2025), confronting corruption, electoral fraud, political repression, economic crises, violations of women's and LGBTQ+ rights, climate devastation, and the genocide of Palestinians [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, n.d.].

Thus, metamodern love balances between the rational self-evidence of modernity and the deconstructive disillusionment of postmodernity, acknowledging the conflictual nature of relationships while refusing to let that conflict extinguish the possibility of closeness, responsibility, solidarity, wholeness, or the genuine experience of encountering the Other.

2. Are metamodernist philosophers truly inclined toward love?

If theorists of metamodernism – whose views were outlined above – assert that our present epoch is itself characterized by heightened lovingness, then it follows, as our working hypothesis, that philosophers associated with metamodern intellectual perspectives should likewise speak extensively about love. To test this hypothesis, we must first determine which philosophical movements are commonly regarded as metamodern. The scholarly literature most frequently identifies speculative realism, especially object-oriented ontology [Van den Akker and Vermeulen, 2017; Stein, 2018; Freinacht, 2017; Radchenko, 2025; Van Tuinen, 2017], new materialism [Konstantinou, 2017; Storm, 2021], and Nick Land's accelerationism, often described as a precursor to speculative realism [Stein, 2018]. Consequently, it is within the texts of authors belonging to these movements that we conduct our investigation into whether, and how, they engage with the theme of love.

We employed four criteria in selecting the thinkers for our analysis in order to examine their engagement with love in the context of metamodernism. First, we chose leading theorists – four representatives from each of the three traditions; the choice of “four” reflects the fact that speculative realism, for example, has four widely recognized founders, and it was therefore logical to maintain symmetry by selecting four thinkers from each of the remaining perspectives. This yielded a total of twelve philosophers: four from speculative realism (Ray Brassier, Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman, Iain Hamilton Grant), four from new materialism (Manuel DeLanda, Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti), and four from accelerationism (Nick Srnicek, Reza Negarestani, Nick Land, Maya B. Kronic). Second, all of them write in English, which allows us to work with their texts directly, without translational distortion, and ensures

maximal precision in corpus-based analysis. Third, each of these philosophers has produced a substantial body of published work, making a representative investigation possible: we can reliably determine whether they speak about love, how they do so, in what contexts, and to what extent.

The need to investigate our working hypothesis arises from the very logic of metamodernism, which proclaims the return of sensitivity, empathy, and the capacity for deep relationality to culture, ethics, and politics – while also acknowledging their conflictual and fragmented character. If metamodern thinkers indeed regard love not merely as a personal experience but as a fundamental form of social ontology – a model of trust, cooperation, and collective transformation – then it becomes essential to empirically determine whether this orientation is reflected in the texts of those philosophical movements typically classified as metamodern. Moreover, metamodernism interprets love as a driving force behind new modes of coexistence, ranging from intimate reciprocity to political forms of solidarity. This makes the discourse of love a crucial indicator of the extent to which these traditions genuinely seek to overcome alienation, crisis, and the cynical irony characteristic of postmodernism. Our study also responds to a direct demand of the present moment: whether contemporary philosophical perspectives are capable of articulating a language of connectedness, solidarity, and mutuality – without which neither collective action nor political transformation, nor even an openness to the future, is possible.

3. Methodology

Our study claims novelty through the use of four methodological foundations, each of which articulates not only a distinct mode of reading and analysis but also a specific ethical gesture toward the object of inquiry – the phenomenon of love within metamodernism.

The first foundation is the conception of reading as love. Here we draw upon the ideas of postcritical, reparative, and restorative reading, which invite us to read not for the sake of unmasking but for the sake of participation – not to undermine the text or reduce it to power discourses and paranoid depths, but to listen for its lexical–semantic autonomy, to trust the affects it generates, and to continue the work of love at the level of the reader, even when the text itself seems to resist such work [Craven, 2024; Walker, 2016; Kalinka, 2023]. Reading as love is a mode of attentiveness to the text: seeing in it what is there rather than what is not (absence, lack, deficiency), preserving its integrity, distinguishing clearly between text and reader, recognizing its dignity, respecting its limits and boundaries; approaching meaning with wonder rather than forcing the text into pre-set contextual interpretations, and instead extending, widening, and multiplying relations and sympathies in the world through the act of reading [Mitrano, 2020; Sheehey, 2019]. In this way, love in our study functions not only as an object of analysis but also as a method – an affective and ethical disposition that enables us to approach philosophical texts with trust and generosity rather than with critical suspicion.

The second foundation is the corpus-based approach, which enables efficient searching, the identification of semantic patterns, and context-sensitive interpretation across large volumes of text through the use of computational tools [Stefanowitsch, 2020, p. 54; Sinclair, 1991, pp. 9, 32, 170, 30; Baker, 2006, pp. 48–49]; this method is well established in philosophy [McKinnon, 1977; Meunier and Forest, 2003; Alfano, 2019]. Using the tools of corpus linguistics via the AntConc software [Anthony, 2022], we empirically detect explicit statements about love in the works of selected metamodern philosophers (after lemmatizing them) – speculative realists, accelerationists, and new materialists. When a corpus contains only a small number of occurrences of the word love, we conduct only a qualitative concordance analysis, reading each instance in its immediate context. When occurrences are numerous, we generate collocations and/or clusters (continuous multi-word sequences containing the target term), and then examine fragments that include love together with its frequent collocates – words appearing within five positions to the left or right – which reveal stable semantic associations in a given philosopher's

discourse. For verification, we also generate dispersion plots to determine how frequently and how densely the word love appears across the corpus [Vajn, 2014, p. 168]; the combination of frequency and density provides indirect evidence of how extensively a philosopher develops the theme of love. In this sense, the corpus-based method extends the logic of reading as love: it demands maximal attentiveness, respect, and care toward the texts themselves and toward the language through which philosophers articulate love.

The third foundation is the method of triangulation, which consists in generating richer knowledge about a phenomenon by mobilizing multiple perspectives across different levels of analysis [Flick, 2018]. We apply triangulation on three levels: theoretical, methodological, and empirical. Theoretical triangulation involves comparing the various conceptions of love found in the philosophers' works with the metamodern understanding of love as oscillation between irony and sincerity, distance and engagement. Methodological triangulation is expressed through the combination of postcritical reading, corpus analysis, and conceptual reconstruction of philosophical positions. Data triangulation entails drawing on sociological sources – large-scale international surveys and statistical data on contemporary attitudes toward love. This enables us to correlate philosophical claims about love with their social counterparts, identifying potential resonances and divergences between theoretical and empirical registers. Triangulation also allows us not merely to acknowledge, as noted in the introduction, the positivity bias characteristic of love and the cognitive distortions it may produce, but to temper this bias by cross-checking our expectations against sociological evidence and philosophical argumentation.

