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Unveiling the Interplay Between Navigating Unconscious Desires, Defence Mechanisms, and Toxic Relationship Patterns in Hoover's *It Ends with Us*

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Dedication

First, I want to thank me for believing in me, I want to thank me for doing all this hard work.

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To my siblings; my dearest sisters "Nadjet" and "Sara", and my brother "Miloud", my nephew "Adem", my nieces "Aridj" and "Rahaf" you are the apple of my eyes.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the characteristics of contemporary American society that contribute to psychological issues, specifically domestic abuse and trauma. Through the lens of the novel, *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover, published in 2016, the study analyses the experiences of the protagonist, Lily. Employing a psychoanalytic approach, the thesis unravels the complex psychological dynamics at play within Lily's character, examining the impact of abuse and trauma on her psyche. Colleen Hoover's novel is commended for its realistic portrayal of toxic relationships, avoiding the romanticization prevalent in contemporary American literature. Through the analysis of Lily's story, the dissertation highlights the importance of empowering individuals to break free from abusive relationships and emphasizes self-respect, self-worth, and setting healthy boundaries. The findings of this research aim to raise awareness, provoke discussions, and advocate strategies and support systems to combat gender-based violence and trauma in contemporary American society. The first chapter delves into the societal fabric of contemporary American society, aiming at understand the underlying roots of abuse and trauma. In the second chapter, the focus shifts to the analysis of Lily in *It Ends with Us*. By examining her personal journey through an abusive relationship and the resulting trauma, the chapter uncovers the parallels between Lily's experiences and broader societal experiences.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

In today's modern world, societies around the globe are undergoing significant changes, shaped by various factors such as technological advancements, evolving cultural norms, and shifting societal dynamics. These transformations have profound implications for the well-being and psychological health of individuals within these societies. Within the context of contemporary American society, it becomes increasingly crucial to understand the characteristics and dynamics that cause the prevalence of domestic abuse and the resulting trauma experienced by victims. The exploration of human psychology and the profound impact of abuse and trauma have been subjects of great interest within the field of contemporary literature.

As a case study, the novel *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover, published in 2016, is chosen to be analysed. It presents a poignant narrative that delves into the complexities of abuse and trauma, particularly through the experiences of the protagonist, Lily. This dissertation embarks on a psychoanalytic journey, seeking to unravel the psychological intricacies of Lily's character and shed light on the profound effects of violence and psychological wounds on her psyche. Abuse, in its various forms, can leave lasting imprints on an individual's mental and emotional well-being. Psychological trauma, stemming from experiences of mistreatment, has far-reaching consequences that permeate every aspect of a person's life. Through a psychoanalytic lens, this research aims to uncover the underlying psychological dynamics at play within Lily's character, examining the ways in which her past experiences shape her present thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Colleen Hoover, a popular author known for her contemporary romance novels, has gained recognition for addressing sensitive topics, including toxic relationships, in a different manner than many other literary works of the 21st century. While some novels tend to romanticize or trivialize abusive relationships, Hoover takes a different approach by portraying various forms of violence and emphasizing the importance of breaking the cycle of abuse.

In *It Ends with Us*, she sheds light on the realities of toxic relationships, highlighting the destructive patterns and behaviours that can lead to emotional, physical, or psychological harm. By doing so, she aims at creating awareness and empowering readers to recognize the signs of abuse, rather than romanticizing or normalizing such behaviours.

Moreover, the significance of this study lies in its contribution to the field of psychoanalytic literary criticism and trauma studies. By examining the psychological dynamics within *It Ends with Us*, this research highlights the intricate interplay between abuse, trauma, and the human psyche. Through a deeper understanding of Lily's character, this dissertation intends to shed light on the broader implications for individuals who have experienced abuse and trauma, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing the psychological consequences of such experiences.

Based on the background of the study above, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

- How does *It Ends with Us* navigate the interplay between unconscious desires, defence mechanisms, and the perpetuation of toxic relationship patterns?
- How do power dynamics and imbalances within intimate relationships contribute to the cycle of abuse, and what broader societal factors influence the prevalence of such power imbalances?
- How does the portrayal of contemporary American society in *It Ends with Us* reflect or challenge prevalent cultural norms and values regarding relationships and abuse?

In order to find answers to the above questions, this dissertation is divided into two chapters:

Chapter one focuses on examining the characteristics of contemporary American society that contribute to psychological issues, particularly domestic abuse and trauma. By delving into the societal fabric, we aim to unravel the intricate web of factors that influence and perpetuate such destructive behaviours. This chapter seeks to shed light on the underlying roots of gender-based

violence within this society and provide a comprehensive understanding of the societal factors that shape individuals' experiences.

Chapter two focuses on Lily, a central character in the novel *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover. By utilizing this literary work as a lens, we delve into the personal journey of Lily as she navigates an abusive relationship, the traumatic experiences she endures, and her subsequent journey towards healing and self-discovery. This chapter aims to provide a deep analysis of Lily's story and examines the ways in which her experiences align with broader societal issues of domestic abuse and trauma.

Chapter One: Contemporary American Values

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1.1 Introduction

Within contemporary American society, domestic abuse remains a disheartening reality that affects individuals in all walks of life. Behind closed doors, within the confines of seemingly ordinary homes, a complex web of power dynamics, cultural influences, and societal pressures manifests, often leading to domestic abuse. These deeply troubling issues not only inflict immediate physical and emotional harm upon victims but also leave lasting psychological trauma that reverberates long after the abuse has ceased.

The characteristics of contemporary American society intertwine with the phenomenon of domestic abuse, creating an environment in which abusive behaviours can escalate. This environment is shaped by a myriad of factors, including persistent gender inequalities, cultural and social norms, patriarchal structures, economic stress, substance abuse, mental health challenges, and media influences. Understanding the interplay between these characteristics and the occurrence of abuse is crucial in order to effectively address and combat this pervasive issue.

This exploration delves into the multifaceted relationship between contemporary American society and domestic abuse, with a particular focus on how these societal characteristics contribute to the development of abusive relationships. Furthermore, it highlights the subsequent trauma experienced by survivors, shedding light on the long-lasting effects that ripple through their lives, relationships, and overall well-being.

1.2 Contemporary American Society

The society of the United States is based on Western culture. There are numerous interwoven but distinctive social subcultures in the US because of how broad American culture is. In the United States, a person's cultural affinities frequently depend on their socioeconomic status, political leanings, and a wide range of demographic traits such their religious background, line of work, and ethnic group membership. A history of immigration has impacted the socioeconomic, racial, and religious composition of the population in America, which has a highly diverse cultural

population, according to Thompson, William and Hickey (2005). Furthermore, social attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs frequently show considerable geographical, ethnic, socioeconomic, or party differences.

In many ways, since the United States has such an enormous global impact on the media, politics, technology, pop culture, economy, and the military, it has frequently served as a model for what many people consider normal "western" society and ideals to be, as cited by Clack and George (1997). Most foreigners today probably have a basic understanding of what "American living" entails. However, the notion of a uniform American culture is no longer accurate given the diversity of its cultures and values. In addition, a history of immigration has impacted the socioeconomic, racial, and religious composition of the population in America, which has a highly diverse cultural population.

Otherwise, according to Thompson, William and Hickey (2005) significant changes have been occurring in many facets of people's lives in the 21st century, including both personal and professional domains. The development of technologies, which accelerated more than ever in the 21st century, is responsible for some of the biggest social developments. Thus, it has evolved since before the United States was a nation, acquiring its own distinct social and cultural traits, including dialects, music, the arts, social customs, food, and folklore. In this context Adams, J.Q (2001) claimed that due to extensive immigration from numerous nations throughout its history, the United States of America is today a nation with a diversified ethnic and racial population.

In *The Federalist Papers No. 2: Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence for the Independent Journal*, John Jay (1787) In a letter to the people of New York, made the case for ratifying the US Constitution on the grounds of preserving cultural diversity. He offered arguments in favour of cooperation because Americans were:

> a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very

similar in their manners and customs, and who by their joint counsels, arms, and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established their general liberty and independence (Jay, 1787).

It is understandable why it is sought that the culture and way of life in America can differ greatly from those in other countries. A group of people's designated and accepted shared views and habits are referred to as their culture. Culture covers a wide range of topics, including attitudes toward education, work habits and time management, religious convictions, and preferences for things like food, art, entertainment, and holidays, as well as etiquette. Thus, accepting cultural and personal diversity is a basic concept that binds the United States together since it is a varied country that has been affected by many different cultures.

