

Lack of Empathy in Varieties of Love in *Enduring Love*

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Abstract—Ian McEwan's novel *Enduring Love* foregrounds the protagonists' failed construction of romantic love and illustrates the fragility of Joe and Clarissa's love on the one hand and the destructive forces of Jed's homosexual love for Joe on the other hand. In the light of Patrick Hogan's componential statement on romantic love, this paper seeks to clarify how the sexual desire system, reward system, and attachment system participate in the collapse of Joe and Clarissa's love as well as to make out why the love of Jed to Joe can be overwhelming and out-of-control. Through a nuanced analysis of ordinary love and its distorted opposite presented in *Enduring Love*, it can be discovered that love is a complicated construction on both sides and the destruction of love can be boiled down to the lack of empathy, in this way McEwan makes prominent the imperative of practicing empathetic understanding with each other when confronted with unidentifiable risks.

Index Terms—*Enduring Love*, Ian McEwan, attachment, reward dependency, empathy

I. INTRODUCTION

Ian McEwan is one of the foremost British writers who emerged prominently since the 1970s. Throughout the great variety and profound changes of McEwan's oeuvre, the complexities and dynamics of interpersonal relationships have always been within the scope of his interests. McEwan "incorporates a huge array of interpersonal alliances into his fiction, examining the attachments between lover and lover, husband and wife, parents and child, brother and sister," according to Slay (1991, p. 6). In contrast to the traditional romantic love story, what is highlighted in McEwan's writings is the fragility of those seemingly secure human relations to internal and external conflicts. McEwan himself holds that "inevitably if you write novels you're going to find yourself writing about—at some level—conflicts between people" (Roberts, 2018, p. 85). The issues of romantic relationships in crises and conflicts receive their fullest treatment in *Enduring Love* (1997), the sixth novel by Ian McEwan. The novel mainly tells a story about the close relationship between Joe Rose and Clarissa Mellon being put in crisis by the disturbance of an unwanted intruder, Jed Parry, who is in demented infatuation with Joe after their shared moment of "emotional intensity" (Childs, 2007, xi) in a ballooning accident: five would-be rescuers, including Joe and Jed, cooperate to save a boy trapped in a drafting hot-air balloon basket. In commentating on the novel, contemporary British novelist A. S. Byatt contends that "it juxtaposes a mad version of the plottedness of human relations, the divine designs, the instant recognition of the beloved and destiny, with a human love which is vulnerable, can be destroyed by madness and certainty" (2001, p. 83). Coupling the engrossing story plot with serious explorations of human love, *Enduring Love* has been well received and acclaimed by both readers and literary critics, who offered insightful readings and interpretations of it from different angles, to name but few, evolutionary psychology, narrative unreliability, masculinities, "madness", and the long-running "two cultures" debate.

Though Peter Childs mentions "it is additionally both about the forces that are destructive of love and about love as a destructive force" (2007, p. 3) in his study of *Enduring Love*, he does not specify what exactly are "the forces that are destructive of love" and in what way love can be "a destructive force". Thus, the present paper serves to unravel certain forces that set apart Jed and Clarissa's union and to make out in what way Jed's love for Joe can be dangerously enduring in the light of Hogan's componential account of romantic love.

In *Sexual Identities: A Cognitive Literary Study* (2018), Hogan explicitly assumes that there are at least three distinct emotion/motivation systems underlying the varieties of love which people experience, respectively, the system of sexual desire, the reward system, and the attachment system. Among the three systems, the attachment system holds the central place, which is "a system of bonding" and "feeling of affection" (Hogan, 2018, p. 1). Attachment relationships may themselves be bound up with the development of a repertoire of emotional memories based, most importantly, on shared experiences (Hogan, 2018, p. 33). Although the relationship between lovers frequently mixes attachment and sexual desire—a craving for sexual gratification—this does not mean that sexual desire is necessarily the prerequisite of romantic love. The reward system can be viewed as a system that fosters a feeling of need, liking, or wanting, which is linked to the excruciating anguish that results from the loss of one's beloved. At its most intense, extreme reward dependency on something or someone can result in "the loss of personal autonomy" (Hogan, 2018, p. 45), as is the case

with drug addiction. When addicted to some drug, one has no choice but to seek out the drug. In the same vein, one's love would go crazy if one cannot control their behaviors but stalk the subject of their love. Not only does Hogan dissect love to gain insight into its underlying mechanism, but he also expands on his study by taking love as an organic whole and proposes that "various bonding and romantic relations may be affected by identity group division and improved by effortful empathy" (2018, p. 47). In his words, empathy reorients people's emotion systems by aligning them with the emotions of someone else (Hogan, 2011, p. 239) and can be inhibited by people's identity opposition.