The fourth methodological foundation is the interpretation of philosophy as talking to oneself, which we employ as a model for intertheoretical love. If, following Peter Sloterdijk, one understands philosophy as “the dialogue of the soul with itself” – a tradition that traces back to Antisthenes and is carried forward by Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury – then it becomes evident that any genuinely philosophical reflection on love must emerge from the very structure of talking to oneself, in which different voices, positions, and tonalities within a single consciousness enter into exchange with one another [Sloterdijk, 2020, pp. 102–103; Shaftesbury, 2001, p. 107; Diogenes Laertius, 2015, Antisthenes, Book VI, pagin. 5]. In this framework, love becomes the felicitous encounter of my “we’s” with your “we’s.” Love thus becomes not merely an object of inquiry but a mode of philosophizing itself – a form of presence and co-presence of multiple “we’s” within a shared space of thought. Accordingly, we read metamodern philosophers in such a way that their voices enter into dialogue with our own, allowing philosophy to become a site of encounter, participation, and exchange. For this reason, it is necessary to speak of intertheoretical love as both a practice and an ethic of mutual recognition, a form of solidarity among diverse ontologies and epistemologies grounded in the model of philosophy as talking to oneself. We argue that intertheoretical love is a necessary condition for a new mode of thinking capable of being genuinely metamodern: dialogical, open to paradox, and able to hold together faith and irony, empathy and critique.

4. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the major philosophical perspectives of metamodernism in order to identify and compare their interpretations of love, and to relate these interpretations to existing claims about the loving character of metamodernism, thereby formulating a “metamodern formula of love.” To achieve this aim, the study pursues three objectives: first, to conduct a corpus-based analysis of the writings of leading representatives of metamodernist philosophy (new materialism, speculative realism, and accelerationism); second, to compare and synthesize the identified conceptions of love with one another and with prevailing accounts of metamodern lovingness; and third, to triangulate the resulting conceptions of love using international sociological studies on love.

5. Literature Review

The literature review is undertaken to clarify how scholars who engage with metamodern philosophical traditions interpret these traditions' understanding of love. The collection of relevant sources was carried out using Agent Mode in ChatGPT 5.0, repeatedly employing a prompt designed to locate academic publications on love in the context of the three aforementioned philosophical perspectives and the twelve selected authors.

Within the framework of new materialism, theorists turn to Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett and others to reconceptualize love as a material-discursive, relational, and posthuman phenomenon. Deirdre C. Byrne and Marianne Schleicher draw on Barad's agential realism to argue that love emerges not from the interaction of self-contained subjects but from the intra-actions of heterogeneous human and nonhuman agents endowed with significance and agency. In their account, love becomes a co-creative process arising within entanglements that exceed anthropocentric assumptions [Byrne and Schleicher, 2021, p. 5]. Schleicher further shows that matter actively shapes cultural discourses of love and gender, transforming norms and imaginaries rather than passively reflecting them, and thus extending Barad's critique of constructivism [Schleicher, 2021, p. 12]. Louis van den Hengel advances this posthumanist trajectory by revealing love in the twenty-first century as a fully post-anthropocentric process emerging across networks that join humans, bodies, atmospheres, and vital materialities. Concepts such as ecosensuality – deeply informed by Barad – present matter as alive and participatory, while Braidotti provides an ethical grounding that emphasizes transcorporeal interdependence and ecological responsibility [van den Hengel, 2021, pp. 35–36, 43, 45, 49–51]. Carol A. Taylor and Susanne Gannon build on this new materialist paradigm to propose an ecological pedagogy of love rooted in bodily and environmental rhythms, suggesting that love arises through ongoing attunement with human and nonhuman agents alike [Taylor and Gannon, 2022].

Speculative realism and object-oriented ontology develop a different but related decentering of the human by relocating love into the domain of object relations. Marcel O'Gorman shows that for thinkers such as Graham Harman and Ian Bogost, love is not confined to interpersonal experience but appears in relations with nonorganic entities – technical objects, bicycles, polymers – so that love becomes a mode of becoming-with across multiple ontological registers. These philosophies reveal an almost erotic dimension to material encounters, amplifying the sensuous and affective qualities of object interaction [O'Gorman, 2017, pp. 32–34, 36]. Levi R. Bryant interprets love within this object-oriented field as the sustained preservation of the gap between the sensual appearance of the other and its withdrawn reality, resisting the pornographic impulse to collapse the other into fully accessible qualities and grounding love in the recognition of ontological depth and alterity [Bryant, 2010].

Accelerationist thought offers yet another reconfiguration of love, one that pushes posthumanism toward its metaphysical extremes. Brian Zager's account of the group Gruppo di Nun, the self-proclaimed spiritual heirs of the CCRU, presents love not as relationality or care but as a cosmic drive: a thermodynamic tendency of bodies toward their own dissolution. In this view, love becomes a pull toward unbeing, an ecstatic return to primordial materiality that transcends both capital and life itself [Zager, 2024]. Rather than grounding ethical responsibility or ecological interdependence, accelerationist love dramatizes entropic forces that destabilize the very notion of a human-centered ontology, reimagining love as an anti-anthropocentric impulse that operates on a cosmological scale.

The literature review allows us to draw several conclusions. First, scholars most frequently turn to new materialism, less often to speculative realism (particularly object-oriented ontology), and even less to accelerationism. Second, with the exception of two sources, authors typically invoke these philosophers in order to interpret love through their frameworks without examining whether, or to what extent, these thinkers actually wrote about love themselves. Third, within new materialism, love is conceptualized in a post-anthropocentric manner, as the place of the human in the world is reconceived: the human being is situated amid living, affecting, and

loving matter upon which it depends and with which it interacts, necessitating a caring and responsible orientation toward all living and nonliving entities that compose the world. Importantly, within speculative realism one also finds an underlying loving disposition, insofar as this tradition approaches all forms of materiality and existence with attentiveness and care, attributing inexhaustible depth to objects. By contrast, accelerationism tends to frame love through its relation to death, that is, as a self-destructive force that prepares the subject for dissolution into nothingness. Thus, alongside positive, post-anthropocentric, attentive, and responsible conceptions of love, we also encounter visions of love that lead toward annihilation. It is evident that these philosophical movements may indeed be called metamodern and, in their own ways, oriented toward love – yet they display striking diversity in their assessments, ranging from the affirmative and luminous to the dark and negating.

However, given the lack of systematic engagement with actual references to love in the writings of philosophers associated with metamodern perspectives, the need to examine our hypothesis becomes even more pressing. What is required is a corpus-based investigation of the texts of metamodern philosophers themselves in order to determine whether they display any genuine interest in love – not merely an interpretive projection of their philosophical legacies onto the question of love, nor the selective use of a few isolated passages, but an assessment grounded in the full scope of their work.

6. Results

All materials from the corpus analysis of metamodern philosophers' texts on love are presented in [Ilin and Nihmatova, 2025]. Below, we offer only the distilled conclusions.

6.1. A Corpus-Based Analysis of Texts by Speculative Realists

6.1.1. Graham Harman

Across 22 texts, Harman uses the word love 576 times in 20 works. One of the frequent collocates of love is Dante, and Harman has devoted an entire book to Dante. Dispersion data further show that this book contains the highest density and frequency of love across his corpus. Taken together, these findings indicate that Harman engages in a systematic analysis of the concept.