In accord with, *The Drum Major Institute for public policy* (2006), even though the majority of Americans in the 21st century consider themselves middle class, American society and culture are profoundly divided. One of the biggest cultural influences in America is social class, which is typically defined as a combination of educational attainment, income, and occupational reputation, as cited by Thompson, William and Hickey (2005). The social structure of the United States influences almost every cultural facet of everyday interactions and consumer behaviour. Different classes are correlated with various lifestyles, consumption habits, and values. Thorstein Veblen (1899), a pioneering sociologist and economist, for instance, asserted that people at the top of the social hierarchy partake in conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumerism.

For instance, northern European civilizations, particularly those of Britain, Ireland, and Germany, had a significant influence on American culture. Due to colonial relations with Britain, which helped spread the English language, judicial system, and other cultural legacies, British culture had a formative impact. Various significant impacts originated in other regions of Europe. The American society was impacted by several wars in the past centuries and immigration until this present time, which led to have its own various characteristics that guide its society and

distinguish it from other societies. According to Martin Halliwell, as he mentioned in *American Thought and Culture in the 21ˢᵗ Century:*

> American culture in often characterized in terms of its plurality and eclecticism. The diversification of cultural forms, particularly in visual and digital media and broader horizons about what constitutes cultural production have contributed to an environment in which being black, poor, female or gay no longer stands in the way of talent or strength of vision (Halliwell, 2008, p. 211).

This implies that, the diversity in American culture is increasing due to the diverseness and the change of cultural forms and wider perspectives on cultural creation. He also added that: "…diversification of cultural forms is still very much part of American and global culture..." (Halliwell, 2008, p. 211), which emphasize on his first point about the cultural diversification, whereas this change brought several different values and characteristics to the contemporary American society.

In *American Ways: An Introduction to American Culture*, written by Mary Ann Kearny, Edward N Kearny and Crandall (1998), the definition of American cultural values—the six fundamental American cultural values and characteristics of the contemporary American society—was first presented; It explores the moral framework that enabled the US to absorb millions of immigrants from various cultures and forge an irreplaceable, national identity. There are three sets of values:

- Individual Freedom and Self-Reliance.

- Equality of Opportunity and Competition.

- The American Dream and Hard Work.

This indicates that, Individual Freedom, and Self-Reliance mean that if we are unable to care for ourselves and maintain our independence, we cannot genuinely be free. Competition, which is for

Equal Opportunity imply that we must compete if everyone has an equal opportunity of success. The possibility for a better life and a greater standard of living, sometimes known as The American Dream, is the third. The American Dream has historically come at a cost: hard work.

On the other hand, L. Robert Kohls in his book *The Values Americans Live By* (1984), explains the values and the characteristics that guide the American society, where he said:

> Although Americans may think of themselves as being more varied and unpredictable than they actually are, it is significant that they think they are. Americans tend to think they have been only slightly influenced by family, church or schools (Kohls, 1984, p. 01).

Thus, in his book *The Values Americans Live By* he gave a list of different values and characteristics which influence each American individual to form and build his own perspective, personality and most importantly his psychology, such as:

1.2.1   Personal Control over the Environment

In the United States, there is a widespread belief that individuals have the power to control their destiny, and the idea of Fate is often dismissed as primitive and backwards. Americans value the idea of controlling their environment, and the notion of humans being powerless to achieve certain things is often rejected. This mindset has driven Americans to achieve great feats, such as sending a man to the moon, despite immense challenges and costs. In essence, Americans have a strong drive to accomplish what others may deem impossible, and they view the idea of limitations as a challenge to be overcame (Kohls, 1984, p. 02).

1.2.2   Change and Mobility

In the minds of Americans, change is unquestionably a good thing. Development, enhancement, improvement, advancement, and expansion are all closely related to change. Such societies embrace stability, continuity, tradition, and a rich and old legacy instead of change — all of which are not highly prized in the US.

Together with an American belief in the virtue of hard work and the belief that each individual has a responsibility to do the best he or she can do, these first two values — the belief that we can do anything and the belief that any change is good — have helped Americans achieve some great accomplishments (Kohls, 1984, p. 02).

1.2.3   Equality and Egalitarianism

One of the principles that Americans hold most dear is equality. Americans place such a high value on this idea that they have even given it a religious foundation. They claim that everyone was created equal. The majority of Americans think that regardless of intelligence, physical health, or socioeconomic standing, God views all people equally. This conviction is transformed into the secular idea that everyone has an equal chance to thrive in life.

To precise, around 7/8 of the world experiences things very differently. Even though they personally end up near the bottom of the social scale, they view position, status, and power as much more desirable factors. People in those other civilizations appear to feel secure and certain because of class and authority. Outside of the United States, people find it comforting to know their identity and place in the complicated system known as society from birth (Kohls, 1984, p. 03).

1.2.4   Individualism, Independence and Privacy

The American individualism of the 20th century is the most extreme example of the individualism that has emerged in the western world since the Renaissance, which began in the late 15th century. Each person is viewed as being fully and fabulously different from every other person in society.

Americans overestimate their level of individualism in their thinking and behaviours. As an example, it is common in the American society, mostly every individual at the age of eighteen, seeks to have his independence and privacy by moving out from his family house, searching for time to be alone and to be themselves. As a result, Americans are seen to be self-centred and sometimes isolated and lonely.

Additionally, the ultimate product of individualism, which is privacy, may be harder for a stranger to understand. In many languages, the word "privacy" does not even exist. If it does, it probably has a very bad meaning, implying loneliness or exclusion from the group. In the US, privacy is not only regarded as a much desired state but also as a prerequisite that all people would find equally important, appealing, and rewarding (Kohls, 1984, p. 03).

1.2.5   Self-Help

In the United States, a person can only claim credit for actions that they took on their own. Americans receive absolutely no benefit from being born into a wealthy family. (That would be referred to as "an accident of birth" (Veblen, 1899), in the US). Americans take great pride in the fact that they overcame a difficult ladder of failure to reach whatever level they have thanks to their own sacrifice and hard work.

As it is mentioned in the previous value, they tend to choose the individual life, and build their career by their own, without getting help from their families and their status, which more

likely helps to build a strong personality and psychology of the individual, either in a good way or a bad one (Kohls, 1984, p. 04).

1.2.6   Competition and Free Enterprise

Americans firmly think that everyone performs at their best when they are competing. They claim that it pushes or compels everyone to produce their best work humanly conceivable. However, a lot of American Peace Corps volunteers who worked as teachers in Third World nations also found the absence of competition in the classroom to be upsetting. They quickly discovered that what they had believed to be a trait shared by all people was actually a distinctively American (or Western) characteristic.

In the same way, competitions' value has created the free economic market system to support it. Americans have a strong belief that a highly competitive economy will bring out the best in its citizens and that, in the end, a society that encourages competition will advance the fastest (Kohls, 1984, p. 04).

1.2.7   Future Orientation

Since Americans place a high value on the future and the changes, they are confident it will bring about, they disregard the past and are largely unaware of the present. Because Americans have historically believed that the future would bring even greater bliss. Almost all effort is focused on bringing about that brighter future. The current situation is, at best, viewed as a precursor to a later and more significant occurrence that will finally result in something much more valuable. Thus, Americans are particularly skilled in organizing and carrying out short-term projects because they have been raised to believe that "Man", not "Fate", can and should control the environment (in characteristic #1). As a result, Americans are now appreciated wherever on the world to plan and accomplish the wonders that their goal-setting is capable of.

Furthermore, this workaholic syndrome causes to the American society and the Americans to be more tense and have less time to relax. Thus, they tend to have some mental health issues as well as psychological disorders (Kohls, 1984, p. 04).

1.2.8   Informality

Americans believe that formality is "un-American", and a sign of arrogance and superiority. It is generally shown in the way they call each other by their first names in the work places, their greetings expressions, and also their dressing style. For instance, the informality within the American society may seem normal and a way of living, thus, through the passing decades, it can cause such a dangerous inequality that will lead later on to disrespect within the community. This latter, causes some serious social and moral issues (Kohls, 1984, p. 05).

1.2.9   Directness, Openness and Honesty

In contrast to many other countries that have developed subtle and often highly ritualistic ways of delivering bad news or negative evaluations, Americans tend to prefer the direct approach. Unlike cultures that rely on indirect communication, Americans are typically straightforward and honest in their delivery of unpleasant information. If you come from such a culture that uses a more indirect approach to conveying negative evaluations, you may find Americans' bluntness shocking.