The following paper can be divided into three parts. The first part maps out the dynamics of Joe and Clarissa's love, exploring how the concerted work of the three systems can forge their love and how the internal mutations of these systems accordingly distance them from each other. The second section explores the mechanisms of Jed's erotomania, disclosing how the alienation of specific systems endows love with intimidating and obsessive forces. To take this study a step further, the third section takes empathy as an entry to examine the irreconcilable conflicts in the two types of love, revealing the deficiency of empathy as a result of people's obsession with their own identity and perspective is a common threat to genuine love that openly embraces the otherness and difference of each other.

II. SEVERED ATTACHMENT BOND IN THE FRAGILITY OF JOE AND CLARISSA'S LOVE

At the outset of the novel, Joe and Clarissa's relationship can be seen as a "prototypical case of romantic love" (Hogan, 2018, p. 42), in which all these elements of love are combined with great intensity. In Joe's words, "there was nothing that threatens our free and intimate existence" (McEwan, 1997, p. 8). First of all, the physical pleasure of sex exists in Joe and Clarissa's close relationship. They cuddle, kiss, and hold one another, enjoying the comfort and warmth provided by their lovemaking. These physical touches offer Joe and Clarissa shelter from negative feelings, making Joe "feel that I belonged, that I was rooted and blessed" (p. 33). Secondly, Joe develops appropriate reward dependency toward Clarissa—the six-week separation from Clarissa causes him to miss her so much that their first reunion after their separation would be "marked for memories in the most pleasurable way" (p. 3). These descriptions clearly show that Clarissa is Joe's felt need, and that the satisfaction of Joe's felt love, in other words, his reunion with Clarissa, would give rise to a feeling of pleasure, while the loss of his felt need will result in "emotional pain". Significantly, there are attachment bonds in their relationship. "Attachment bonds manifest themselves in the desire for practices of reciprocity and sharing, prominently emotion sharing and mutual or shared attention or experience" (Hogan, 2018, p. 42). Mutual attention refers to the "attention of persons to one another, thus a form of reciprocity" while shared attention means "attention to the same object" (Hogan, 2018, p. 42). Initially, Joe and Clarissa have reciprocal understanding and care for each other despite the inherent divergence in their fields of specialization, one is a popular science writer, and the other is a Keats scholar. The background information tells us that Joe once made an effort to cater to Clarissa's emotional needs—writing love letters to her despite his inability to come up with beautiful and poetic language. And when Clarissa returns, Joe spends the majority of time talking with her about John Keats, her research subject, when they are wandering in the woods, rather than focusing on his own concerns.

Though the ballooning catastrophe upends their peaceful existence, in which Joe and Clarissa witnessed the gruesome death of another rescuer who was the only one to stick to hold on to the balloon's ropes, they attempt to work together to come to terms with the uneasiness, depression, and sense of guilt in the wake of the accident at first. Back home, they sit face to face and discuss the accident, sharing their opinions on and recalling their memories of the same occurrences—such as the appearance of Jed Parry, John Logan's fall, the emergent situation of the boy, and so on. Additionally, Clarissa, who is aware of Joe's suffering, "pushed back her chair and coma round my [Joe's] side of table" and "drew my [Joe's] head against her breast" (p. 30) in an effort to soothe Joe through the physicality of her love. She recognizes that "we've seen something terrible together. It won't go away, and we have to help each other. And that means we'll have to love each other even harder" (p. 33). Later, as a couple, they share the experience of inviting friends and relating the entire accident to them as a way to relieve themselves of the trauma. "We told it in the married style, running alone with it for a stretch... Over the days and weeks, Clarissa and I told our story many times to friends, colleagues and relatives" (p. 39). This collaboration further strengthens the affective bond between this couple. Up to this point in the story, the attachment bond established and maintained by Joe and Clarissa, in the form of mutual attention to each other's feelings and needs and shared attention on the same accident, reinforces the solidarity of their relationship.