Following Dante, Harman argues that love is not merely an emotion but a fundamental mode of interaction with an object – whether a person, an idea, or a thing. Love requires respect for the object's autonomy, which entails moving beyond surface-level qualities and beyond perceiving the object solely through the lens of personal benefit. Harman emphasizes the dual nature of love, borrowing this insight from Dante. On the one hand, love is a striving toward an object that remains unattainable (as in Socratic philosophy, where wisdom is forever out of reach yet worthy of pursuit). On the other hand, love is the capacity to take delight in the object here and now, experiencing it in its concrete, albeit limited, forms. Thus, love is simultaneously a longing for what cannot be attained and an ability to find fulfillment in what is available.

In this context, love becomes comparable to the process of knowing: we can never fully encompass the object, yet we can strive toward it by attending to its qualities and respecting its autonomy. For Harman, love is a form of sincerity in which the subject confers significance upon the object, devoting attentive, passionate regard to it. He contrasts this stance with the contemporary “cynicism of critics,” who seek to “explain,” “deconstruct,” or “expose” objects by reducing them either to their social contexts (undermining) or to their constituent elements (overmining). Harman contends that Dantean love is closer to a productive, well-tempered naïveté – an approach whose goal is deepened understanding, careful attention, and a loving, responsible relation to objects rather than their destruction [Harman, 2016, Chapter 1; Harman, 2022, pp. 105–108].

6.1.2. Quentin Meillassoux

Across 18 texts, Meillassoux uses the word love 52 times in 10 works. Most of these occurrences appear in discussions of Badiou's philosophy. Dispersion data and concordances reading reveal only two dense clusters of usage that pertain to Meillassoux's own philosophical claims. Consequently, the theme of love is not significant for Meillassoux, although it does intersect with his notion of the nonexistence of the divine – the central subject of his dissertation.

For Meillassoux, the crucial point is that traditional religion identifies love with God, who is conceived not only as absolute goodness but also as absolute power. This, in his view, produces a fundamental contradiction: if God is both omnipotent and loving, why does suffering and cruelty exist in the world? Within such a framework, love of God becomes intermixed with fear of divine power, resulting in idolatry – people venerate God not for love but for strength. Meillassoux rejects this traditional religious conception of love, which presupposes submission to a creator God who permits suffering. To affirm God's existence would be to affirm that God produces suffering, that God is not good – and this, he argues, is tantamount to blasphemy.

At the same time, Meillassoux criticizes atheism, which by denying God deprives humanity of any hope for justice for the dead or for future generations. The refusal to concede the possibility of God's existence is, for him, a refusal of justice itself. Thus, love in a metaphysical sense becomes something far more significant than a religious or emotional experience: it becomes an ethical obligation toward both the future and the past – toward the dead and the not-yet-born – an obligation that exceeds faith in any actually existing deity. Meillassoux proposes the concept of the “nonexistence of the divine”: the idea that a God truly worthy of love does not yet exist but may come into existence in the future. Denying this possibility – in atheism – is, for Meillassoux, a form of arrogant overconfidence, a presumption that human beings can know the limits of what the world is capable of producing. In this way, love becomes not merely a feeling but a fundamental ethical principle grounded in hope for a world without injustice [Meillassoux, 2015, pp. 228–237; Meillassoux, 2008, pp. 264–266].

6.1.3. Ray Brassier

Across 34 texts, Brassier uses the word love only 8 times, in 5 works. It is evident that the theme of love holds little to no significance for his philosophical project.

Brassier declines to speak about love, and he does so in part through his critique of Alain Badiou, who avoided addressing events of cosmic or planetary magnitude – such as the Big Bang or the Cambrian explosion. By invoking these events, Brassier challenges phenomenology, which seeks to correlate phenomena with human perception, even though the realities disclosed by science cannot be reduced to, or inferred from, the limits of human perceptual capacities.

In discussing the eventual death of the Sun, Brassier turns to François Lyotard and to the scientific fact that our star will be destroyed in approximately five billion years. He emphasizes the crucial difference between this form of death and the role death traditionally played in philosophy – for instance, in Hegel, where death functions as a moment in the movement of spirit, a moment that exists for spirit and can be sublated. The death of the Sun, by contrast, is a banal empirical fact that exists for nothing and no one; it marks an absolute limit to thought, annihilating even the very concept of death itself. It is an unthinkable horizon.

Thus, Brassier does not engage with the study of love because he is concerned with events that (1) do not depend on humanity, (2) will nonetheless have overwhelming consequences for humanity, and (3) cannot be integrated into any anthropocentric philosophical framework [Brassier, 2007, pp. 113–114; Brassier, 2001, pp. 24–27, 400–402; Brassier, 2003, pp. 421–422, 428–429; Bou Ali and Brassier, 2020, pp. 14–16].

6.1.4. Iain Hamilton Grant

Across 41 texts, Grant uses the lexeme love 23 times (a broadened search was required due to the absence of philosophically relevant occurrences), and these appear in only 3 works. Only two meaningful fragments were identified, indicating that the theme of love is not of substantive importance in Grant's philosophy.

Grant turns to an actual historical case: Alan Davis, described as a "loving and affectionate husband," survives a car accident with his wife Christine and subsequently becomes convinced that his wife died in the crash, while the living woman (whom he calls "Christine No. 2") is her double. For Grant, the automobile accident becomes a moment in which technological rationality breaks down and reveals its underlying "magical" foundation. The car – an artifact of industrial magic grounded in duplication and self-reproduction (the assembly line, seriality, the endless geometric multiplication of products) – suddenly manifests a different logic in the crash: not one of rational control, but of corrupting subjective contingency or defect. What modernity sought to suppress reemerges here: animism, belief in doubles, spirits, and uncanny replicas.

Thus, Grant illustrates a form of love endangered by modern technologies precisely because of their propensity toward malfunction. Love, as inferred from this fragment, requires a conviction in the singularity, integrity, and unrepeatability of the beloved. In another text, Grant notes that within Orphism, the lover – alongside the metaphysician and the musician – is one of the figures who do not aspire to bad imitation (as do artists who reproduce objects that are themselves, in the Platonic tradition, copies of divine ideas), but instead seek to imitate the very founder, the generative ground of being – God – through emulating His creative activity. Good imitation, therefore, is imitation of generative, creative, world-producing activity rather than of the products of that activity.

Taken together, Grant's reflections suggest that love does not tolerate duplication, copying, or blind mimicry [Grant, 2019; Grant, 2002, pp. 103–105, 110–112].

Thus, the speculative realists' views on love resist any straightforward unification. Only in Harman and Meillassoux is love directly integrated into their philosophical frameworks – and even here the scope differs markedly: Harman shows the greatest sustained interest in the phenomenon, whereas Meillassoux engages it primarily in relation to a single concept – the nonexistence of the divine – rather than across the broader architecture of his mature thought. Harman articulates a distinctly human form of love, characterized by respect for the autonomy and the inexhaustible depth of the beloved object in a Dantean register. Meillassoux, by contrast, treats love in a theological-eschatological sense: as the advent of justice for the dead and for future generations through the possible emergence of a God who does not yet exist.