In American culture, any communication that is not direct and open is perceived as insincere and dishonest. Americans place a high value on clear and straightforward communication, and they tend to lose confidence and trust in individuals who use hints or intermediaries to convey their message instead of stating it outright. Using intermediaries to deliver a message is viewed as manipulative and untrustworthy in the United States (Kohls, 1984, p. 06).

1.3 Social Cultural Psychology

According to Jennifer Walinga and Charles Stangor (2010) in *Introduction to Psychology*, "Psychology is the scientific study of mind and behaviour. The word 'psychology' comes from the Greek words 'psyche' meaning life, and 'logos' meaning explanation" (p. 06). In this part, we will mainly focus on "the Social-Cultural Psychology", which is — the study of how the social situations and the cultures in which people find themselves influence thinking and behaviour are affected by their environment and their social norms. — For instance, an important aspect of social-cultural psychology are social norms —the ways of thinking, feeling, or behaving that are shared by group members and perceived by them as appropriate (Asch, 1952; Cialdini, 1993). In particular, social-cultural psychologists are interested in how individuals view themselves and others, as well as how people affect one another's behaviour.

For fact, social psychologists have discovered that we are drawn to people who share our interests and perspectives, according to Byrne (1969), and that by contrasting our views and attitudes with those of others, we form our own beliefs and attitudes, as cited by Festinger (1954), also we often shift our views and actions in order to more closely resemble the persons we care about. Furthermore Mesoudi (2009), claimed that: "Cultures influence every aspect of our lives, and it is not inappropriate to say that our culture defines our lives just as much as does our evolutionary experience", which means the culture we live in is a major factor to form our behaviours, the way we perceive and interact with others.

1.3.1 Definition of Psychology

Professor Ladd (1895) defines psychology as "the description and explanation of states of consciousness as such" (p. 01). Emotions, wants, feelings, perceptions, reasoning, choices, desires, and other such phenomena are meant by states of consciousness. The examination of their causes, circumstances, and immediate causal sequences, to the extent that these can be determined, must

of course be a part of their explanation. As it is claimed by William James (1890), "All mental states (no matter what their character as regards utility may be) are followed by bodily activity of some sort" (p. 05). This emphasis that the mental state of each individual will affect him in each of his actions and the way he interrupts with others. For instance, our circulatory health affects our moods and decisions more so than our logical foundations do.

Furthermore, unusual thoughts, feelings, and behaviours define psychological diseases as conditions. It can be difficult, but it is critical that psychologists and other mental health practitioners agree on the kinds of behaviours and interior experiences that indicate the presence of a psychological condition. The presence of a condition may be indicated by abnormal or out-of-character behaviours and inner sensations; nevertheless, each one of these signs is insufficient on its own. The idea that psychological diseases are brought on by an internal mechanism's failure to carry out its intended role is known as harmful dysfunction (Wakefield, 1992). The official description of psychological illnesses by the APA (American Psychological Association) now includes many of the traits of detrimental dysfunction conceptualization. This definition states that the existence of a psychological disorder is indicated by significant disturbances in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. These disturbances must reflect some form of dysfunction (biological, psychological, or developmental), must significantly impair one's life, and must not correspond to culturally expected responses to particular life events, "social psychologists focus on how people conceptualize and interpret situations and how these interpretations influence their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours" (Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

Likewise, individuals are affected by their environments, the society they are living in and its characteristics and norms, his historical and childhood background, all this and more can be the reason of having psychological disorders and illnesses, that will be shown in the way the individual faces any situation in his life. Today's American society, is touched by several psychological illnesses that impact how people interact and influence one another's thoughts, feelings, and

behaviours in negative ways, whether this influence is between the person and itself (man against himself), or persons among themselves (man against man).

In addition, more than half of those suffering from mental illness do not obtain treatment. People frequently put off or postpone seeking therapy out of fear of being treated unfairly or out of concern for their livelihood. This is due to the fact that stigma, discrimination, and prejudice against those who have mental illnesses are still major issues (Wang et al, 2005). In this part, we will discuss some of the major psychological problems that are common in the whole world in general, and the contemporary American society in particular. These problems and situations faced by the individual might seem usual and standard, yet, they will affect him in the long term in several ways.

1.3.2 Gender-Based Violence

An enormous problem, gender-based violence (GBV), is frequently committed by those who have more material, cultural, or social clout and inflicted upon those who lack it. It is a reflection of the unequal power dynamics produced by the binary gender system. Thus, a dangerous and unjust power dynamic that manifests in violent physical, verbal, or psychological aggression and affects an alarming percentage of the population has been produced by the close association of violence with masculinity (Kabeer, 2016).

Even though GBV affects anyone who suffers abuse because of their gender, some groups are more severely impacted than others. According to a study on GBV; "One in every three women in the world has been beaten, forced to have sex, or subjected to some other form of abuse" (Acosta et al, 2018, p. 02). In general, it was observed between all of these cases that social relations are what determine violence, as violence;

> derives from hegemonic social values, which naturalize inequalities between men and women and their roles, giving man greater power in relationships, which often

justifies the oppression/submission of women. Therefore, this asymmetry of power in the relations present in society is one of the determinants of gender violence (Costa et al, 2017).

In light of this, GBV will be specified for this scope to comprehend "any act ... that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering ... including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (De Ferrante, 2009, p. 288). According to Holmes (2007), there are biological differences between men and women that affect sex. Gender, on the other hand, is a distinction formed in society between being feminine and masculine. These gender disparities may lead to injustice and violent behaviour (Holmes, 2007, p. 02).

Furthermore, violence can take the form of violence towards one specific sex brought on by gender differences and is defined as an attack or invasion (assault) on the bodily and psychological integrity of a person (Fakih, 2013, p. 17). In addition, violence against women is both very widespread and frequent. He claimed that patriarchal society was a contributing factor to violence against women. In this instance, men control women's bodies and social institutions.

Meanwhile, women's marginalization, subordination, stereotypical attitudes, workload, and violence are examples of injustices resulting from gender discrimination, according to Noorkasiani (2007, pp. 96-97). In general, violence due to gender differences is normally referred to as gender-based violence (Soul City Institute for Social Justice, 2016, p. 02, Ellsberg and Heise, 2005, p. 11, Fakih, 2007, p. 17).

In the meantime, Fakih (2007, pp. 17–20) clarified that there are numerous types and forms of crime that can be classified as gender violence, including rape of women, even marital rape, beatings and physical attacks that occur in the home (domestic violence), forms of torture that lead to genital mutilation, prostitution, violence in the form of pornography, violence in the

form of forced sterilization in family planning (enforced sterilization), violence in the form of sexual assault, and also violence in the form of emotional harassment.

1.3.2.1 Domestic Abuse

Domestic violence or abuse is a severe socio-pathological phenomenon that occurs in people's homes and private lives — the homes and lives of the violent actors. It may be committed between spouses, partners, or other family members. The cyclicality of violence, which refers to the fact that violent occurrences repeat again and alternate with periods of relative well-being and a picture of a pleasant family life with periods of violence in any form, is a significant phenomenon that happens in domestic violence. "We call aggression any deliberate action whose motive is to cause harm, guilt or pain to someone or something in an open or symbolic form" (Jeno, 1982, p. 82).

Furthermore, anger, fear, retaliation, and hostility are just a few examples of the negative emotions and feelings that strongly influence violent behaviour. Battles, insults, injuries, murders, even partial rape, property damage, or destruction are examples of how this conduct presents itself.

In recent years, the gender-sensitive term "violence in couples" (Libáková, Bosá, 2017) has appeared. Violence is typically associated with physical violence in the general population. Harm, dominance, misuse of power, threats, physical, mental, and sexual coercion are all examples of violence. Meanwhile, abuse may not always include physical harm. In addition, Baranová (2004) states that "domestic violence, especially against women, transcends the boundaries of all classes, cultural barriers and occurs in all economic and social and other structures" (p. 13).

On the other hand, concerning children living in an abusive house and witnessing different acts of violence, can affect them more than receiving these acts. This will cause the growth of

some negative feelings toward either the abusive parent or both parents (Jaffe, 2015). According to R.Bari Flowers (2000) : "Children have long been viewed as unequal to adults in society and therefore subject to various acts of cruelty and exploitation" (pp. 09-10), which means physical abuse is generally used as a form of discipline whether from their families or from the society, children are often neglected.