However, as the story progresses, their couplehood breaks off gradually. What causes the divergence of Joe and Clarissa's love from the normal and secure path? References to variables in each of the three main components of love may be useful to respond to this question. The most straightforward explanation for the estrangement of their love is the disappearance of sexual desire. What has once seemed natural and familiar for Joe and Clarissa, "like love-making or long talks or silent companionship" (p. 140), becomes hard even impossible to retrieve. In consequence, Joe confesses that "we [he and Clarissa] slept the same bed, but we didn't embrace, we used the same bathroom, but we never saw each other's naked body" (p. 140). The loss of sexual need for each other to some extent distances Joe and Clarissa physically, which is an indicator of the disruption of their emotional community. Therefore, Joe feels that "we were loveless, or we had lost the trick of love" (p. 140). At the end of Chapter 18, Joe thinks to himself "Clarissa thought I was mad, the police thought I was a fool, and one thing was clear: the task of getting us back to where we were was going to be mine alone" (p. 161). Actually, this does not mean that Joe has completely severed his reward dependency

for Clarissa, but it does indicate that Joe decides to do something by himself without the participation or accompany of Clarissa. In the subsequent course of committing himself to finding out the scientific explanation for Jed's psychopath, whether Clarissa is present or not and whether she sides with him or not makes no difference for him, which means the system of reward temporarily ceases to sustain their relationship.

It's worth emphasizing the systems of sexual desire, reward dependency, and attachment are interconnected rather than isolated. The degradation of desire and reward dependency stems from the underlying severance of the attachment bond. As one of the variables in the attachment system, the issue of shared attention and mutual attention also enters here. As the first day comes to an end, a split in their shared attention emerges. Joe is perplexed when Jed calls late at night to tell him he loves him. But he chooses to keep this phone call from Clarissa: "It was nothing. Wrong number" (p. 37), instead of sharing his current emotions with her. Joe himself is conscious of his decision may account for how their marriage would go terribly wrong—"It may have been exhaustion, or perhaps my concealment was protective of her, but I know I made my first serious mistake when I turned on my side and said to her" (p. 37). Moreover, Joe deletes about thirty calls from Jed, depriving Clarissa of the pieces of evidence that she requires to see the full picture of Jed's affair. In Joe's turning a story involving two of them into one dominated by himself, his attention begins to diverge from Clarissa's. From then on, Joe is overwhelmed by the barrage of phone calls, secret trails, and passionate love letters from Jed. To prove the possibility that Jed may hurt him and Clarissa since one survey indicates that "over half of male de Clérambaults had attempted violence on the subjects of their obsessions" (p. 142), Joe frantically keeps a tiny dictating machine in his pocket and wears a microphone under his lapel so that he can record what Jed says in case Jed threatens him, and even attempts to bait Jed into making violent actions that would give him grounds to involve the police. Clarissa, on the other hand, merely views the information Joe gave her about Jed's crush and stalking activities as a funny petty story. She chuckles easily and merrily at Joe's description, remarking something like "Come on, it is a joke...At worst it's a nuisance. You mustn't let it get to you" (p. 58). Given that they never reached a consensus on the issue, the gap in their attention grows increasingly glaring and detrimental with time. While Clarissa continues to believe that Joe is making a fuss over Jed and "he [Jed] is not that much of a problem" (p. 84), Joe increasingly engrosses himself in his dealings with Jed. Secretly, Joe gathers all the love letters from Jed, reads them from start to end, marks the key passages, and extracts them to compile a dossier of proof of Jed's penchant for violence. The more attention Joe pays to Jed's weird behaviors, the more Clarissa finds him in league with Jed and refuses to stand by his side. Consequently, the two find themselves "in very different mental universes now, with very different needs" (p. 82). Living in the same house but thinking in entirely different ways, Joe's and Clarissa's attention has split away which makes it harder for them to grasp each other's thoughts and feelings, putting their attachment bond under enormous strain.