As for Brassier and Grant, the former explicitly declines to engage with the phenomenon of love, given his focus on the eventual extinction of life; the latter never addresses the noun "love" in his corpus, and his reflections on other related lexemes do not amount to a substantive conceptualization. They do, however, suggest a single insight: the necessity of protecting love from imitation, duplication, and doubling.

6.2. A Corpus-Based Analysis of Texts by New Materialists

6.2.1. Rosi Braidotti

Across 21 texts, Braidotti uses the word love 247 times in 15 works. The collocations link love to world, zoe (one chapter section is explicitly titled "love of zoe"), and life – all central concepts in her philosophy. Dispersion analysis likewise reveals multiple dense clusters of usage across her corpus. Taken together, these data indicate a sustained and detailed development of the theme of love in Braidotti's work.

Braidotti writes about love for *zoe* – the vital, nonhuman, pre-linguistic energy of life that does not obey the logic of consciousness, will, or control. This form of love does not seek to “possess”; it aims to endure life’s intensity, to let its flows pass through one’s body, and to be transformed by them. Love thus becomes a practice of becoming, a redistribution of boundaries between self and others – between humans, animals, the earth, viruses, machines, matter, and time. Such love presupposes a non-unitary subject dispersed across multiple beings and objects.

Braidotti calls herself a “she-wolf,” an “incubator,” and a “carrier of viruses,” breaking with images of femininity as passive, domesticated, or tamed. She affirms herself as a subject of *zoe* – stratified, anomalous, active, and unstable.

For Braidotti, love is a post-anthropocentric and postsecular act of generous co-participation in life in all its multiplicity. It is not only love for others – people, women, “monsters,” or “alien others” – but love for the world itself. She calls this a deep, neo-vitalist love, an act of faith in life’s power without exchange or justification. This love of the world establishes a horizon of sustainability and hope: not solely for the sake of saving ourselves, but for enabling a shared, flourishing life after us, for all living beings.

Love, in this framework, is not merely an emotion but a mode of being in which the rigid boundary between Self and Other dissolves. Braidotti calls such love nomadic, molecular, non-unitary: it dismantles binary oppositions (man/woman, human/animal, nature/culture) and opens the possibility of transversal alliances – new ways of feeling, thinking, and acting.

She insists that genuine political transformation becomes possible only through the recognition of difference and through attachment to the world we inhabit together – not only with other humans but with animals, machines, and the Earth itself. This love does not deny pain, loss, or fear; rather, it transforms them into an affirmative force, into a capacity to desire despite everything, into a generous “yes” to the world that remains attuned to struggles against injustice and destruction [Braidotti, 2006, pp. 129–137; Braidotti, 2002, pp. 132, 190–193; Braidotti, 2022, Chapter Five, Chapter Six, Epilogue; Braidotti, 2011b, pp. 34, 200, 220, 298, 340; Braidotti, 2011a, p. 98].

6.2.2. Jane Bennett

Across 42 texts, Bennett uses the word love 128 times in 26 works. The collocations link love to world, life, Thoreau, earth, nature, and rock, forming a stable semantic pattern. Dispersion analysis reveals dense clusters of usage across several works, indicating that Bennett develops the theme of love in substantial detail.

For Bennett, love is not merely a feeling in the familiar human sense but a mode of existing within a world that is itself alive, active, and teeming with unexpected forces. She understands love as a particular state of attention and attunement in which one senses that one’s body is made of the same matter as soil, plants, stones, iron, trace elements, air, and so forth – a felt kinship that reveals the radical equality of all earthly beings.

Bennett reads Walt Whitman with care and precision: in his poetry she finds a powerful impulse of love for the earthly – the capacity to sense unity with the world in every step and every breath. Yet she also notes that Whitman’s love walks a precarious line: one can easily slip from respectful wonder before the world into consumption, a colonizing gaze, or the belief that the earth was made for us.

She likewise reads Henry Thoreau from a post-anthropocentric perspective. For her, Thoreau is an ally in understanding that nature has never been a seamless, harmonious, perfectly calibrated system to be restored or “saved” in its original form. He depicts nature as uneven, willful, full of sharp transitions, conflicts, and resistances. Bennett’s central claim follows from this: one can love the world only when one stops demanding that it be whole, harmonious, or complete. The world is heterogeneous, imperfect, and conflictual; attempts to “fall in love” with an idealized nature easily turn into violence – the desire to force reality to conform to a beautiful category.

For Bennett, things possess material complexity; they unsettle our expectations, dislodge us from habitual cognitive frameworks, and induce wonder. This sense of enchantment does not arise from sacralizing nature or appealing to God but from the very capacity of things to resist our categories. Such enchantment forms the basis of love for matter-life—the nonorganic [Bennett, 2020, pp. xiv, 24, 31, 47; Bennett, 2001, pp. 4, 12, 91; Bennett, 2002, p. 53; Bennett and Khan, 2009, p. 100; Bennett, 2010, p. 61; Bennett, 2000, pp. 12–13].

6.2.3. Karen Barad

Across 35 texts, Barad uses the word love only 19 times in 9 works. This low frequency indicates that she does not display a sustained or systematic interest in developing a philosophy of love.

Barad proposes understanding “a mature love” for science as a responsible, sober, and ethically vigilant orientation – one that perceives not only the beauty and power of scientific knowledge but also its entanglement with violence, inequality, and oppression. Such love requires asking how to practice science justly, how to rework its entrenched forms, and how to transform physics into an activity that does not reproduce colonial or social hierarchies but instead opens possibilities for a more equitable world. Thus, love for science in Barad’s sense is the ability to perceive the object of love in its full complexity, in all its vulnerabilities and capacities; it is a form of ethical and political engagement, a desire to care for a world in which science is inseparably woven into questions of how we live together [Juelskjær and Schwennesen, 2012, p. 15; Juelskjær, Plauborg, and Adrian, 2020, pp. 119, 124; Barad, 2013, pp. 223–224].

6.2.4. Manuel DeLanda

Across 53 texts, DeLanda uses the word love only 13 times, in 10 works. This low frequency indicates that he does not exhibit a sustained interest in developing a philosophical account of love.

DeLanda implies the possibility of a theoretical account of love but leaves it undeveloped. For him, love can be understood as a complex, dynamic assemblage of impressions and passions that shapes the becoming of the subject: it is simultaneously biosocial and singular, arising from an assemblage of bodily sensations, social relations, and cognitive habits, generating its own relational field and guiding a person’s selection of goals. DeLanda makes it clear that love could be conceptualized within his framework, but he himself does not pursue such a project [DeLanda, 2006, pp. 47–48; DeLanda, 2022, pp. 65, 170; DeLanda, 2005, p. 82].