As a result, domestic violence affects people of all genders; it can also affect the children of abused moms. The abuse is witnessed by the children as they grow up, whether they "merely" overhear it or really see it. Children who grow up in homes where there is violence, according to Harne and Radford (2008), "are more likely to be fearful and anxious than other children" (p. 58).

Thus, for children growing in an abusive house or living with an abusive partner, it is a challenging task to face the society. In addition, living under such circumstances and accepting these acts of violence, while remaining silent, will cause also to this victim some serious psychological illnesses and social problems. Thus, there will always be a circle of abuse and violence (Ybarra & Wilkens, 2013).

1.3.2.2 Intimate Partner Violence

Any form of violence—physical, sexual, or psychological harm—is referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV). Abuse between people in an intimate relationship is referred to as intimate partner violence; boyfriends, girlfriends, and spouses—both living and deceased—can all be intimate partners. Abuse can occur physically, sexually, or emotionally, among other ways. A lot of the time, emotional abuse and threatening and controlling behaviours go hand in hand with the committed physical violence. In addition, males often use intimate partner violence to control their partners' sexual behaviour (Buss & Malamuth, 1996; Daly & Wilson, 1982; Wilson & Daly, 1988) and the only way to understand it is a behavioral result of male sexual jealousy. In the same

context, Fakih (2013) stated that there are numerous types of crime that can be classified as gender violence, including rape of women, including marital rape, beatings and physical assaults that take place in the home (domestic violence), forms of torture that result in genital mutilation, prostitution, violence in the form of pornography, forced sterilization in family planning (enforced sterilization), and violence in the form of molestation (pp. 17-20), which summarize the definition of Intimate Partner Violence.

Furthermore, the estimated yearly rate of IPV among Americans aged 12 and older has decreased by 64% between 1994 and 2010, from 9.8 to 3.6 victimizations per 1,000 people, according to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs. In contrast to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey in 2010, IPV, sexual assault, and stalking affect millions of Americans each year. In fact, according to recent estimates, 20 people are physically abused by an intimate partner every minute. Additionally, according to the National Crime Victimization Survey and the most recent findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Study (NIPSVS), about one in ten American women had been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetimes. Furthermore, the difficulty in lowering IPV incidence stems in part from the abuse's secrecy, the silent nature of its effects in the victims, and its "syndemic" (Singer, 1996) connection to other public health issues like depression and other mental illnesses, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted infections.

Moreover, there are many intricate interactions between socioeconomic conditions and IPV. Low income, financial stress, and poverty are all listed as risk factors for IPV by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (World Health Organization, 2002; Anstey, 2013). Additionally, it has been observed, according to Abramsky (2011), that the risk for IPV declines by up to 72 percent as socioeconomic class raises. The three types of IPV harm that have previously been used to characterize it are as follows: physical, sexual, and emotional abuse brought on by violence, threats of force, or other violent methods,

such as stalking (Saltzman, et.al, 2002).

1.3.2.2.1 Physical Violence

Throughout all social and economic levels, violence against women and girls is a widespread phenomenon and a severe public health issue. Violence against women is the most ubiquitous human rights violation we are aware of today; it destroys lives, shatters communities, and halts progress. There is violence in our neighbourhoods, families, workplaces, schools, colleges, and other institutions. According to statistics, at least one in three women worldwide has experienced physical abuse at some point in their lives, and the abuser is almost always someone she knows (General Assembly, 2006). Thus, with very serious and long-lasting effects on women's physical, mental, psychological, social, and reproductive health, violence against women is a significant risk factor for their health (Campbell, 2002). According to estimates, about 40 to 52 percent of American and Mexican women who had intimate partners reported physical abuse (Campbell, Soeken, 1999).

Whenever women are subjected to physical violence, it usually results in serious injuries, and occasionally death, due to kicking, biting, slapping, beating, or choking. However, the abuse that women experience is typically covered up by the abusers, as well as by the legal system and mental health specialists. The abusers routinely downplay and deny the harm they do to their relationships and/or accuse the victims of inciting the violence through their actions. In addition, battered women are viewed by psychologists and psychiatrists as labile, narcissistic, and malingerers, which obscures the violence and its extensive repercussions in their assessments because these professionals are typically unfamiliar with the dynamics of domestic violence. Because they ignore the violence that drove them to take the action in the first place, mental health practitioners frequently blame battered mothers who try to protect their children from violent fathers for leading to parental alienation.

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the worst types of human rights abuse, the issue is made more difficult by its alleged connections to family honour, dignity, respect, and position. It is this silence that empowers the offenders and normalizes violence in familial and gender relations because it is brought on by the complete experience of violence as well as the fear of other acts of violence. The seriousness of this act is evidenced by global data from the World Bank Report (2019), which states that one in three women may experience violence in their lifetime. Further, 38 percent of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. In addition, male violence against women, especially in family and personal relationships, has generally been termed 'private' violence. Intimate partner abuse, which is the most prevalent form of family violence and violence against women, has received extraordinary policy attention in recent decades (World Health Organisation 2013).

Male violence against women, especially against intimate partners, has always been seen as separate, less relevant, and distinct from violence against strangers and the general public (Scutt, 1990, pp. 445-462). Furthermore, physical abuse and violence is linked with the mental health and the psychology of both the abuser and the victim.

1.3.2.2.2 Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is defined as any form of harmful or non-consensual sexual act or behaviour inflicted upon an individual. It encompasses a wide range of acts that violate a person's autonomy, bodily integrity, and sexual rights. Sexual violence is described according to World Health Organization (2011) as:

> any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

In both developed and developing nations, sexual violence against women raised throughout these years. Even though prevalence decreases with age, it nevertheless exists in elderly women. Violence against women can, in the worst situations, result in death as cited by the World Health Organization (2013). Additional instances of sexual violence may take the form of being denied the right to use contraception or to take other precautions against sexually transmitted illnesses, rape in marriage, attack against people of the same gender, pornography, peeping toms, hidden cameras, incest, groping, etc (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Centre; and Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Violence). As it is usually common between people that sexual violence always happens with injuries and physical violence also, Hakimi (2001) claims that Sexual assault can occur on occasion without physical violence. Additionally, Lamichhane (2011) stated that Sexual violence severely curtails women's ability to exercise their sexual and reproductive autonomy.

Furthermore, in 2005 the World Health Organization confirms that it was estimated that 12 million people worldwide experience sexual abuse each year, despite the fact that the victims tend to keep it secret. This can lead to many serious impacts, including behavioural and psychological issues, sexual dysfunction, marital issues, low self-esteem, despair, suicidal thoughts, alcohol and drug misuse, and sexual risk-taking (Worku, Addisie, 2002). Thus, to understand more this kind of abuse in the frame of Intimate Partner Violence, it is necessary to highlight some terms such as; Marital Rape.

1.3.2.2.2.1 Marital Rape

The crime of Marital Rape, also called Spousal Rape, refers to a sexual act committed against one's own spouse without their consent. The majority of the world's nations consider it to be a form of sexual and domestic abuse. One dangerous and frequent type of abuse against women is rape in marriage. While the legal definition of marital rape differs from state to state in the United States, it can be summed up as any unwelcome (vaginal, anal, or oral) penetration achieved through force, the threat of force, or when the wife is unable to consent (Bergen, 1996; Pagelow, 1992; Russell,

1990). In addition, with the idea that the dynamics of sexual violence in a long-term cohabiting relationship are comparable to those of a married couple, the majority of studies on marital rape have included couples who are legally married, separated, divorced, or cohabiting (Mahoney & Williams, 1998). Thus, only after the 1970 Women's movement, which was led by feminists who asked that the legal system on marital rape be altered, did marital rape become legally recognized as a horrible crime (Basile, 1999).

Furthermore, the majority of researchers who study marital rape concur that raping a spouse is a violent act; it is an abuse of power used by a husband to try to dominate and control his wife. According to a 2013 United Nations survey, nearly one-fourth of 10,000 men interviewed in six Asia-Pacific nations admitted to having sexually assaulted a female partner. According to studies, between 10 to 14 percent of married women today report being raped by their husbands. Moreover, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2013), states that: "Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape". The number of wives who are sexually assaulted by their husbands is 40 times higher than the number of women who are attacked by men they don't know. Hence, we should consider if we actually inhabit the twenty-first century. The patriarchal system we currently adhere to, in which women are merely considered as things and objects, is not a recent development. According to Fakih's theory (2013), he claimed that violence against women including non-physical harassment, the body of a woman is considered as an object in this brutality for personal gain.