The disruption of their attachment security also can be attributed to the absence of mutual attention in their relationship. Detailed descriptions of several rounds of exchanges between Clarissa and Joe reveal the fact that Joe is preoccupied with his own worries about Jed's harassment, his dissatisfaction with his work as a science journalist, and his sense of guilt deriving from John's death that Clarissa cannot attract any of his attention. After a long day's work, under the pressure from her work and bad physical condition, and plagued by horrible memories of Logan's death, Clarissa expects care and understanding of her beloved, but what awaits her is Joe's incessant complaints even with "some kind of accusation, perhaps even anger against her" (p. 80). Joe is consumed by his emotions and displays a complete insensitivity towards Clarissa: he seems oblivious to Clarissa's emotional needs, let alone providing empathetic care to her. "All Clarissa wants to say is, 'Where is my kiss? Hug me! Take care of me! But Joe is pressing like a man who has seen other humans for a year'" (p. 81), constantly following and talking to her about himself. Though we are aware that Joe's inconsiderate behaviors are not motivated by malicious intentions but a kind of spontaneous urge to demonstrate his rationality, they do distance him from Clarissa. Despite receiving little attention and comfort from Joe, Clarissa initially tries to approach Joe in a caring and comforting manner. But all her efforts are doomed to failure: "Her careful questions were designed to help him, and now she is being rewarded by hid aggression while her own needs go unnoticed" (p. 85). Irritated and frustrated by Joe's ignorance, Clarissa finally decides to disconnect herself from him, suggesting her attention to Joe is fading away. Joe's inability to respond to Clarissa's emotional needs combined with Clarissa's decision to leave Joe behind marks the disruption of mutual attention once existed in their love, resulting in the inevitable dissolution of Joe and Clarissa's love. Via showcasing the failure of practicing both shared and mutual attention and the subsequent breakdown of Joe and Clarissa's union, McEwan highlights the importance of reconstructing and reviving love from both sides whenever it is threatened and the dangers of a self-first attitude to love relationships.

Even though it is the advent of Jed that unhinges Joe and Clarissa, there are some strong undercurrents of disconnection belying the veneer of togetherness between Joe and Clarissa. In examining the ontological insecurity in this novel, Graham John Matthew remarks that "Parry is a vague threat but not a tangible danger until the end of the novel" (2019, p. 3). Admittedly, Jed's invasion makes the crack under the perfect surface of their relationship wide open. However, "attachment may be either secure or insecure...The securely attached lover has trust in the reciprocity of the relationship, as well as a sense of confidence about circumstance" (Hogan, 2018, p. 45). Drawing on Hogan's statement on attachment security and insecurity, it can be referred that there are some latent but inherent problems in Joe and Clarissa's relations, which render their attachment bond intrinsically insecure prior to Jed's disturbance. To begin with,

Clarissa's infertility indicates the unsteadiness of their marital union, which gives rise to her lack of confidence and the fear of being abandoned when her connection with Joe is faced with a conflict. The invasion of Jed "disrupts the equilibrium of their relationship" (Palmer, 2009, p. 299), but Clarissa unconsciously downplays the problem and even denies Jed's existence. "Perhaps Parry, or the Parry described by Joe, does not exist" (McEwan 90). Why doesn't she actively engage in and fix this problem as Joe does? The conversation between the two may provide a hint:

You're always thinking about him. It never stops. You were thinking about him just then, weren't you? Go on, tell me honestly. Tell me.

I was, yes.

I don't know what's happening with you, Joe. I'm losing you. It's frightening. You need help, but I don't think it can come from me. (p. 148)

It is obvious that Clarissa's reaction to Jed's affairs partly comes from her fear that she will lose her loved one if she pushes Joe away from her and makes him further involved in figuring out Jed's mystery. From Clarissa's perspective, the best solution to the current situation is to put Jed's affair aside so as to maintain their intimate relations. Hogan also points out that "insecurity may be an individual propensity...presumably deriving from critical period experience in childhood" (2018, p. 45). Delving into Clarissa's past, especially her childhood experiences with her father, critically helps account for "a breach of faith by such an intelligent person [Clarissa] within such a trusting relationship" (Palmer, 2009, p.303). When she was twelve years old, her father died of Alzheimer's disease, which made her fear, at least in Joe's opinion, that she would live with someone insane. That is why she picks "rational Joe" as her lover. For Clarissa, Joe is not just an intimate partner but also represents insurance of order and stability. But the coming of Jed makes Joe an unfamiliar person to her: he is upset, easy to be agitated, and frantic all the time. The changes in Joe may aggravate Clarissa's inner fear of chaotic and unstable life, so she intuitively first asks Joe to detach himself from Jed and then decides to step away from Joe after a series of fruitless conversations with him about Jed.

