



Emotional Hierarchies in Love Triangles: Loud and Passive Lovers in *The Great Gatsby*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

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Abstract:

This paper aims to propose and examine a conceptual relationship between emotional expressiveness (verbal and non-verbal) and the consistent need to prove one's worth within an asymmetrical romantic relationship through a comparative textual analysis of the timeless classic love stories of Jay Gatsby, Daisy and Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*; Heathcliff, Catherine and Linton in *Wuthering Heights*; and Tess, Angel and Alec d'Urberville in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Across the select literary texts, this research identifies a recurring pattern in which unequal emotional investment results in an asymmetrical relationship between an emotionally expressive ("loud") lover and a comparatively emotionally restrained ("passive") lover. Through comparative close reading of the select classical novels, the study argues that this imbalance often compels the loud lover to seek validation from their partner through continued acts of sacrifice and self-proving, ultimately contributing to tragic relational outcomes such as long-term disappointments, regrets, mental health issues and eventually, the end of relationships. The findings suggest that within these three narratives, greater emotional expressiveness is consistently associated with an intensified need to prove one's worth in a relationship when emotional reciprocity is absent.

Keywords: Loud Lover, Passive Lover, Emotional Asymmetry, Respect, Identity Formation, Romantic Relationship.

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Introduction

“To love and be loved is to feel the sun from both sides.”

— David Viscott

The aspiration for emotional reciprocity from a singular, lifelong partner represents the quintessential romantic ideal for the majority of individuals in romantic relationships. However, “relationships of this sort provide no guarantee for either permanence or bliss” (Halpern). Falling in love is often considered a daunting endeavour, primarily due to the lack of emotional reciprocity among partners. Individuals who explicitly invest emotionally in loving another person are frequently found to sacrifice their personal identity in pursuit of becoming the ideal partner for their beloved. Love demands freedom, yet being in a relationship demands reciprocity. Relationships thrive on respect, care, and emotional reciprocity (Frei and Shaver 122).

This research argues that inconsistencies in emotional expression result in lopsided relational roles within romantic relationships. Thus, it proposes two conceptual categories — the loud lover and the passive lover — to navigate how emotional inequality shapes interpersonal dynamics in literary works. Despite treating emotional expressiveness as a mere personality trait, this study examines how unequal emotional investment in a romantic relationship structures insecurity, power and tragic outcomes in the selected three canonical novels.

Respect in relationships has become a colossal concept. Respecting another person varies on factors like audience, medium of communication, intensity of connection that people share. To understand the concept of respect more comprehensively, Simon has identified two kinds of respect: vertical respect and horizontal respect. Vertical respect means a difference in the intensity and form of respect given to the other person based on their status in a society. Horizontal respect suggests mutual respect for one another since all the individuals involved

belong to equal social status (Simon). Horizontal respect manifests in romantic relationships as there must not be any hierarchy among partners in this kind of relationship (Laursen and Bukowski 754). According to Alper, a psychotherapist, respect is the core condition of intimacy: “*Respect* ... essentially means regarding ... someone as worthy of investing one's time and energy” (Alper). In most relationships, particularly the romantic ones, respect acts as one of the foundational pillars that holds and nourishes the union of partners.

The study of respect in romantic relationships in academic circles has been popularized recently (Hendrick and Hendrick; Frei and Shaver), though its presence can be observed in classic love stories of Romeo and Juliet in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1597), Miranda and Ferdinand in *The Tempest* (1610), Nala and Damyanti in *Mahabharata* (3 BCE), Edmund Spenser and Elizabeth Boyle in *Amoretti* (1595) and other works. Hendrick and Hendrick emphasize the respect that one gives to their partner because of their feelings and emotions towards them rather than considering their partner's actual worthiness of respect (Hendrick and Hendrick). They identified two parameters to study respect in romantic relationships: supportiveness and mutuality (Hendrick and Hendrick). Within these two parameters lie Lawrence-Lightfoot's six themes of respect:: dialogue, curiosity, attention, self-respect and healing (Lawrence-Lightfoot). Through three consecutive studies, they formed this six-component scale to measure one's respect for one's romantic partner (Hendrick and Hendrick). The present study explores the dynamics of respect among partners in romantic relationship in the select texts to emphasize upon the component of dialogue/ communication in Lawrence-Lightfoot's model.