On the other hand, besides the physical injuries that can go with the Marital Rape, also serious psychological repercussions are also prevalent for women who have been sexually assaulted by their relationships. Anxiety, shock, severe terror, sadness, suicidal thoughts, and post-traumatic stress disorder are a few of the short-term repercussions of marital rape. Disordered eating, trouble sleeping, depression, difficulties building trustworthy relationships, and an increase in self-doubt are just a few of the long-term impacts. Long-lasting psychological impacts are

probably possible. Years after the abuse, some survivors of marital rape describe flashbacks, sexual dysfunction, and emotional agony.

On top of everything else, whereas a woman is compelled to live with the attacker day in and day out for an extended length of time and is unable to find sanctuary elsewhere, marital rape is far more cruel, emotionally traumatic, and destructive.

1.3.2.2.3 Psychological and Mental Violence

To begin with, any behaviour meant to humiliate, exclude, or control a partner is considered emotional or psychological abuse. By restricting victims' access to resources and social contacts, fostering physical and emotional dependence, and lowering victims' perceptions of their own value, competence, and worth, emotional abuse aims to put them under control. The following are examples of emotional abuse: isolation of the victim; control of social and family contacts; denial of access to finances or transportation; extreme jealousy and possessiveness displayed; behaviour monitoring; accusations of infidelity; threats of harm to the victim's family, children, or friends; threats of abandonment or infidelity; damage to or destruction of property, and harassment or forcing the partner to do something that she is not convinced with. In US literature, psychological and emotional abuse—whether physical abuse happens or not—is occasionally distinguished from "psychological violence," which only occurs in conjunction with physical assault (O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001). Thus, according to Loring (1994), psychological abuse is "an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another" (p. 01), which means psychological violence's main aim is not to cause harm or injuries for the victim rather it leaves some serious mental illnesses, personality disorder, lack of self-esteem, and various other psychological diseases.

Additionally, Murphy and Cascardi (1999) defined psychological abuse as "coercive or aversive behaviours, not including physical force or threat of harm", which are "intended to produce emotional harm and which are directed at the target's sense of self" (p. 09). Whereas, Tolman (1999) described psychological abuse in terms of the victim's isolation, the perpetrator's

dominance, and the victim's verbal or emotional abuse. For instance, Millar (1995) suggested that emotional abuse includes words and deeds meant to erode the victim's feeling of value and self-respect. Its objective is to compromise the victim's own logic and reasoning. In other words, the abuser gives the victim the impression that they are going crazy. In a research conducted in Germany, survivors described psychological abuse as a sort of brainwashing that alienated them from their own emotions and experiences, destroyed their self-confidence, and left them feeling as though they were going mad (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, 2004). Furthermore, A Council of Europe report (2011) defined 'psychological violence' as "reiterated words and acts aimed at or having the consequence of causing harm or putting the victim in a position of subjugation", confirming psychological abuse can come in a variety of forms, including verbal abuse, yelling, threats, harassment, intimidation, constant criticism, blaming, name-calling, insults, ridicule, imitating, and publicly humiliating the victim, isolation of the victim, discouragement of any independent activities, and expecting the victim to engage in sexual activity she or he is uncomfortable with to demonstrate her or his love, according to Council of Europe (2011).

With all these definitions and more, we can say that the more damaging type of violence is psychological one. Women's dignity is directly impacted in this situation. We can discuss exclusion from friends and family, threats, false allegations, blackmail, and harassment. All of this is done to influence and manage the victim. Moreover, similarly to physical violence, psychological violence is used to assert authority and control over a partner (Lambert, 2016), which means that the main point of any kind of violence against women, is to show the male's dominance over them. In the same context Gondolf and Edward (2002) claimed that "due to visible wounds, physical abuse is easily identifiable. But emotional, verbal and psychological abuse are much harder to pinpoint, especially as many women hide it or do not even realize that what is happening to them should never happen", this violence has some serious impacts that cannot be recognized until it is too late, especially on the mental health of the victim. In addition, research

from Europe and other regions have repeatedly proven that psychological aggression has a negative impact on one's physical, mental, and sexual health.

All in all, violence is a traumatic accident that can occur to any individual with different forms. It begins with the domestic violence or abuse where the child from his very young age witnesses or lives as a victim all the kind of violence; it varies from insulting to beatings and attacks. It moves later on to another devastating kind of violence which is intimate partner violence, with the person they share together an intimate relation. Thus, the victim can suffer from several forms of violence; physical violence and cruelty followed by beatings, attacks, choking, slapping, kicking, etc. Furthermore, sexual violence is another form that can be faced by women in intimate relationship, where most of them were victims of marital rape. To add, psychological or mental violence, which is not always necessarily followed with any kind of injuries, it involves generally harassments, verbal abuse, yelling, name-calling, etc. The violence differs yet the consequence is the same, which will cost the mental health of victim, which they commonly suffer from psychological illnesses; lack of self-confidence, depression, trust issues, suicide and trauma.

1.4 Definition of Trauma

To begin with, Trauma is the mental body's reaction to mental harm. The unpleasant emotions and terrifying thoughts brought on by seeing or going through a traumatic incident are referred to as mental trauma. Some people are unable to process and deal with these feelings, but most people do so after some time. Trauma is a term used to describe situations and experiences that are highly upsetting. It also discusses how the incidents impacted the person. Trauma is frequently felt as both bodily and mental pain. It may induce fear, helplessness, and a lack of hope. Furthermore, the American Psychological Association (APA) defines trauma as the emotional reaction to a seriously bad experience. Even while trauma is a common response to a terrible incident, the effects can be so severe that they make it difficult for a person to lead a regular life. An intensely distressing incident that has a long-lasting effect on the victim's mental and emotional well-being

might result in trauma. There are many physical and violent traumatizing factors, but there are also psychological ones.

1.5 Trauma in Literature

Nonetheless, trauma theory has developed into a topic within literary studies over the past century, with numerous well-known critics and theorists including Cathy Caruth and Anne Whitehead. Trauma is defined by the fields of psychology and medicine. Previously, the word trauma has been used to describe physical injuries to a body. However, in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth, claimed that the term trauma now refers to psychological traumas rather than physical injuries in modern society, especially in the wake of Freudian psychoanalysis (p. 03).

Thus, researches indicate that the domestic violence and abuse is the main factor of having such a mental disorder. Furthermore, domestic abuse may include "a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour [...] Domestic violence is repetitive, life-threatening, and can destroy the lives of women and children" (Women's AID qtd. in Harne and Radford 4). As a result, domestic violence affects people of all genders; it can also affect the children of abused moms. The abuse is witnessed by the children as they grow up, whether they "merely" overhear it or really see it. Harne and Radford highlight that children who experience domestic violence "are more likely to be fearful and anxious than other children" (p. 58). In addition, Women, and men, who live with chronic domestic abuse regularly, go through true traumatic events, not just reliving it, whether it is physical or verbal assault.

As seen by Caruth, a person who experiences or survives trauma has to experience it more than once. In other words, the trauma is present not just in the setting in which it occurs, but also in the recurring recollections (p. 07). In contrast to a physical trauma, which can heal in a few days or weeks, this mental wound may take years to heal. Furthermore, In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub

cited that a traumatic incident is one that "has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (p. 69). Hence, trauma survivors are trapped in a cycle of trauma.

Moreover, Susan J. Brison in her chapter "*Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self*" (1999) discussed the value of trauma narratives. As cited by Brison, the traumatized survivor may be able to overcome the trauma by recounting the traumatic events (p. 40). Emotional writing, such as narrating the painful experience through letters, diaries, or storytelling, has been thoroughly studied and found to be helpful for trauma survivors.

All in all, the different types of violence discussed and mentioned above are the entire main factor for an individual to experience trauma in his lifetime. Thus, experiencing physical violence (domestic abuse), sexual (rape), or emotional violence (harassment) will lead directly to fill the victim with fear, lack of self-confidence, anxiety symptoms, and flashbacks of the lived events even after years. Furthermore, the injuries and scares caused by violence might heal within weeks, yet the psychology of the victim will not, the trauma can affect him in every detail of his life, and the decision he makes, and the way he interacts with others. In other words, it is important to seek professional help in order to overcome the negative thoughts, or to go for the traumatic narrative by writing down as a way of venting. This is why, for example, we find many authors publishing novels who deal with such topics; their traumatic experiences, as a form of highlighting this mental illness and generalising it between other victims.