Besides, Joe's sense of inferiority makes him wary of trusting the permanency of their attachment bond. That is, he does not believe there is a reciprocal love between them, which is a crucial component of secure attachment. Joe recalls his private thoughts when he first knew Clarissa: "how did such an oversized average-looking lump like myself land this pale beauty" (p. 103). In his inner world, Joe always thinks that he cannot match fair Clarissa and does not deserve such a beauty. When their relationship approaches a deadlock, his suspicion about Clarissa's fidelity is intensified: "Was she beginning to regret her life with me? Could she have met someone?" (p. 103). He ascribes Clarissa's refusal to remain by his side to the possibility that she might have affairs with someone else and finally cannot but peek at Clarissa's personal letters when she is out, which definitely exposes his distrust of her. Put it more clearly, Joe's uncertainty about Clarissa's love for him poses a potential threat to their intimate relationship and surfaces in their later interaction.

III. EXCESSIVE REWARD DEPENDENCY IN JED'S PATHOLOGICAL LOVE FOR JOE

"The pathological extensions of love not only touch upon but overlap with normal experience" (p. 259), hence it is appropriate to explore and explain Jed's pathological love based on Patrick Hogan's statement. The dangerous and non-conformity version of love—Jed's rapturous crush on Joe—is diagnosed as "De Clérambault syndrome", which is "a dark, distorting mirror that reflected and parodied a brighter world of lovers" (p. 128). The reason why Jed's love is described as a "dark, distorting" one is not that he loves one who is of the same sex as himself but can be traced back to the sudden appearance of attachment and extreme reward dependency he develops for Joe.

Before going to elaborate on the abnormal condition of the attachment system and the reward system in Jed's love, the absence of sexual desire between Jed and Joe must be clarified. Obviously, the sexual desire system is not at stake in Jed's love for Joe. When they first meet face to face after the accident, Joe asks, "You keep using the word love. Are we talking about sex? Is that what you want?" (p. 66), yet Jed is reluctant to respond to the topic, showing the "fear of sexual intimacy" (p. 240). Furthermore, the first appendix, a scientific article on "De Clérambault syndrome", mentions that "the subjects of erotomania" remain chaste. When questioned in an interview about his erotic ambitions for Joe, Jed is evasive and even feels offended. There is no evidence of intrusive sexual intention in Jed's delusional love for his love object, Joe, which argues that feelings of sexual desire are not a prerequisite of love relationships.

Part of the explanation for the mystery of Jed's love for Joe is the sudden attachment, which is evoked by "activation of emotional memories, which is to say, memories that reproduce the initial emotional arousal" (Hogan, 2018, p. 116). Before encountering Joe, Jed has been living in complete isolation from the outside world and human interaction: his father passed away when he was eight, and he has made no contact with his older sister who lived in Australia since his mother died; after inheriting the money and house left by his mother, he quitted his job as an English teacher, thus cutting his connection with his former coworkers whom he "never really get on with" (p. 96), and moved into the big empty mansion where no one steps into the front door except postman. Without anyone visiting and enclosing himself in his paranoiac world, Jed calls himself "the king of my castle" (p. 95). However, in their cooperation to save the boy trapped in the basket of a hot-air balloon, all the would-be rescuers, including Jed and Joe, unexpectedly share parallel emotions, memories even the same fate, thus establishing emotional connections. After letting go of the rope and falling to the ground, Joe feels the relief of being alive and notices that Jed who is next to him is watching him with a pained and puzzled face. "In the second or so that this stranger's [Jed's] clear, gray-blue eyes held mine I [Joe] felt I could

include him in the self-congratulatory warmth I felt being alive. It even crossed my mind to touch him comfortingly on the shoulder” (p. 20). Even rational Joe perceives the temporary emotional bonds with Jed and has the urge to physically approach him at that specific moment, let alone a lonely and sensitive person like Jed. Their meeting glance, however fleeting it may be, leaves a strong psychological impression on Jed. McEwan also notes that “such a transformation, from ‘a socially empty’ life to intense teamwork may have been the dominating factor in precipitating the syndrome” (p. 239). The rare and sudden emotional bond with other people sets off a chain of effects in Jed’s psychological world. What’s more, Jed closely follows Joe going down the slope to check on the status of dead John Logan while the rest is not stirring. What they experienced at the bottom of the slope where the dead Logan sits further enhances the emotional connections Jed felt with Joe. Immediately, Jed decides to enlist Joe into his religious world as a way to combine with Joe together. These memories of the accident trigger strong emotional fluctuation in Jed’s life, making him develop extremely powerful affection for Joe since he claims that “I’ll never forget the time at the bottom of the hill” (p. 98).