Communication is a means of conveying a person's respect for their partner. When a person builds enough trust and respect for their partner in themselves, it becomes natural to share their deepest emotions, feelings, desires, and insecurities with their partner since there “lies an unshakable foundation of trust” between the partners in a romantic relationship (Stevens

and Zerikho 41). In such cases, it becomes the responsibility of their partner to make the person comfortable enough to maintain their self-respect and confidence. Romantic relationships thrive when the communication is clear and honest (Yasmin 2041). It leads to mutual growth and a healthier life – physically and emotionally (Le et al.). However, relationships become challenging if this dynamic is disrupted by emotional instability (Bowen et al. 1). It occurs when one of the partners is a loud lover while the other is a passive recipient of love.

The existing scholarship on these literary texts has discussed respect, communication, intimacy and emotional reciprocity in romantic relationships but lacks terminology for explaining the recurring asymmetrical patterns identified between an emotionally expressive partner and a comparatively emotionally passive partner as observed across literary narratives. The present research proposes to introduce the terms “loud lover” and “passive lover” to describe this recurring relational pattern in romantic relationships. The major contribution of this article is the development of a new literary-critical typology consisting of two relational categories — “loud lover” and “passive lover” — through which emotional inequality can be examined across romantic literary narratives.

Loud Lover vs Passive Lover

“Love, in its truest form, cannot remain silent” (Donna). Love, by its very nature, is loud, if not verbally then through the actions of a lover. This paper proposes that a loud lover is someone who has the ability to convey their deepest feelings, emotions and concerns wholeheartedly to their partner. These people might hesitate but who fully express their feelings to their partners, often taking initiatives to develop their relationship consistently. In contrast, a passive lover is someone who avoids making any efforts to express their feelings to their partner. They avoid taking the initiatives a balanced and healthy relationship. A

passive lover is often the indolent recipient of love who either shifts the narrative to avoid their emotional responsibility towards their partner or victimizes themselves as being incapable of taking any initiatives. This lopsided relationship is eventually doomed to cause disappointments, mental health issues and ultimately the termination of such relationships (Radnitz et al. 4; Soltani et al. 123). Among these two kinds of lover, the paper argues that, a loud lover is often someone with a higher emotional quotient and in long term, is devoid of any regrets in effort-making or saving their relationship.