As with the speculative realists, the new materialists do not exhibit a uniform level of engagement with the theme of love. Braidotti and Bennett are the most love-oriented thinkers: they articulate love as a mode of being in a world in which the human is interconnected with, dependent upon, and opened toward multiple forms of becoming – both organic and inorganic – while also being itself one such form whose actions toward others must be guided by responsible, loving care. As in the cases of Braidotti and Bennett, Barad also speaks of love in relation to the central themes of her philosophy (her analyses of philosophy through the lens of quantum physics), yet she does not develop love as an independent concept. DeLanda, for his part, merely hints at the possibility of interpreting love through his key notions but does not advance this line of inquiry.

6.3. A Corpus-Based Analysis of Texts by Accelerationists

6.3.1. Nick Land

Across 13 texts, Land uses the word love 137 times in 12 works. Despite the presence of thematically significant collocates such as death, love, and erotic, none of these proved to be

frequent. Dispersion analysis revealed only a single dense cluster of usage, which is attributable to Land's discussion of Georges Bataille. Consequently, the theme of love is not developed in any systematic or substantive way in Land's own philosophy.

Land openly professes a love of death. He is drawn to annihilation; he is, quite literally, fascinated by destruction. He emphasizes that the automatic, sacrificial orientation toward reality must be overcome, and for this, nihilism is necessary. Nihilism, in his view, is precisely the stance that must shatter all positive conceptions of life, devalue every hope and every illusion – including love.

For Land, love must be dragged through the mud. It is, in itself, a form of expenditure without remainder, a pure force of destruction that ultimately leads to catastrophe. Here he follows Bataille, who maintains that erotic love is, by its very nature, always catastrophic. It is doomed to failure, to non-reciprocity. It always leads to ruin because it entails the total giving of oneself to another, a complete dissolution of the self in passion.

Land also draws attention to Cooper's love for his daughter Murph in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*. This love is impossible in any ordinary sense (in terms of paternal presence and care) due to the spatiotemporal implosion of the film's narrative universe; it is not erotic, not earthly, and is ultimately reduced to the transmission of transgalactic messages [Land, 1992, pp. xiv, 109, 135, 137; Land, 2020, p. 198].

6.3.2. Reza Negarestani

Across 51 texts, Negarestani uses the word love 218 times in 16 works. However, dispersion analysis reveals only a single text with dense usage. Concordance analysis shows that these instances do not refer to intimate or philosophical notions of love but instead use love in the colloquial sense of simple liking or personal preference (functioning as a synonym for like). Moreover, these occurrences stem primarily from the philosopher's publicistic writings – blog posts and correspondence with Land – rather than from his systematic philosophical work. Thus, Negarestani does not develop love as a conceptual theme in any substantive way.

Negarestani conceives of love in terms of decay, illness, infection, wounding, and separation from the world. In his view, one can fall in love only once, because love utterly exhausts the subject – draining strength, undermining any capacity for recovery, and rendering a second experience of love impossible. Like in Land's work, love for Negarestani is catastrophic. Love opens a person to another, but in doing so, it closes them off from the world.

For Negarestani, love is a particular instance of the cosmic force *philia*, but not Empedoclean *philia*, which unites, creates, and weaves all living beings into a single cosmic fabric. Instead, he focuses on *philia*'s inverse – its dark, contaminating side. In his account, *philia* is no longer a principle of creation but a principle of infection, epidemic, plague – spreading itself through bodies and destroying them. It does not bind; it devours. It penetrates, transfers disease, and corrodes. Thus, in Negarestani's work, *philia* shades into *necro-philia*: love becomes not a life-affirming force but a pull toward death, destruction, and disintegration. Love opens the human being – but not in the sense of spiritual revelation; rather, in a literal, physical, wounding sense.

Negarestani also draws on mythological imagery – such as Moroccan legends of female jinn who penetrate a man, subjugate him, turn him into their puppet, and expose him to other demons and jinn. In these narratives, love is inseparable from possession, infection, and dissolution [Negarestani, 2008, *An Assyrian Relic*, *Mistmare*, *The Dust Enforcer*, *A Good Meal*, *Excursus XII (Schizotropy and the Dawn of Paranoia)*; Negarestani, 2002; Negarestani, 2003].

6.3.3. Nick Srnicek

Across 51 texts, Srnicek uses the word love only 17 times, in 4 works. This low frequency indicates that he does not exhibit a sustained or substantive interest in developing a philosophical account of love.

Srnicek (writing in collaboration with Helen Hester) discusses the abolition of labor and the notion of free love among the hippies of the 1960s. For the hippies, communes became an ideal – alternative forms of collective existence in which roughly one million Americans sought, by the late 1960s, to create a new social order that rejected private property, consumerism, urban life, hierarchy, and the bourgeois family. Yet beneath this utopian aspiration lay harsh realities: shortages of food, water, and other basic necessities, and above all, the unresolved problem of childcare and persistent gender inequality. Thus, free love and non-hierarchical living reproduced gendered inequalities rather than offering a viable path toward the abolition of labor.

Srnicek and Hester emphasize the need for collectively distributed responsibility for reproductive labor and the labor of social reproduction within the family – understood as a primary site of love. They argue that this notion of the family must be expanded into a solidaristic network of people bound by shared feelings, commitments, and relations. Only through such an expansion, they contend, can societies overcome the problem of unpaid reproductive labor and move toward a postcapitalist, postgender, and postwork future [Hester and Srnicek, 2023, *Communal Counter-Imaginaries*; Hester and Srnicek, 2020].

6.3.4. Maya B. Kronic

Across 114 texts, Kronic uses the word love 107 times in 28 works. The collocations link love to her central philosophical concept – cute. Dispersion analysis shows dense and sustained usage of the term in her major work devoted to “cute accelerationism.” Taken together, these findings indicate a detailed and systematic engagement with the theme of love.

The concept of cute accelerationism was literally born out of a love experience, since the work of the same name was written during a period of romantic attachment between Kronic and Amy Ireland; love thus became its initial impulse. Cute accelerationism is conceived as a logic of love, because it concerns the transformation of the subject, the expansion of the boundaries of identity, the acceptance of the future, and the distinctive temporality of the loving experience: the (future) encounter with the beloved reshapes not only the present but also retroactively redefines the past, as if everything prior had been leading to that event.

Kronic pushes love beyond its familiar intimate form, demonstrating that contemporary love is always technologically and aesthetically mediated. It is love for two-dimensional objects (anime), fictional characters, and entities that destabilize the distinction between subject and object, activity and passivity. Here the logic of becoming is at work: a person may become animal, plant, or imagined character, experiencing intense affects toward similarly hybrid figures, performing oneself in multiple roles, destabilizing one's identity, surrendering to one's attachments and passions.

Kronic places particular emphasis on the hermaphroditic character of love: gender differences are blurred, a man may become a woman and vice versa – and this is possible not only physiologically but, above all, technologically. The concept also has a political dimension. Those who practice such forms of “two-dimensional love” step outside the normative social logic of family, property, reproduction, and productive career-building. Their love becomes a form of resistance: it turns into a cute phenomenon, an act of play and total giving-over to pleasurable affects without remainder [Ireland and Kronic, 2024; Kawaiizome; Notes for “On Several Regimes of Lines”; Fapparatus of Rapture; No Vanillas, or ‘Cute Happened’; Pelotas, 2024; Iadarola, 2025].