“Love is not only sexual desire and attachment; it is a relation to the beloved that makes our physical well-being neurochemically dependent on him or her” (Hogan, 2011, p. 83). That is what Hogan describes as “reward dependency”. In the case of Jed, his extreme and morbid reward dependency on his beloved dismantles his control over himself and induces a spiritual illness. Hogan holds that the first noteworthy feature of reward dependency is that it is individualized for a specific object rather than being substitutable. Take the feeling of hunger as an example, if someone is hungry, he can satisfy his hunger through various food, though he cannot immediately get the exact food that he likes most. But if one suffers from the “dependency-based effect of separation” (Hogan, 2018, p. 83), no one can free him/she from such pain except his/her very beloved. If Joe’s dependency on Clarissa situates itself to an appropriate degree, Jed’s is proved to be overpowerful and uncontrollable. It is reasonable to assume that the separation from Joe disorients Jed mentality beyond what is considered normal since he pathologically stalks Joe and waits outside Joe’s house to keep spatial approximation with Joe. In his first letter presented in the novel Jed confesses his delusion that he can feel Joe’s presence in the leaves Joe touched earlier and is eager to get more information about Joe so he read every article Joe published. His emotional state and its fluctuations are wholly at the mercy of the presence, attitudes, and reaction of his beloved, Joe, to the point that he himself realizes his dependency on Joe. He asserts “It’s all about control, isn’t it” (p. 62) and “But you’ve got all the power” (p. 63). “Reward dependency has its most deleterious consequence on the loss of personal autonomy” (Hogan, 2018, p. 45). As Joe never gives him a thing, a sign of dissatisfaction with his need for the union of his beloved, Jed is unable to tolerate the pain brought about by this dissatisfaction so he covertly plans an assassination to kill Joe and holds Clarissa hostage with a knife. “If you wouldn’t return my love, I thought I’d rather have you dead” (p. 212). He declares that “I didn’t want any of it” (p. 210). Overwhelmed by his fanatical dependency on Joe, Jed loses rational control over his own thoughts and actions: he cannot but try to approach his beloved, which is the only way to alleviate his emotional pains. When his needs persistently are left unsatisfied, he turns frantically violent out of his expectations. Jed’s love “wrecked” his life, which exactly demonstrates the destructive force of acquisitive love.

Eventually, Jed “abandons” his craving for Joe’s physical presence, which does not mean he mitigates his dependency on Joe but shows that he has descended into the last stage of his madness. His letter sent from the mental hospital in Appendix II indicates that he has been completely enmeshed in his love fantasy where Joe “accepts” his love and “confirms” all his efforts made for “their love” and he and his lover live together spiritually forever. Jed’s love is the most extreme example of the kind of enduring love which is immune not just to temporal time and space but also to all these suspicion and conflicts confronted by ordinary love. As Edward points out, “Jed’s love for Joe is not itself the central issue but is a distorting mirror in which we can trace the lineaments of ‘normal love’: especially the love of Clarissa and Joe” (2007, p. 86). In the two seemingly opposing forms of love, the healthy and the morbid, the rational and the insane, exists a subtle connection, which reveals the universal requisite of love—an empathetic understanding of each other.