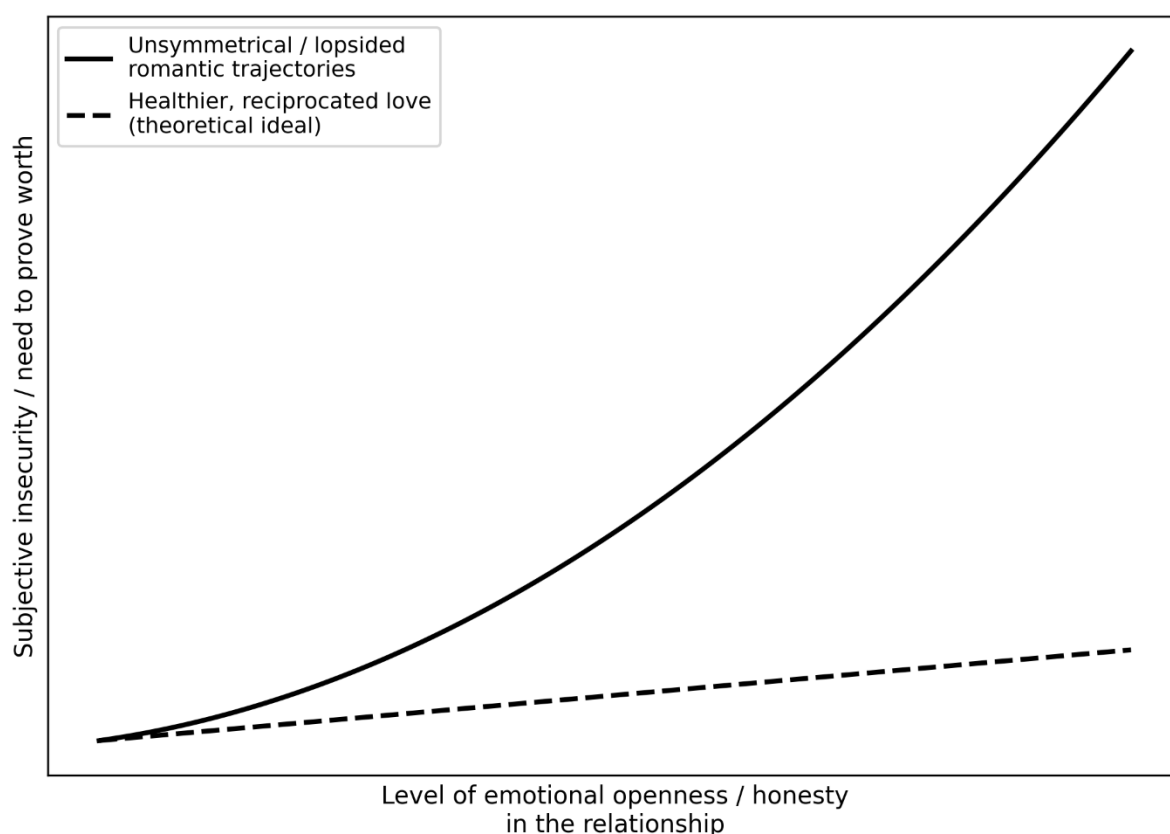


Figure 1 (Emotional-Reciprocation Curve): Hypothetical relationship between emotional openness and self-worth anxiety in romantic relationships. The solid curve represents trajectories observed in lopsided, asymmetrical romantic relationships — exemplified by *Gatsby*, *Heathcliff*, and *Tess* — where higher emotional openness intensifies subjective insecurity and the need to prove one's worth to their partner. The dashed curve represents

trajectories of healthier, reciprocated love in which emotional openness does not proportionally amplify anxiety.

This theoretical framework posits that the differential emotional expression and reception between "loud" and "passive" lovers can lead to significant discrepancies in relationship satisfaction and stability, particularly impacting mental well-being when emotional needs remain unaddressed (Walker et al. 3). Here, loud does not imply noise or ostentation. Love declares itself through intense respect, care, humility, consistency, sacrifice, and protection. Apostle Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13, "Love is patient, love is kind...", (Ike et al. 86) has become so widely popular that it is used universally in wedding ceremonies and relationships (Bryson and Movsesian 370). However, this description is spoken out loud rather than whispered to couples because love is destined to be proclaimed. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, the construction of Taj Mahal by Shah Jahan, the act of exchanging vows out loudly during wedding in front of the entire world are a few examples of "loud proclamation that love is real, present and worth celebrating" (Donna).

Nevertheless, it is not confined to religion, weddings, or mere words. Love manifests itself in many ways other than verbal confessions. For instance, in O' Henry's short story, *The Last Leaf*, Johnsy starts believing that her life depends upon the ivy vine and when all its leaves would fall, she would also die. However, despite his curmudgeonly attitude, the artist Behrman paints a leaf on the wall so realistically that Johnsy, seeing it on the vine even after a stormy night, regains her will to live (Henry). Here, Behrman is a loud lover – not in romantic love with a person, but in an aesthetic love with an artist's spirit—who takes every possible initiative to help a fellow artist. Additionally, in romantic relationships, when a passive lover is showered with intense love by a loud lover, they never feel the need to reciprocate similar love to their partner. It is always the loud lover who keeps on proving his

worth to the passive lover in multiple ways until this process turns to a tragic end (Díaz et al. 124).