All of the accelerationists considered here engage with the theme of love, but only Maja B. Kronic develops it in a systematic and sustained manner. As with the speculative realists and the new materialists, it is impossible to offer a unified account of love within accelerationism. One can, however, identify a shared motif that threads through these thinkers: love as a means of overcoming – though what is to be overcome differs markedly. For Kronic, it is the overcoming

of the subject; for Land and Negarestani, the overcoming of life itself; for Srnicek, the overcoming of capitalist social organization.

Likewise, the philosophers' conceptions of love diverge significantly: Land and Negarestani describe destructive, erotic love; Kronic articulates a form of romantic attachment to technologies and media-images; and Srnicek envisions love as collectively supported, socially distributed, and responsibly enacted within a new, postcapitalist family structure.

7. Summary of Findings: The Formula of Love in Metamodernist Philosophy

Thus, scholars of metamodernism generally begin from the assumption that we are living in an era of return and restoration – of the subject, of truth, of affect, of responsibility, and of love as a form of human and nonhuman co-being. In their view, love becomes not merely an emotion that enriches life but a mechanism for reconfiguring the world, a kind of emotional–ontological resource capable of preventing catastrophes, including the climate crisis. However, once we turned to the literature review, it became clear that interpreters – except for a single reference to Bennett and one to an accelerationist collective – were not, in fact, documenting what metamodern philosophers (speculative realists, new materialists, and accelerationists) themselves say about love. Rather, they were attempting to apply those philosophers' broader conceptual frameworks to the phenomenon of love.

When we turned to the corpus-based analysis of the philosophers' own texts, we discovered precisely what had not been noted in the secondary literature. First, it became clear that far from all representatives of the three metamodern perspectives speak about love at all: some mention it only in passing, and some avoid the topic entirely. Second, among those who do address love, the interpretive literature proves only partially accurate, for their actual conceptualizations of love turn out either deeper, or more specific, or, conversely, far more restrained than commentators had assumed.

Among the speculative realists, we observed a highly heterogeneous picture: for Harman, the concept of love is indeed methodologically and ontologically significant; for Meilloux, it is less central; while for Brassier and Grant, it plays no substantial role. Within new materialism, the situation is similar: Bennett and Braidotti develop dense, conceptually rich accounts of love that are fully embedded in their theoretical architectures, whereas Barad and DeLanda offer virtually no systematic reflections on love – despite the fact that interpreters often appeal to Barad when constructing conceptual frameworks for love.

Accelerationism proved even more intriguing: all four thinkers engage with love in some way, yet unevenly. Positive conceptions arise in Kronic's "cute accelerationism" and, in a sociopolitical register, in Srnicek's work, while Land and Negarestani develop negative, destructive, even catastrophic accounts of love. However, if we speak specifically about the systematic elaboration of the concept, only Kronic demonstrates a sustained and rigorous treatment of love.

And here we arrive at the central outcome of our study. First, it becomes clear that contemporary metamodern thought is not nearly as uniformly love-oriented as metamodern theorists sometimes suggest – thereby falsifying our working hypothesis. The broad claim that love is "returning," that philosophy is once again learning to speak of love, is not supported by corpus-based evidence: love is not present everywhere, and where it is present, it exhibits remarkably diverse ontological, ethical, and affective profiles. Second, we cannot allow ourselves the sweeping generalizations that often appear both in metamodern theoretical writings and in interpretive scholarship. The corpus analysis demonstrates, with precision, that in some cases there is indeed rich material for a discussion of love – literal "cries" of love (the philosophers most devoted to love, on the basis of corpus evidence, are Harman, Braidotti, Bennett, and Kronic) – while in other cases there is almost none, and we are confronted instead with faint "whispers" of love. This means that we must distinguish clearly between situations in which we

can rely on a philosopher's explicit statements and those in which we must honestly acknowledge the absence of a clear position and turn instead to interpretation.

Overall, we are compelled to conclude that the metamodern understanding of love – if we speak in terms of a formula of love – is far broader than both theorists of metamodern sensibility and interpreters of its associated philosophical perspectives tend to assume. The metamodern formula of love encompasses a wide spectrum of interpretations and, accordingly, a wide range of love-related affects – from the most radical forms of erotic attachment leading to self-destruction, dependency, and even suicidality, to gentle forms of attachment to things, technologies, infrastructures, and the world at large, and finally to a kind of theoretical indifference toward love. For the major metamodern theorists, love ceases to be an exclusively interpersonal relation: it may be directed toward objects, processes, materialities, technical assemblages, or nonhuman actors. On this basis, within the middle of the spectrum, love becomes a feeling that demands responsibility, recognition of the autonomy and independence of the loved object, and an appreciation of its wondrousness – an object always already inhabited and traversed by multiple influencing actors and agencies. Such a wide range of possibilities is, in fact, perfectly consonant with the emotional oscillations of metamodernism itself – stretching from modernist confidence and hope to postmodern despair and disbelief.

What, ultimately, makes contemporary metamodern philosophers' accounts of love unique? Their uniqueness lies not only in what they say about love but, above all, in the conditions under which these statements emerge. These conditions are delineated by the philosophers themselves: they concern the scientific discoveries of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which radically transformed our understanding of the human; they concern a cascade of crises, among which the ecological crisis is both central and most alarming; and they concern the profound uncertainty that pervades contemporary life – an uncertainty about whether it is even possible to avert the coming ecological catastrophe, coupled with a desire, however hesitant, to seek ways of overcoming it.

Contemporary philosophical theories of love are shaped precisely against the backdrop of this double knowledge. On the one hand, the humanities and the natural sciences demonstrate that the human being is only one element within a vast metabolic circuit of life – and, moreover, not only of life but of inorganic nature as well, within which we are dissolved, dependent, and traversed by countless relations. On the other hand, we confront the consequences of the very model of human–nature relations that has produced the ecological crisis. This crisis becomes the strongest argument for expanding the boundaries of love: love can no longer be conceived solely as an intra-species affect, as a relation between human beings. It must become a trans-species practice – a literal, sensuous recognition of our entanglement with other forms of existence, both human and nonhuman.

From this emerges a new understanding of love: love becomes not only a union with another person but a union with another person against the horizon of projecting such union onto a planetary scale. At its limit, it is an attempt to experience a sense of belonging to the Earth as a whole – to the multiplicity of lives and to the materiality of the world. This is where its radical novelty lies: never before has humanity faced, simultaneously, such vast scales of knowledge, such forms of global crisis, and such an urgent need for planetary empathy, care, and solidarity. These historical conditions constitute the framework within which metamodern love becomes unique – capable of responding to the challenges of our century.