IV. LACK OF EMPATHY IN DESTRUCTED AND ABNORMAL LOVE

Slay in his dissertation on McEwan’s oeuvre remarks that “McEwan’s characters...plays these games in the belief that the establishment of life-affirming relationships can provide refuge from the chaos and turmoil of their lived and worlds” (1991, p.1). But what happens to these characters is always the opposite. In *Enduring Love*, the union between Joe and Clarissa breaks up, and Jed’s love for Joe is never stable, but instead excessive and intrusive. After the componential analyses of the love shared by Joe and Clarissa and Jed’s love for Joe, it is time to put the two versions of love on the table so we can compare them within the framework of empathy. Empathy involves a simulational affect state parallel to other people’s emotions according to Hogan, briefly, emotion sharing. On the other hand, it “consists of an ability to accurately imagine others’ viewpoints” (Davis, 2018, p. 7). In the beginning, McEwan’s depiction of Joe and Clarissa’s seemingly flawless romantic love reflects an active construction of love from “the point of view of two” (Hsu, 2014, p. 110), which will serve them to deal with unexpected crises in a supportive and redeeming manner. Unfortunately, Jed’s appearance plunges everything into turmoil. Joe adheres to his idea that Jed is a psychopath, trying to find a scientific explanation to support his speculation, focuses solely on his own anxieties, and fails to understand his wife properly, while Clarissa’s feminine intuition reads Jed’s aberrant behaviors as a joke, “I thought of him as a

creature of your imagination” (p. 216). Joe tries hard to persuade Clarissa that Jed is stalking him, but Clarissa seldom attempts to engage with Joe’s point of view since “Clarissa thought that her emotions were the appropriate guide, that she could feel her way to the truth” (p. 150). In their battle of winning each other over in the argument, neither of them can “suppresses his or her usual egocentric outlook and imagines how the world appears to others” (Davis, 2018, p. 6), allowing the chance to reconstruct their love union to slip away. Likewise, Badiou and Truong in their book titled *In Praise of Love* point out that:

Selfishness, not any rival, is love’s enemy. One could say: my love’s main enemy, the one I must defeat...it is myself, the “myself” that prefers identity to difference, that prefers to impose its world against the world re-constructed through the filter of difference. (2012, p. 60)

In *Enduring Love*, Joe, as a science journalist, is mesmerized by rationality, whereas Clarissa, a scholar on Keats, is enthralled by emotionalism and sentimentalism. Constrained by their diametrically separated perspectives, they care more about their own judgment of events than the otherness of the beloved, resulting in misunderstanding and disregard for each other’s feelings in their close relationship. At the climactic scene of the story, Joe rescues Clarissa from Jed’s violent actions, which eventually vindicates Joe’s judgment and prediction of Jed’s behaviors are right. Critics have also noted Joe’s righteous judgment serves as a kind of emblem for the triumph of rationality over emotionalism. But that is not the point when their viewpoints are set in the context of love relationships. In her letter to Joe, Clarissa charges that “You did the research, you made the logical references and you got a lot of things right, but in the process, you forgot to take me along with you, you forgot how to confide” (p. 217). By staging Clarissa’s criticism of Joe, McEwan inserts into the novel not which side is right or better than the other, but a call for decentering to establish mutually beneficial relationships.

The stark difference in their identity partly impinges on mutual understanding and care in Joe and Clarissa’s love. Furthermore, social construction with respect to people’s identity is noteworthy since individuals are inevitably socially regulated. Social routines and their coercive forces may break in on the otherwise natural development of the secure attachment (Hogan, 2018, p. 184). The social norms inscribe a set of rules and discourse on how to behave like a man in the terms of sexual potency, rationality, and intelligence. Confronted with the discrepancy between the ideal male image and his actual self, a man who internalizes and conforms to traditional gender standards cannot help but feel pressure and anxiety and then he will go to any lengths to make up for these deficiencies. As Joe acts as a prime example and victim of such ideal masculinities, his couplehood with Clarissa cannot bypass the social expectations of gender roles. Joe molds himself as a typical male, making the right decision by logical reason, taking control, and making money, and makes all the appropriate moves to fit in the perfect male image. Working as a scientific freelancer, Joe always keeps “this old frustration about not doing original research” (p. 84) and a “sense of failure on science, of being parasitic and marginal” (p. 99) in his mind. Besides, his pose of a rescuing hero dismantles in the balloon accident due to his cowardly and selfish deed of giving up the hope to save a boy in danger. In the chaos that ensues, he becomes “the object of another man’s desire” (Davis, 2007, p.72), which dissolves the very foundation of his masculine self. All of these exactly reflect how these gender stereotypes push Joe into a quagmire of crisis. Haunted by his “unsuccessful” work, impeded intelligence, and danger of emasculation, which is imposed by social construction, Joe involuntarily encloses himself in society-distributed worries and desperately grapples with them to regain control of his life, unable to perceive other things. Besides, Joe’s obsession with his masculine identity, taking the form of homophobia, delays his empathetic understanding of Jed. Byers indicates that “a man homosexual proposition puts the straight man in the traditionally feminine position of the object” (1995, p. 14). Thus, the fear of emasculation preoccupies Joe’s mind, rendering it harder for him to empathize with Jed. And an individual may be more inclined to understand and care about a person who is perceived as similar to themselves (Kohn, 1992, p.122), or who does not... touch upon her unconscious conflicts or on areas of developmental deprivation and disappointment” (Basch, 1983, p. 120). Having identified Jed as a homosexual and madman who unquestionably belongs to the “out-group member”, Joe automatically repulses and has prejudice towards Jed, which in the same vein makes it more difficult for him to obtain an understanding of Jed’s inner world. Joe’s repulsion is so glaring that even Jed notices that “Your mind is closed, your defenses are in place. It suits you and protects you to tell I am a madman” (p. 136). In his desperate efforts to stave off his masculine insecurities, Joe blocks Clarissa’s critical thoughts and Jed’s world views from creeping in.