This dynamic is highly entrenched in the traditional kind of romantic love, which supports and encourages idealization, control, subordination, inequality, passivity, and emotional dependence — particularly burdening one partner (usually positioned as more devoted or ‘loud’ lover) with personal sacrifices, excessive caregiving, and unreciprocated affection; in contrast the other partner remains entitled to only receive without any equivalent return (Díaz et al. 124) (Jiménez-Picón et al. 838) (Donovan and Hester). Such patterns emerge especially when the traditional cultural myths portray love as an "absolute and unconditional surrender" (Díaz et al. 124), leading individuals—often women in traditional narratives, but applicable across all genders—to internalize these roles as natural and socially acceptable, thereby suppressing their own emotions and desires by perpetuating imbalance in a relationship (Banks 7). Beliefs and emotions in a relationship are not innate but culturally perpetuated by stereotypes and taboos, sustaining sentimental structures defined by rigid gender or power differences (Lenz and Adler 315).

Literature strikingly depicts this imbalance through narratives of doomed triads or pairings where the loud lover's ardent devotion is juxtaposed with the passive lover's entitled detachment. In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy Buchanan functions as the passive lover — charming yet shallow, she basks in Jay Gatsby's (the loud lover) mythic, all-consuming adoration reflected in his lavish parties, accumulated wealth, and persistent idealization of her as a perfect, unattainable ideal woman—without her ever matching his intensity or sacrificing her security (Safadi and Awajan 2978). Jay Gatsby repeatedly attempts to prove his worth by ostentatious displays of his wealth and unwavering loyalty to Daisy, even taking the blame for her unintentional murder of Myrtle (Mizrak 94). Yet, she offers no true reciprocity to Gatsby, ultimately retreating into the comfort of her social status, wealth, and marriage to

Tom Buchanan. This one-sided dynamic, fueled by romantic idealization and dependence, thus, culminates in tragedy: Gatsby's death, highlighting how the passive lover's lack of reciprocity and mutual engagement drains the loud lover until destruction (Carroll 14).

Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw embodies the role of passive lover in her entanglement with Heathcliff (the loud lover), while her husband Edgar Linton represents a parallel passive entitlement. The love of Heathcliff is raw and obsessive yet subordinating—he endures social humiliation (mostly by Hindley, “who has brought Heathcliff so low that Catherine cannot imagine marrying him (Soberano 92), exile, and self-reinvention only to prove himself worthy of Catherine, thereby sacrificing his humanity in the process (Soberano 92). Catherine, despite her profound declaration “I am Heathcliff” (Arneson), chooses the social security offered by Edgar Linton over her love for Heathcliff, demonstrating prioritisation of social standing over an intensely passionate, yet tumultuous relationship. She absorbs his intense passion and idealisation without reciprocation, choosing a safer, more socially elevated life with Linton while keeping her own emotions and desires fragmented “though she is in love with Heathcliff” (Küçük 1249). She confesses loving Heathcliff like her own self, yet marries another person, embodying the culturally mediated belief in love as surrender that demands everything from the devoted party while excusing the passive lover’s ambivalence (Küçük 1249). Here, the result is mutual torment, revenge, and early deaths, illustrating how unreciprocated proving of worth corrodes both souls within unequal sentimental structures. This pattern underscores how societal pressures and individual choices can transform profound emotional connections into destructive forces when reciprocity and equitable engagement are absent, particularly within rigid social hierarchies (Arneson; Akhter and Shams).

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, this pattern inverts gender roles yet preserves the core inequality among partners in a lopsided relationship. Here, Tess d'Urberville takes the role of a loud

lover. Her passionate nature drives her towards an intense, sacrificial devotion despite her societal condemnation. Angel Clare embodies the passive lover who receives his partner's unwavering devotion, care and love yet never reciprocates with an equivalent commitment. Though Alec exploits her vulnerability with predatory 'care', the ostensibly virtuous Angel continuously attempts to idealise Tess as a pure maiden, then abandons her upon learning about her past. Tess continually strives to prove her worth through endurance, forgiveness, and self-erasure—offering unconditional love and caregiving. Her belief in love includes absolute surrender, rooted in cultural narratives of female sacrifice, leading to her exploitation, ostracism, and execution. It underscores how the passive lover's detachment, enabled by societal beliefs, transforms the loud lover's devotion into a path of tragic self-annihilation (Cendales et al. 8). This dynamic is further exacerbated by the prevailing Victorian code of patriarchal society and its biased societal norms which perpetuate an unjust system where women like Tess are made victims of social prejudice and male dominance, leading to their tragic fate (Hooti).