1.6 Contemporary American Literature

One of the world's most diversified countries is the United States. With its vibrant 300 million-population, there are more than 30 million people who were born abroad and can speak a variety of languages and dialects. Every year, almost one million new immigrants arrive, many of them from Asia and Latin America. Similarly, modern American literature is dazzlingly diverse, fascinating, and changing. Fresh voices have emerged from a variety of backgrounds, questioning conventional wisdom and modifying literary traditions to fit shifting social norms. Moreover, literature is a really exquisite work of art that contains many different qualities. Generally

speaking, it is divided into many genres, writing styles, and sorts. Literature can be written as poetry, drama, or play scripts. Yet, the writing style may also vary depending on the genre of the piece; it may be romantic, humorous, or even horrifying. A very large list could result from differentiating literary works. Literature can also be classified according to ethnicity; examples include French literature, African literature, English literature, American literature, and so on.

1.6.1 Definition of Contemporary American Literature

Contemporary American Literature refers to the literary works published in the present time, during the 21st century in America. It contains literary explanation and expression, fiction and non-fiction, prose and poetry that are shared by the many different American ethnic groups, written by authors who demonstrate important traits that these groups share, as cited by Shell (2000). Furthermore, American literature, like other national literatures, was influenced by the history of the nation that produced it. For instance, literature and society are related and influence each other. In other words, American Literary works produced in the 21st century reflect the social norms and characteristics of the American society. Over the past century, there had been noticeable changes in the form and purpose of American literature. Literature has evolved to comment on, foresee, and reflect upon these changes as societies and our environment have altered.

Additionally, all the words and phrases that are intended to energize and inspire the intellect are considered to be literature. It captures the thoughts and emotions of individuals and is appealing in two ways: the literary style and subject. The literary style must be appealing to the reader and add to his knowledge base. The subject matter must be interesting to the reader in order to pique his attention. In other words, literature generally deals with society in some way, thus, society is the fellowship of human beings that the poet or writer seeks through communication, along with the publication of various literary works that deals with each contemporary social issue, such as: poets, plays, films, novels, autobiographies etc.

1.6.2 The Novel

Many researchers such as E.M Forster (1966), consider the novel as a "story-telling", which is one of the most important aspects of the novel (p. 33), this way of "story-telling" developed and reshaped through the centuries from the oral to the written tradition, creating many literary genres due to the influence caused by many factors. The novel is usually defined as a literary long written fictional work, typically published and released in the form of a book. The credit of the first novel in the history is associated with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* published in the early 18th century. Yet, in this context "fictional" or "fictive" does not have the same meaning as unreal. It merely implies that it is a creative recreation of the events or people rather than an exact replication. Due to this, some authors caution their readers that the novels they will tell have nothing to do with real people or events. Any resemblance to real people or events in his work is completely coincidental, as is the normal form of disclaimer. On the other hand, some authors earnestly declare that the specific tale they are going to tell is in fact based on real-life incidents involving a real person or people, or even based on their own experience, known as the autobiography, where the author tells actual events and stories from his own life in the form of fictional characters with different names.

This operation of realizing a novel traditionally written consists to have many criteria, "The novel differs from its previous forms because of its numerous characteristics. It is made of a plot, a setting and, most important, of a set of different characters" (Mouro, 2021, p. 07). As it is already mentioned the criteria for the novel are the plot, the setting and the characters. Besides these factors the most important one is the author, who is the reflection of the novel. In this research, we are going to have a further explanation and understand each of the previous terms.

1.6.3 The Characters

Characters in the novel are the most important part. They are the mirror of the writer; they reflect his thoughts and ideas. In this context, Forster (1966) refers to the characters by the word "people", emphasizing on the realistic side of the characters in the novel, the resemblance to normal human beings with a normal life (p. 51-90).

Different changes occurred to characterization to become the "people" reached in the novels nowadays. While talking about the importance of the characterization in the novel Henry James raises some questions: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character?" (Zabel in Mouro, 1975, p. 401), these interrogations show the power of the characterization in the novel, thus it is impossible to find a novel without characters.

From this perspective, Besant used the words 'men and women' in order to refer to male and female characters to show the rational aspects of the characters in the novel. Along the same lines, Wellek and Warren (1985) claim that "the simplest form of characterization is naming" (p. 219), giving characters names makes them more realistic and furnishes them with an identity. Generally speaking, the names given to the characters in the novel are symbolic and representative for the character's personality, it goes in coherence with the environment of the story, the time and the place. As well as the psychical appearance and description of the characters, although, some writers narrate while giving certain characters a personalized tone and way of talking, special words they often say, or expressions (Ibid, p. 219), this makes the reader getting through the novel and living it as a non-fiction story, which helps him imagine the characters as real humans. Moreover, the characters are linked with the writer; they are his reflection of the novel. For instance, many authors chose their characters based on real people, real events, and based on their own experience.

As a case, Colleen Hoover, in her novel *It Ends with Us* which was based on true events about her own experience with domestic abuse, mentioned that "This book is different. This was not for entertainment for me. It was the most gruelling thing I have ever written" (Hoover, 2016, p. 372). In addition, Hoover chose the characters of the novel, Lily Bloom and Ryle Kincaid based on the relation between her mother and father, in which she depicted her own tragedy through some fictional characters that represent her parents, that will be discussed and analysed in this research.

1.7 Psychology in Literature

Any literary work, whether it is American or not, will offer insights into psychology and explain why individuals act, think, and behave in certain ways. Thus, anyone can explore a wide variety of literary viewpoints from various cultures and historical eras by studying American literature. Psychology, on the other hand, advocates for everything we are and do, including biological effects, social forces, and environmental causes. Furthermore, psychology and literature both examine the human soul. While literature utilizes fiction to depict human behaviour, psychology explains human actions and their reasons. Reading literature can help you understand the human condition. The study of human behaviour in psychology and literature has connections and benefits for both disciplines.

With the aid of authors, artists, philosophers, psychiatrists, and psychologists, language is utilized as the medium of expression in literature so that one can analyse man, life and culture, personality, attitude, and individual differences that have continuously been explored and mentioned. Since they both deal with people, their behaviours, reactions, wishes, miseries, fears, desires, disputes, culture, individual differences, reconciliations, and social issues, psychology and literature have a strong relationship. To deal with the issues, they employ a few techniques and strategies.

In addition, contemporary American literature deals nowadays with topics and plots about psychological issues that are faced in the society, such as violence and trauma. Thus, writers help to portray these illnesses for the readers in particular and the society in general, in order to have a better understanding about what the victims are facing.

1.8 Conclusion

To sum up, the characteristics of contemporary American society play a significant role in shaping the occurrence of domestic abuse and the subsequent trauma experienced by survivors. Through

an examination of the different norms and characteristics of the American society, we begin to unravel the complex web of factors that contribute to this deeply troubling issue.

Ultimately, by acknowledging the impact of contemporary American society on domestic abuse and trauma, we take a crucial step towards creating a safer, more equitable society. Through a collective commitment to education, awareness, and the implementation of comprehensive solutions, we can work towards eradicating domestic abuse, supporting survivors, and fostering a society that values and nurtures healthy relationships, respect, and empathy, through publishing literary works that portray this psychological issue for a better understanding of what the victims are passing by.

Chapter Two: Abuse in *It Ends with Us*

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2.1 Introduction

It Ends with Us, a novel written by Colleen Hoover, delves into the complex themes of domestic abuse, resilience, and personal growth. Through the compelling story of Lily Bloom, the protagonist, the novel offers a poignant portrayal of the traumatic experiences endured by victims of abuse. As we delve into the psychoanalysis of Lily's journey, we unravel the intricate layers of her trauma, exploring the psychological dynamics and their profound impact on her sense of self and relationships.

At the heart of *It Ends with Us* lies the exploration of Lily's experiences with abuse, which leave deep emotional scars and shape her perception of herself and others. By examining these experiences through a psychoanalytical lens, we gain insight into the underlying psychological processes at play, shedding light on the complexities of trauma and its consequences.