However, our findings also reveal a paradox that must be acknowledged. If we take seriously the claim that metamodern thinkers are those who restore attention to connections, relations, interactions – to the world understood as a mesh of interdependencies – and if their philosophy is indeed built around the idea of the mutual entanglement of everything with everything, then it is striking that, in the majority of texts by the key philosophers across the three metamodern traditions, we find very little explicit attention to love. Mentions of the very affect that constitutes the heart of all forms of connection are, for most of these thinkers, almost entirely absent.

8. Triangulating Metamodernist Interpretations of Love Through Sociological Surveys

According to a 2024 Ipsos survey spanning 30 countries, an average of 76% of people report feeling loved, 59% are satisfied with their romantic/sexual lives, and among those in relationships, 83% are satisfied with their partner. The highest levels of love and romantic satisfaction are found in Colombia, Thailand, and Mexico (indices 81–82), while the lowest appear in Japan (56) and South Korea (59). Feelings of being loved are more pronounced among high-income respondents (83% versus 69% among low-income groups), and the same pattern holds for sexual satisfaction (67% versus 51%) [Ipsos, 2025]. At the same time, WHO and Gallup data from 2023 show that, on average, 16–23% of people globally experience loneliness – that is, roughly one in five. Yet some countries display strikingly higher levels: for example, loneliness reaches 45% in the Comoros, and around 30–35% in several African countries. Conversely, in Vietnam (6%) and in Denmark, Finland, and Estonia (10–12%), loneliness is far less common [World Health Organization, 2025; Gallup, 2024]. Taken together, these data broadly correlate with the metamodern emphasis on lovingness, yet they also reveal a complicated landscape of romantic (or, in accelerationist terms, erotic) love: more than 40% of people are dissatisfied with it. Could this help explain why not all metamodern philosophers speak extensively about love?

Today, an increasing number of people form parasocial love – one-sided emotional bonds with influencers, celebrities, or even fictional characters. Research shows that individuals often experience such bonds as a way to meet unmet emotional needs: “strong” parasocial relationships can at times feel more supportive than weak ties with real people [Lotun, Lamarche, Matran-Fernandez and Sandstrom, 2024]. Moreover, love now emerges in relation to technologies themselves. A growing number of adolescents form emotional – and even “romantic” – attachments to AI. According to a survey from the Center for Democracy and Technology, 19% of U.S. high-school students report that they or their friends have used chatbots for romantic connection, while 42% turn to AI for friendship or psychological support. This rapidly reshapes adolescent sociality: one-third of teenagers say it is easier to talk to AI than to their parents, even though such relationships are frequently accompanied by risks and potentially harmful advice from bots [Landymore, 2025]. Thus, these developments offer empirical confirmation of the insights of cute accelerationism: contemporary forms of love increasingly unfold through technologically mediated, media-aesthetic, and non-reciprocal attachments that blur the boundaries between the human, the virtual, and the artificial.

In contemporary research, the concept of social love has become increasingly prominent, and it closely aligns with new materialist understandings of post-anthropocentric love – love oriented toward life, the nonhuman, and the more-than-human world. Drawing on Gennaro Iorio’s work, social love can be defined as a form of disinterested care in which individuals or communities act “in excess,” giving more than is required, expecting no reward, and recognizing the intrinsic worth of others beyond kinship, utility, or group membership. Iorio shows that social love has historically expanded: from care limited to small kin groups, to recognition and support of strangers; from the universalist ethics of world religions, to national belonging, to the rights of marginalized groups, and finally to care for animals, nature, and the biosphere as a whole – moving from a local morality of “our own” toward a universal principle of responsibility for all life [Iorio, 2022].

Marco Palmieri and Chiara Iannaccone operationalized the concept of social love for global quantification. Using large international datasets (Gallup World Poll and World Values Survey, 2010–2014), they developed the World Love Index, identifying four dimensions of social love: overabundance (volunteering, giving time and money, joining environmental or humanitarian organizations – acting “more than necessary”); care (environmental action, donations to ecological causes, recognition of poverty and pollution as global threats); recognition (raising children to be tolerant and altruistic; striving for a “less impersonal, more human society”); and universalism (helping strangers, trusting others, trusting people of another religion, and seeing migrants as normal neighbors). They calculated overall social-love scores for

55 countries. The top ten were primarily developed democracies – Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Slovenia, Chile, and Thailand. Australia and New Zealand score highest due to strong recent charitable activity and acute concern about poverty. The Netherlands and Sweden excel in sensitivity to poverty and vulnerability. In the index's terms, “loving” societies are those in which volunteering, philanthropy, environmental activism, the raising of tolerant children, and openness toward strangers are widespread. Yet the authors stress that social love operates not only at the level of individual practice but also at the level of institutional policy, where patterns are far more uneven. They introduce two additional “ecological” indices as indirect measures of institutional love: the Humanitarian Protection Index (the generosity of asylum and refugee protection) and the Red List Index (performance in conserving species and biodiversity). The comparison shows that only a few countries score highly both in individual social love and in institutional expressions of care; Sweden stands as the clearest case of such harmony. Other “loving” countries show stark mismatches: for example, the United States ranks high in social love and refugee protection but low in environmental outcomes; Australia and New Zealand combine strong personal generosity with modest environmental conservation; some European states protect refugees or nature well but fall short in individual-level social love. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that social love can be measured; it is unevenly distributed; and full alignment between “loving people” and “loving institutions” is extremely rare (achieved only in Sweden). Hence, from the standpoint of this research, the political task of the future is not merely to cultivate individual empathy and generosity, but to institutionalize them – transforming them into durable humanitarian and ecological policies. It is interesting that Ukraine ranks 49th of 87 in individual social love (with sub-scores: overabundance 23rd, universalism 33rd, care 63rd, recognition 66th) and 74th of 87 in institutional social love (overabundance 74th, universalism 59th, care 65th, recognition 52nd) [World Love Index, n.d.]. Thus, Ukrainians express significant social love at the individual level (with the exception of “recognition”), while institutions lag far behind. There is a clear need to translate popular love into loving, caring institutions. In this sense, the indicators of social love reinforce the significance of new materialist ideas, while adding a political and institutional dimension (hinted at, for example, by Srnicek), or what Nussbaum calls political love. This provides a crucial bridge for expanding metamodern philosophical accounts of love into active political struggle for post-anthropocentric, responsible, socially and ecologically attuned forms of love expressed through institutional, collective, and socially distributed practices.

9. Conclusion

Our study refutes the hypothesis – drawn from existing scholarship on metamodernism – that this cultural logic of contemporary Western societies and their philosophers is uniformly love-oriented. In fact, deep, systematic engagement with the phenomenon of love among the principal representatives of the three major metamodern philosophical perspectives – new materialism, speculative realism, and accelerationism – appears only in a minority of cases (4 out of 12 philosophers). A small minority “cries” about love, while the majority in our sample merely “whispers” about it. Nonetheless, we were able to formulate a metamodern formula of love: a formula characterized by wide variability, a broad spectrum of interpretations and affects associated with love – ranging from indifference to suicidal passion. Its “golden mean” lies in a responsible stance that recognizes the autonomy, independence, and eccentricity of the loved object – whether that object is a person, a media-image, a technology, any form of life, life as such, or even inorganic matter. Mesothymic (balanced, temperate) love in the metamodern sense acknowledges the materiality, diversity, and networked structuration of objects, while also recognizing their quirky singularity – their partial detachment from the world’s networks. Thus, both the loved object and the lover exist within relations, yet are never exhausted by them, given the ongoing possibilities of new connections, discoveries, and wonders in an open, uncertain, and complex world.