Through the select texts, the paper aims to explore this dynamic between a loud lover and a passive lover, thereby attempting to prove that there is a direct and linear relationship between one's ability to express their honest and deepest feelings and the urge to continuously prove one's worth to their partner. The partner who expresses their feelings more verbally or nonverbally becomes the one who is more restless and insecure in a relationship (Topal and Sever). Having discussed the main argument of the paper, it is imperative to focus on the select texts to examine how the above-mentioned relationship between the two variables manifests in literary and cultural texts.

Wuthering Heights (1847)

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is a classic novel of the Victorian era set in Yorkshire Moors of Northern England. It is a revenge love story about passionate, intense and destructive love between Catherine and Heathcliff. Here, Heathcliff embodies the persona of a loud lover. Throughout the novel, Heathcliff has proclaimed his love for Catherine in various ways. He endures emotional suffering, strives to make himself worthy of Catherine's social status, refuses to accept Isabella as Catherine's substitute, and ultimately seeks union with Catherine in his death (Bagley 505). During their childhood, Heathcliff endured the abuses of Hindley Earnshaw and disrespect from many other characters. He remained quiet to avoid causing any hostility between Catherine and her brother, Hindley. The narrator, Nelly Dean, observes Heathcliff in his childhood as "a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear... as if he had hurt himself by accident, and nobody was to blame" (Brontë, 43). However, the passionate yet indecisive Catherine chooses to leave the orphaned Heathcliff to marry Linton, a rich aristocrat in order to maintain a higher status in society. Catherine confides to her housekeeper, Nelly Dean: "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now" (Brontë, 92). While she was highly influenced by her social standing, Heathcliff's character emerges passionate, expressive, devoted and an invested partner. Jennifer Hays-Grudo and Amanda Sheffield Morris, in their book, *Adverse and Protective Child Experiences* (2020) explain how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, mental illness, parental separation, domestic violence etc., harm a person's overall character development (Hays and Morris). Heathcliff was a victim of physical and emotional abuse from most characters in his early childhood at the *Wuthering Heights*. This led him to form an intense emotional connection with the one character who behaved nicely with him i.e. Catherine which is later manifested in an unhealthy manner as well.

Heathcliff's feelings grew stronger with time and the experiences that he shared with Catherine. Love is not about grandiosity or showing off, but rather about the connection between partners. Although Heathcliff never confessed his feelings directly to Catherine, he feels an intense connection with Catherine even after her death. Hence, it is right to categorize him as a loud lover for he does not leave any opportunity to fulfill his love. This can be easily witnessed through his actions. He conveyed his true and deepest romantic inclinations to Catherine in a way that his partner, Catherine, became too assured of his love: "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Brontë, 92). Heathcliff's ability to fully convey his feelings to his partner makes him a relatively stronger character emotionally. It is arguably the case that Heathcliff has never felt this kind of assurance from Catherine since Catherine plays the role of a passive consumer of love who accepts status over true love. Since Catherine experiences a more intense and honest love from Heathcliff, she struggles to experience a similar kind of love later with her husband, Edgar Linton. She claims that Linton's love is "as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire" (Brontë, 92). This is because she is in a perpetual pursuit of the love, respect and reverence that she had received from Heathcliff. She struggles emotionally and psychologically until the end of her life, destroying her marriage and later appearing as a restless ghost in want of true love.