Drawing upon psychoanalytical theories, including those developed by Sigmund Freud and contemporary theorists, we uncover the intricate interplay of unconscious desires, defence mechanisms, and the internalization of abusive patterns. Furthermore, we analyse the ways in which Lily's early life experiences, familial dynamics, and societal influences contribute to her understanding of relationships and her capacity to cope with the trauma she endures.

Additionally, it explores Lily's internal conflicts, her struggle to reconcile her emotions and desires, and the mechanisms she employs to protect herself from further harm. This psychoanalysis encompasses the exploration of unconscious motivations, the role of childhood experiences in shaping adult relationships, and the complex dynamics of power and control that underpin abusive relationships.

Moreover, the psychoanalytical exploration of *It Ends with Us* allows us to delve into Lily's journey of healing and self-discovery. We examine her process of reclaiming her agency, challenging ingrained patterns, and breaking free from the cycle of abuse.

2.2 Author's Biography

The novel *It Ends with Us*, written by Colleen Hoover, deals with the experience and struggle of the protagonist Lily Bloom. Hoover, was born on December 11st, 1979, she became one of the best writers according to the New York Times magazine with the title "The First New York Times Bestselling Author". Her works fall under the category of the new young adult and young adult fiction. Hoover was always interested in writing and publishing novels related to based-gender violence, abuse, rape, struggles of the female main characters, such as in *Hopeless, Losing Hope*, *Ugly Love*, *Confess*, *Maybe Someday* and many more. Furthermore, the way she captures domestic violence in *It Ends with Us* is intriguing. For one thing, it gives the reader a new perspective related to the issue. Thus, she described this novel, published in August 2nd, 2016 as "the hardest novel I have ever written", she claimed that the idea of the novel was based on her personal experience. Hoover was also a victim of domestic violence, she was indirectly in an abusive relationship, experienced by her mother, where she captured the character Lily as her mother and Ryle as her father, giving some of the actual incidents that happened between her parents a fictional style in her novel (Hoover, 2016, p. 369).

2.3 Novel's Summary

This novel is interesting to be studied since the issues and conflict in the plot of the story are very relevant to the cases that often occur in our society, like domestic violence and toxic relationships, which cause conflict in the victim's mind and lead to inner conflict. The inner conflict that happened to the main character, Lily Bloom, because of her trauma due to domestic violence happened to her both then and now.

Lily Bloom faced several psychological traumas in her teenage period by her father. She lived in an abusive house which made her witness the violent acts of her father against her mother. Soon, she became a victim of domestic violence. Thus, this made her a woman who hated her father, and because of that she kept her distance from her mother after refusing to divorce and leave her husband (Lily's father) and trying to survive the bad treatments and acts. Lily was a

pretty and smart girl and the daughter of the Mayor of the town where they lived, thus it was quite unbelievable that a man with such a high status would commit any act of violence towards his family. Lily had a bit difficult adolescence, where she had to limit her days between school and home, because she was forbidden to hang out with any friends. Lily could save herself by choosing to move out to Boston after her graduation, in order to seek for freedom and for a normal life away from her father and any forms of violence. Years later, she was on a rooftop, on the day of her father's funeral getting her thoughts together, where, she met Ryle Kincaid, a young handsome neurosurgeon. The two had connection right away, yet they wanted different things from relationships; Lily was seeking for a committed relationship and Ryle was not interested in that. Six months later, when Lily recruited Ryle's sister (Allysa) to work in her flower shop, she had just founded, the two were reunited after parting ways earlier.

The more time Ryle and Lily spent together, the more attracted they were to one another, and eventually Ryle overcame his initial reservations and decided to pursue a relationship with Lily. With the passing of her father, who had been abusive to her mother, Lily found herself reflecting on the past and seeking for closure. She searched through old notebooks she had written when she was 15 to discover it. Her interaction with Atlas Corrigan, an 18-year-old guy who was homeless, was described in those journals. When he was a young man without a home or family, Lily had the desire to help him, and the two grew close as a result of his support for her when she witnessed her father assaulting her mother.

Furthermore, Lily and Ryle's relationship seemed to be going great, and as they spent more time together and more integrated into one another's lives, their feelings only grew stronger. Thus, Atlas appeared in the picture again where Lily discovered that he was the owner of a restaurant where they had dinner. Yet Lily's bad experience with men did not stop only with her father, her life changes even more after finding herself stuck in an abusive relationship, where she faced violence in many forms; physical, sexual and psychological violence. Lily experienced also a series of inner conflicts; she was comparing herself to her mother after each incident with her

husband Ryle, which shows that Lily was still traumatised from her past experience. After giving Ryle several chances to change his attitude and convince her that his violence towards her was due to his temper, anger issues and his doubts that Lily was being unfaithful and she was having an affair with Atlas. Still, Ryle was apologetic after each incident and swore that it will not happen again, yet nothing changed and he even tried to rape her which was the drop that overflowed the cup. Furthermore, Lily found out that she was pregnant, where she had to decide to remain silent and stay as her mother did before, or to save her life searching for freedom away from him. Again, Ryle wanted her forgiveness another time after discovering about the pregnancy.

Eventually, she permitted him to help her throughout the last few months of the pregnancy by acting as a father. Lily accepted his assistance but would not commit to their relationship before the delivery. Lily realizes she does not want her daughter to grow up seeing cruelty after giving birth to a girl. With her and her mother, she made the decision that the cycle of abuse was over. Hence, *It Ends with Us* as the title. To end the cycle of domestic violence, she made the decision to divorce Ryle, when she says to her daughter: "It stops here. With me and you. It ends with us" (Hoover, 2016 p361), meaning she had the courage to break the cycle of violence and stop it before her daughter could experience it with her father Ryle, like Lily did before.

2.4 Domestic abuse

The novel *It Ends with Us*, explores the complex dynamics of domestic abuse in a romantic relationship. It depicts domestic violence in a sympathetic and realistic manner, highlighting the emotional suffering of both the abuser and the victim. Throughout the book, Lily's experience with her father was shown as she was reading her teenage diary. Moreover, Lily's father is portrayed as physically abusive towards her mother and emotionally abusive towards her, as it is mentioned: "My father was abusive. Not to me— to my mother" (Hoover, 2016, p. 16), while she witnesses their accidents every time, this makes lily a victim as well. Thus, this made her grow a feeling of rage and hatred towards her father. Yet despite her father's abuse, Lily still loves him, although she battles with her feelings for him, she talked several times about her feelings for him,

which were contradictory, as it is cited: "As his daughter, I loved him. But as a human, I hated him […] your parents must be real as****, one of them is. *Was*" (Hoover, 2016, p. 15), "People like my father are the problem" (Hoover, 2016, p. 118).

Furthermore, the way domestic violence is shown in Lily's relationship with her father highlights the intricate relationships and of maltreatment within families. Lily finds it difficult to comprehend and to forgive her mother for continuing to live with her abusive husband out of a sense of loyalty to her family, as she says:

> I swear, sometimes I get so mad at her for staying with him. I know I'm only fifteen and probably don't understand all the reasons she chooses to stay, but I refuse to let her use me as her excuse. I don't care if she's too poor to leave him and we'd have to move into a crappy apartment and eat ramen noodles until I graduate. That would be better than this (Hoover, 2016, p. 64).

Besides, the relationship between Lily and her father is an important aspect of the book since it shapes how she views love and relationships in general, Lily declares:

> I had never seen my father lift a finger in the kitchen. I'm pretty sure he wouldn't even know how to preheat our oven. I kind of thought most men were like that […] I'm not growing up in a household with a great example of how a man should treat someone he loves, so I've always held on to an unhealthy amount of distrust when it comes to relationships and other people. […] there have been times I've wondered if I could ever allow myself to trust a guy. For the most part, I hate men because the only example I have is my father (Hoover, 2016, pp. 147-148).

Growing up, Lily saw her father mistreating her mother, and each incident between them stuck and remained in her mind. She narrates each fight that happened in details, as such:

> I can hear him yelling at her right now […] He doesn't like to hit her when I'm in the room. Maybe I should go try that […] If I had access to a gun or a knife now,

> I'd kill him […] I saw him push her […] he backhanded her and knocked her straight to the floor. I'm pretty sure he was about to kick her, but he saw me walk into the living room and he stopped […] I could see the redness on her cheek from where he hit her (Hoover, 2016, pp. 64-65).