As for Jed, the major problem in his love for Joe lies in his absurd egocentricity, completely detaching himself from other people’s wills. He blindly believes God “has ordained their amorous union” (Carbonell, 2010, p. 4) and that his perspective is superior to Jed’s view so his mission is to set Joe “free from his little cage of reason” (p. 133). Badiou argues that “in love the individual goes beyond himself, beyond the narcissistic” (19). Jed never ventures beyond his self-centered world, just as Joe’s description that “his was a world determined from the inside” (p. 143), and “he illuminated the world with his feelings” (p. 143). At first, Jed holds that the camaraderie of saving a boy in danger and Joe’s invitation to check the wreckage of Logan’s corpse are signals that Joe is falling in love with him. Then he stalks Joe and interprets the movement of the curtain in Joe’s house as evidence of the development of Joe’s love for him in spite of Joe’s claim that “I have no feelings for you either way” (p. 63) and Joe’s active dislikes. Despite knowing that Joe has a loving wife and a happy life, he insists Joe should abandon everything he owned and follows him to embrace God’s love. Whatever Joe says, in Jed’s mind, there is only one voice, one mindset, one standpoint, that is his own. In the final stage, totally ignoring the physical existence of his beloved, he expresses thanks to Joe for “loving” him,

“accepting” him, and “recognizing” everything he is doing for their love in delusion, selectively forgetting the fact that Joe shot him on his elbow and would never forgive his attempts of assassination. In his courtship of Joe, Jed not just is oblivious to Joe’s thoughts but even ignores the possibility of Joe having different ideas from him, considering the whole thing from his own feelings, which explains why his love can be enduring.

Framing the triangular relationship within the context of empathy reveals that while there are clear differences between the two versions of love in several aspects, the deficiency of empathy indiscriminately contributes to the conflicts and crises in their love. Joe and Clarissa’s obsession with their own identity deprives them of the chance to accommodate the experiences of the otherness of one other, leading to a lack of empathetic understanding and care which undermines their love from the inside. The absence of empathy in Jed’s interactions with Joe, that is, persistently imposing his worldview upon his beloved, dismissive of Joe’s cognitive framework, can explain the pathological symptoms of his love.

V. CONCLUSION

Through mapping out the passage of love and probing into the underlying systems engaging in love, this paper endeavors to advance the understanding of the intricacies of love *Enduring Love* exams. On the one hand, *Enduring Love* demonstrates the concerted work of the system of sexual desire, the reward system, and the attachment system making for the perfect mode of love. On the other hand, the text simultaneously reveals how insecure attachment bond leads to the collapse of love and underscores the dangers of obsessive unrequited love characterized by extreme reward dependency, a type of love that drives people to the brink of insanity. As quoted by David Malcolm, “although McEwan is often seen as a writer who argues for the redeeming power of human love, he is also one who suggests love’s fragility” (156). Unlike traditional love stories which hail love as supportive and redeeming, *Enduring Love*, portraying love as a complex affect state, foregrounds its fragility to external and internal factors and demonstrates its potential deconstructive forces of self-deluding resulting from possessive madness. In the meantime, by presenting three protagonists with conflicting temperaments and beliefs and their inability to go beyond their self-centeredness, which constitutes a serious deterrent to viable relationships, McEwan empathizes the significance of mutual empathetic understanding in constructing a reliable love relationship to ward off unprecedented crises and uncertainties in the modern world.

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