The Great Gatsby (1925)

The Great Gatsby is an iconic decadent Jazz Age novel by the American novelist, F. Scott Fitzgerald, set on Long Island. It is about the tragic love story of Jay Gatsby and Daisy, corrupted by social status and materialism. Gatsby and Daisy appear to be in love but are separated due to war and materialism. While Gatsby served in World War I, she chose financial stability over true love. "She wanted her life shaped now, immediately—and the decision must be made by some force—of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality—

that was close at hand” (Fitzgerald, 151), says Nick Carraway. Her inability to be impervious to social status, materialism, and the opinions of those around her proves her to be an emotionally weak character. This is further evidenced by her infamous wish for her daughter to become “a beautiful little fool” (Fitzgerald, 17). This desire comes from “a chilling articulation of her own lived experience” (Ma) as gradually, Daisy along with her husband repeatedly “smashed up things and creatures and then retreated into their money or their vast carelessness” (Fitzgerald, 180). While Catherine married Linton for his wealth and social status (Indrasari et al. 216), Daisy emerged as too materialistic and shallow ever to proclaim her love for Gatsby in the novel. On the other hand, Gatsby is a loud lover whose love for Daisy is demonstrated, performed and proclaimed in multiple ways until the end of his life. For instance, he reinvented his entire life to match Daisy’s wealthy status. All of his materialistic possessions are directed to impress Daisy and save their relationship.

Unlike Heathcliff, Gatsby proclaimed his love verbally too. He spoke out loud to Tom, “Your wife doesn’t love you... She’s never loved you. She loves me” (Fitzgerald, 130). Yet, Daisy being an emotionally weak and shallow character, is unable to be honest about her true feelings for Gatsby even though it means enduring a lifelong loveless marriage. Materialism and social status make her too weak even to take responsibility for Myrtle’s murder as opposed to Gatsby, for whom it is an instinct to protect his partner: “but of course I’ll say I was” driving the car that hit Myrtle (Fitzgerald, 154). Throughout the novel, Gatsby repeatedly and devotedly proclaims his love loudly through self-reinvention, material display, verbal confession, and personal sacrifice. Gatsby’s tragedy lies in the fact that the feelings that he was able to communicate to Daisy were never reciprocated by her.

Daisy felt the assurance, safety and respect from Gatsby that she never experienced with her husband. When she accidentally killed Myrtle, it was Gatsby that she felt could protect her, not her husband (Carroll 14). Albeit highly influenced and obsessed with material

possessions, Daisy's survival as an ignorant character is only sustained by the loud love that Gatsby has for her. At the same time, Gatsby still dies with the hope that someday Daisy would express her true feelings. Had there been clear and honest communication between Gatsby and Daisy, they might have saved their relationship. Because Daisy had experienced the loud love of Gatsby earlier in the novel, it became impossible for her to find a similar kind of love from her husband. Tom and Daisy's marriage is only a superficial relationship that lacks emotional depth, mutual respect and a long-term commitment (Mulatsih 120; Safadi and Awajan 2978). Daisy's unhappiness in her marriage is discernible through Tom's blatant infidelity, emotional numbness and controlling nature towards Daisy (Matzke; Ma and Wei 32). Despite this, even Daisy is unable to provide any emotional comfort to her husband due to her lingering past emotions and feelings for Gatsby.

The lack of clear communication – firstly, between Gatsby and Daisy and later between Daisy and Tom becomes a major reason for disharmony in both relationships. Having experienced a greater form of love, Daisy is on a continuous quest to regain that love when she loses it. From the beginning, Daisy appears as a passive consumer of love who avoids making any efforts to save her relationship with Gatsby. Wasiolek in his article, "The Sexual Drama of Nick and Gatsby," describes "the real Daisy" as "bored, spoiled, cynical, and uncaring (Wasiolek)". If Daisy had invested in her relationship with Gatsby in a similar manner, he would have experienced the same kind of intense love, assurance, and safety, rather than continuously needing to earn her love and emotional reciprocity.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891)

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* is a Victorian era classic novel about the tragic life of the protagonist, Tess, who is judged and punished by her family, husband and society for being raped by an aristocrat, Alec d'Urberville. In this novel, Tess

emerges as a loud lover, whereas Angel Clare takes up the role of a passive consumer of love. In the beginning, Tess falls in love with Angel Clare, then goes to the d'Urbervilles' estate on her father's advice for financial help, where she is raped by Alec d'Urberville. Tess repeatedly attempts to convey her feelings to Angel and build a relationship based on honesty and empathy. As a loud lover, she repeatedly tries to confess about her past to Angel before their marriage; endures Angel's harsh judgement, hoping time will soften him; withstands the unjust social shame from Angel's family and her society; and ultimately murders Alec – not for revenge but to be united with Angel.