Just as the positivity bias in Kronic and Barad stemmed from their own states of romantic attachment and affective investment in their objects of study, we, being in a state of mutual love ourselves, inevitably experienced a similar inclination toward a positive interpretation of love; however, this bias was mitigated in our study through corpus analysis of several philosophical schools and also through triangulation.

The triangulation of these findings allows us to extend the notion of mesothymic love toward social, or political, love – a form of love that requires harmonizing individual and institutional expressions of care. It calls for the creation of collective and structural conditions that would enable responsible, loving, post-anthropocentric coexistence among diverse forms of life and even the inorganic on the planet Earth.

Such an expansion is all the more necessary because contemporary metamodern philosophies have long been criticized – especially new materialism and accelerationism, though speculative realism can be added with equal confidence – for their lack of empathy toward the oppressed and for their absence of a political program [Torrant, 2014; DeFazio, 2025; Blackburn, 2021]. Critics point to the insufficient grounding of these philosophical frameworks within a philosophy of the political and class-based subject – one that would be materially invested in realizing metamodern conceptions of love. Without addressing the question of how these ideas are to be enacted politically, such philosophies risk ceding the ground to far-right movements and already existing strategies that narrow love to a single nation, a single group, a single religion, a single language, or the interests of the heterosexual white male. Instead of offering resources for theoretical and programmatic solidarity among emancipatory and progressive movements – such as ecosocialist mobilizations, which depend on expanded, post-anthropocentric, responsible, political love – metamodern philosophies risk being co-opted or outpaced.

These progressive social forces – workers, farmers, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQI+ communities, ecofeminists – are materially dependent on the preservation of biodiversity, on access to natural resources, and on the recognition of humanity's biocultural nature. Their commitments stand in stark contrast to capitalist, nationalist, and neocolonial forces that seek a reduced, ego-centered love limited to a narrow circle of “their own,” and whose extractivist logic treats all life and land as objects for intervention, capture, and the pursuit of surplus value, often through ecocidal and militaristic means.

For this reason, metamodern love must guard not only against the extremes of indifference and suicidal passion; it must also expand to recognize the vast reservoirs of love distributed across the Earth – expressed in Gen Z and climate protests, ecosocialist mobilizations, anti-war movements, and trade-union activism. Ultimately, the survival of the Earth as a life-bearing organism depends on the construction of political, planetary solidarity among all loving, life-creating, and life-sustaining actors – both human and nonhuman.

A potential cluster for an emerging eco-socialist movement in Ukraine could coalesce around several existing organizations. These include the environmental NGOs “Ecoclub” and the Center for Environmental Initiatives “Ecoaction;” the socialist organization “Sotsialnyi Rukh,” which works closely with labor unions; the independent student trade union «Direct Action»; the independent medical trade union «Be Like Us»; and the Association of Farmers and Private Landowners of Ukraine, which represents a movement of radical small-scale farmers.

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Ilin Illia V.

PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor

Department of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy named after Prof. J. B. Schad

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

61000, Kharkiv, Svobody sq., 4

E-mail: i.v.illin@karazin.ua

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3945-212X>

Nihmatova Olena St.

PhD in Economics

NGO «Ecoclub» (Ukraine)

33014, Rivne, Stepana Bandera St. 41, office 95

E-mail: nigma2804@gmail.com

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0268-9556>

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КРИКИ ТА ШЕПІТИ ПРО КОХАННЯ В МЕТАМОДЕРНІЗМІ: КОРПУСНИЙ ПІДХІД

Ільїн Ілля Вікторович

кандидат філософських наук

доцент кафедри теоретичної і практичної філософії імені професора Й. Б. Шада
Харківський національний університет імені В. Н. Каразіна

майдан Свободи, 4, Харків, 61022, Україна
E-mail: i.v.illin@karazin.ua
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3945-212X>

Нігматова Олена Станіславівна

кандидат економічних наук
ГО «Екоклуб»
вул. Степана Бандери 41, оф. 95, Рівне, 33014, Україна
E-mail: nigma2804@gmail.com
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0268-9556>

АННОТАЦІЯ

У статті здійснено міждисциплінарне дослідження того, як сучасна метамодерністська філософія осмислює любов, через поєднання корпусної лінгвістики та соціально-філософського аналізу. Хоча дослідники метамодернізму часто говорять про «повернення любові» у культурі – як про нову чутливість, відкритість та етичну залученість, – автори наголошують на необхідності емпіричної перевірки цих тверджень. Спираючись на твори дванадцяти провідних мислителів, пов’язаних зі спекулятивним реалізмом, новим матеріалізмом і акселераціонізмом, автори здійснили систематичний аналіз експлііцитних згадок любові в їхніх текстах. Отримані результати демонструють значно більш різномірну й нерівномірну картину, ніж зазвичай припускають інтерпретатори: лише меншість – зокрема Грем Гарман, Розі Брайдотті, Джейн Беннетт і Майя Б. Кронік – формують концептуально насычений уявлення про любов, тоді як інші звертаються до цього поняття побіжно, метафорично або майже не використовують його.

Методологія статті поєднує чотири підходи: посткритичне читання як форму любові, корпусний аналіз конкордансів, колокацій і дисперсії, теоретичну, методологічну та соціологічну тріангуляцію та інтерпретацію філософування як «розмови із самим собою». Такий багаторівневий підхід дає змогу реконструювати, яким чином різні течії метамодернізму уявляють любов як онтологічну, етичну, естетичну чи політичну силу. Спектр інтерпретацій охоплює посттуманістичну, зорієнтовану на зоє, життєву любов (Брайдотті), екологічне зачарування та матеріальну спорідненість (Беннетт), дантеанську любов-увагу до автономного об’єкта (Гарман), а також темні моделі катастрофічності та розпаду в еротичній любові (Нік Ланд, Реза Негарестані).

Для ширшого контексту автори зіставляють ці філософські позиції з масштабними соціологічними даними про романтичну любов, самотність, парасоціальні зв’язки та поняття «соціальної любові» у глобальних індексах. Це показує, що переосмислення любові в умовах метамодерності певною мірою резонує зі світовими афективними тенденціями, хоча й залишається концептуально фрагментованим. У підсумку автори пропонують «метамодерністську формулу любові» як широкий спектр – від байдужості й деструктивної пристрасті до відповідальної, постантропоцентричної етики турботи. Водночас автори стверджують, що такі моделі потребують доповнення політичними та інституційними формами солідарності, без яких неможливе екологічне й планетарне виживання та співжиття в ХХІ столітті.

Ключові слова: метамодернізм, кохання, корпусна лінгвістика, новий матеріалізм, акселераціонізм, спекулятивний реалізм.

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