On the other hand, Angel's ideology is highly influenced by his society and the Victorian code of purity based on "a society obsessed with the virginity of a woman" (Sennett). "Angel Clare was deeply influenced by the traditional patriarchal values, and he had a strong desire to control both the nature and the women" (Liu). The hypocritical moral codes of Victorian society embedded in the characters, especially Angel, are proved when Tess confessed about her past on their wedding night and Angel condemns her as an impure and unfaithful woman. Even though in the past, he had himself willingly spent 48 hours of debauchery with a stranger, Angel's patriarchal values are so deeply rooted that he cannot stop himself from judging Tess: "Forgiveness does not apply in this case... You were one person: now you are another" (Hardy, 228). Angel Clare appears as an emotionally weak character who does not possess the capacity to reciprocate the love he had received from Tess. He is merely a passive consumer of love, bound by the unjust societal values. Earlier, Angel denied his family's decision to marry Mercy Chant as he had already fallen in love with Tess. Later, after Tess and Angel's separation, he attempts to fill the void left by Tess with Retty, Marian, and Izz by asking for their companionship to go to Brazil. However, he soon realises that he had already experienced a higher, intense love that could not be substituted by someone else.

Unlike Tess, Angel is a selfish, confused, and emotionally weak character, which causes the acknowledgement to respect and return to Tess to come much later to him.

Throughout the novel, Angel never attempts to reciprocate the love, care, and respect that Tess had shown him. Being a loud lover, Tess has conveyed her true feelings to Angel due to which not only Angel but also others experience an assurance that Tess will always love him. "Tess would lay down her life for him" claims Izz Huett (Hardy, 385). It is due to this assurance that when he failed in Brazil, he decided to come to Tess for comfort. A loud lover makes his partner feel worthy of the love showered upon them. Angel needed his confidence, self-assurance and respect back, so he went to the one person who never stopped investing in him. Tess never experiences a similar assurance in her relationship with Angel. From the beginning, she keeps reminding him that she is only a human prone to errors, and not the goddess that he has imagined her to be. Not even once in the novel, Tess has attained the state of emotional peace since her passive lover, Angel never feels the need to make efforts on his end to save their relationship. Ultimately, it is only Tess who repeatedly attempts to prove her worth to him. In addition to Liu's argument, "It was Angel's stubbornness on the patriarchal values that have shattered all the love between Tess and Angel"(Liu 114), it is also the lack of clear and honest articulation of feelings as well as emotional reciprocity, that led to the end of Tess's life and their relationship.

In all three narratives examined, a consistent pattern arises where a "loud" lover, characterised by overt emotional investment and vulnerability, is juxtaposed against a "passive" counterpart who, constrained by social norms or internal conflicts, fails to reciprocate with equivalent emotional depth or demonstrativeness, ultimately leading to significant relational breakdowns and tragic outcomes.

Literary Work	Passive Lover	Key Behaviours of Passive Lover	Loud Lover	Key Behaviours of Loud Lover	Tragic Outcome
The Great Gatsby	Daisy Buchanan	Superficial affection; return to social security	Jay Gatsby	Idealization; wealth accumulation; sacrifice	Gatsby's death
Wuthering Heights	Catherine Earnshaw	Ambivalence; chooses social status	Heathcliff	Obsession; revenge; self-reinvention	Mutual torment and multiple deaths
Tess of the d'Urbervilles	Angel Clare	Idealisation followed by abandonment	Tess Durbeyfield	Endurance; forgiveness; self-sacrifice	Tess' execution

Figure 2 (Passive and loud lovers in select tragic romances: behavioural patterns and tragic outcomes): The table contrasts a 'passive' lover (who equivocates or withdraws conditional affection) with a 'loud' lover (who expresses desire intensely, often through performance, sacrifice, or obsession), showing how their interaction culminates in irreversible tragic loss or death.

This table represents a recurring psychodrama across the classical narratives — *The Great Gatsby*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* — in which the passive lover (Daisy, Catherine, Angel) oscillates between affection and withdrawal, typically prioritising their choice in social status, moral idealism, or class anxiety. In contrast, the loud lover (Gatsby, Heathcliff, Tess) externalizes his desires as an intense performance — idealisation, wealth accumulation, revenge, or self-sacrifice — transforming emotional openness into a

visible, often untenable display (Lenz and Adler 316). Thus, a crucial asymmetry emerges: once the passive lover has been exposed to a higher, more intense form of love through the loud lover, even if it is only partially or fleetingly experienced, the separation leaves them emotionally benchmarked against that encounter. Since a passive lover has already felt something greater — a purer, more consuming form of love — when they are separated from the loud lover, they have very low or negligent chances of finding a comparable emotional intensity again, which further reinforces their emotional withdrawal or ambivalence with their later partners.

This pattern reveals that classical romantic tragedy does not rely merely on mismatched personalities. However, rather on a structural imbalance: the passive lover's capacity to withhold emotional reciprocation amplifies the loud lover's compulsion to prove their worth, until emotional investment exhausts itself in violence, ruin, or death (Zhang and Yihui 991; Badinjk 1355). This configuration underscores the paper's central claim: the more honestly and clearly one expresses their feelings in a lopsided relationship, the more insecure and desperate their position becomes, until the very act of loving turns into a fatal performance.

Conclusion

Across these narratives, the paper establishes that the traditional model of romantic relationship ensures the loud lover's efforts — idealisation, dependence, and repeated proofs of worth—remain unreciprocated, strengthening power imbalances until the loud lover's emotional exhaustion or literal destruction. The select novels collectively represent social structures that normalise such asymmetrical patterns in romantic relationships, allowing unequal emotional investment to persist while privileging social conformity or emotional restraint. This study has meticulously analysed the structural asymmetry inherent in traditional romantic relationships and their literary depictions, demonstrating how the 'loud'

and ‘passive’ lover dynamic consistently culminates in tragic outcomes due to unreciprocated emotional engagement and rigid social constraints (Díaz et al. 124; Jiménez-Picón et al. 838). This paper concludes that such tragic denouements are not merely the result of individual failings but are deeply interwoven with prevailing societal norms and expectations, which usually penalize genuine emotional expression while implicitly endorsing emotional restraint (Javier 101).

i. Theoretical Implications of the Study

The conceptual framework propounded in this paper may also inform future interdisciplinary research on relationship dynamics, emotional communication and representations of romantic reciprocity beyond literary texts. Future research could further expand this framework to cross-cultural analyses of romantic narratives to investigate how diverse societal norms and emotional affection influence the manifestation and tragic outcomes of such asymmetrical emotional dynamics. Furthermore, an exploration of contemporary digital romantic relationships, particularly those moderated by contemporary literary and media narratives, could reveal new manifestations of these ‘loud lover’ and ‘passive lover’ roles, as individuals navigate self-presentation and emotional vulnerability in the contemporary, technologically-augmented era.

ii. Broader Implications of the Study

The present framework may offer a useful theoretical framework for analysing emotional asymmetry in literary narratives beyond the select texts. Future studies may examine whether the proposed typology can be applied across different cultures, historical periods, genres or contemporary representations of romantic relationships. Furthermore, encouraging a critical evaluation of gender roles within relational dynamics could restructure prescriptive notions of emotional expression and receptivity, thereby promoting more equitable and fulfilling

relationships. Moreover, analysing the evolution of love symbols across different eras and cultures through content analysis of literature and media could further illuminate how societal expectations shape romantic ideals and contribute to these relational asymmetries. To summarise, the present study invites further scholarly examination of how literature constructs relational power, emotional reciprocity and unequal affective investment, while illustrating the usefulness of the proposed loud lover/passive lover framework for comparative literary analysis.

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