Lily's empathy and deep concern for her mother made her a violent person, as she was thinking of killing her father, yet she was ready to do anything to stop him. In addition, Lily's father is sensitively shown as abusing her, underlining the intricacy of the victim-abuser connection:

> My dad keeps his car in the garage and my mom keeps her in the driveway […] He started honking his horn because he was mad at my mom was parked in the garage […] why does my father always get the garage? […] my mother got that real scared look in her eyes when he started honking […] I heard a crash, and then I heard her scream […] He has her pushed down on the hood with his hands around her throat. He was choking her […] he was yelling at her, staring down at her with so much hatred (Hoover, 2016, pp. 109-110).

This reveals a power dynamic within the family, symbolized by her father consistently getting the privilege of using the garage, which shows the dominance of the abusers, as they get to take everything. As well, her father's aggressive behavior also instills a sense of loyalty and obligation in Lily, who feels responsible for protecting her mother from harm, she narrates:

> I started screaming at him. I jumped on his back and I hitting him on the side of his head. Then I wasn't […] I'm guessing he threw me off of him […] I was on the ground and my forehead hurt like you wouldn't believe […] I thought for sure this was the final straw. That she would leave him now that he had hurt me. That was the moment I realized that she'd never leave him […] I had nine stitches in my forehead (Hoover, 2016, pp. 110-111).

Lily attempts to intervene to protect her mother. However, the attempt quickly turns into a physical altercation where she is overpowered and injured. Yet, Lily never expected that her father would be able to hurt, her realization that her mother will never leave him even after witnessing the harm inflicted on her, reflects the complexity and challenges associated with domestic violence. Moreover, Lily's terrible childhood experiences with her father's abusive behavior are at the heart of her fear and mistrust of males, yet Lily's suffering did not stop only in witnessing the abuse her mother was getting, she was deprived from living a normal life a teenage can have. Her days were between home and school, where she could not have any friends or hang out with them, as she mentions:

> I also never really get to go to other people's houses but I'm not sure why. Maybe my father doesn't want me staying over at friends' houses because I might witness how a good husband is supposed to treat his wife. He probably wants me to believe the way he treats my mother is normal (Hoover, 2016, p. 104).

Additionally, this emphasizes the reasons for her father being cautious about his reputation, thus, her father's high status as the Mayor of Plethora played a huge role in the way he treats and interrupts with his family. He was trying to keep his name clear between people, as she says:

> My father is usually pretty cognizant of hitting her where it won't leave a visible bruise. The last thing he probably wants if for people in the town to know what he does to her. I've seen him kick her a few times, choke her, hit her on the back and on the stomach, pull her hair. The few times he's hit her on the face, it's always just been a slap, so the marks wouldn't stay for long (Hoover, 2016, p. 153).

Besides, her parents' relationship was defined by verbal and physical abuse. Lily's mother withdrew and became emotionally distant as a result of her alcoholic husband abusing her on a regular basis. Lily's mother tried to leave her marriage numerous times since she was unhappy, thus she finally stayed out of responsibility and a desire to keep the family together. Furthermore, this costs her to be pushed to the limits with him and the loss of her values and basics (Hoover,

2016, p. 335). Eventually, he came to the point to rape her, but she remained silent for the sake of keeping her family reunited, she explains:

> I heard him call her a whore and then I heard the first blow […] they were on the couch and he had his hand around her throat, […] she was trying to fight him off […] she kept begging him to get off her and then he hit her right across the face and told her to shut up […] my mother had warned me not to call the police in the past. She said it could jeopardize my father's career […] Mom, he was trying to rape you! (Hoover, 2016, pp. 153-156).

In this context, she added that after each incident between them he was apologetic even more, and tried to make up for both Lily and her mother, who made her think that it might be the last time and that he would eventually change, she says:

> When that happened, he would spend the next week or two making up for it. He would do things like buy her flowers or take us out to a nice dinner. Sometimes he would buy me stuff because he knew I hated it when they fought. When I was a kid, I found myself looking forward to the nights they would fight. Because I knew if he hit her, the two weeks that followed would be great (Hoover, 2016, p. 17).

Furthermore, Lily decided to seek for her freedom after her graduation away from her abusive father. The significant turning point in the story is Lily's path toward moving and escaping to Boston. Lily's decision to move away from her native Boston and begin a new life in another city is a representation of her desire to leave behind her a painful past and the toxic relationships that have restricted her, as she mentions: "After college I ended up moving to Boston […] because I had to see for myself if Boston was really better. […] and I wanted to get as far away from my father as I could" (Hoover, 2016, p. 218).

In addition, Lily's moving to Boston is a brave move that demonstrates Lily's resolution to get over her tragedy and build a brighter future for herself, thus, her decision is crucial since it

shows her readiness to accept chances and adapt to change. It demonstrates her character development as she learns to advocate for herself and pursue her goals in spite of the difficulties and setbacks she encounters.

Due to his past, Lily's feelings towards her father are complicated and nuanced, reflecting the pain and mental anguish she has gone through as a survivor of abuse, yet Lily experienced mixed feelings after knowing of her father's cancer diagnosis, as she claimed: "My father was diagnosed with cancer three years ago […] I was a bit relieved when my father became too ill to physically hurt my mother" (Hoover, 2016, p. 39).

Likewise, it is clear that Lily had not any feelings of attachments towards her father, since she was unable to give a eulogy at her father's funeral. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that she detested him. Instead, it is a reflection of her conflicted feelings for him and the difficulty she experiences in making sense of his past actions in light of the memories she holds onto, as she stated:

> I feel like eulogies should be delivered by those who respected the deceased. And I didn't much respect my father […] I stood up there for two solid minutes without saying another word. There wasn't great thing I could say about that man […] if I had my way, he would have been a much better person and I would have stood up there and talked for an hour (Hoover, 2016 pp. 19-20).

Ultimately, Lily moving to Boston represents a fresh start for Lily sees her move to Boston as a chance for a new beginning, an opportunity to get away from her abusive and controlling father and start over, where she met her beloved Ryle Kincaid.

2.5 Physical Abuse

The physical abuse that Lily experienced from her father includes being beaten, slapped, and kicked. He was also grabbing her and pulling her along while punishing her with severe and

humiliating punishments, as she says: "I'm guessing he threw me off of him" (Hoover, 2016, p. 110).

However, Lily met Ryle on the rooftop in the day of her father's funeral. When Lily and Ryle first meet, they fall in love right away. Ryle Kincaid is a well-known neurosurgeon who initially comes across as affable and compassionate. But as their romance develops, Lily starts to notice Ryle's dark side. He has a hard time controlling his rage and a propensity to strike out, which worries Lily more and more. Lily's bad experience with men did not stop with only her father when she moved away to Boston. Ryle's behaviour raises several warning signs from the beginning. Hence, he seems to have trouble controlling his emotions, especially in situations that make him angry, as she says: "the door was just shoved open so hard, I expect the stairwell to spit a human out onto the rooftop […] he spins around and kicks one of the patio chairs behind him […] he kicks the chair repeatedly over and over" (Hoover, 2016, pp. 04-06), she also mentions: "I knew Ryle has a temper. I saw it the first night we met" (Hoover, 2016, p. 245).

Initially portrayed as a loving and caring partner, Ryle progressively starts to mistreat Lily emotionally and physically. The first incident between Lily and Ryle occurred when Ryle burned his hand and Lily laughed, according to her: "I start laughing as soon as I realize he didn't even think to use a pot holder […] I'm still laughing as I lean over to get a look at Ryle's hand" (Hoover, 2016, p. 185), which made Ryle iratated and prompted him to lash out at her, it was another indicator of Ryle's proclivity for violence and his trouble managing his emotions, as she says:

> I'm instantly not laughing anymore. I'm on the floor, my hand pressed against the corner of my eye […] Ryle's arm came out of nowhere and slammed against me, knocking me backward […] I hit my face on one of the cabinet door handles as I came down (Hoover, 2016, p. 185).

Moreover, Ryle was apologetic and extremely sorry about what happened, and he asked for a chance to prove that it was only a mistake, yet his abusive behaviour and violence towards Lily continue even worst, under the guise of his extreme jealousy and his fear of losing her. The next

incident that occurred between them was more terrible and could get Lily's life in danger, as she claims:

> He's taking the stairs two at a time, and I finally reach him when he's at the landing of the second floor. I shove myself in front of him and grab his shirt in my fists […] He grabs my wrists and pushes me away from him […] 'You fell down the stairs' he says. […] But I didn't fall he pushed me. Again. That's twice (Hoover, 2016, pp. 230-231).

Lily and Ryle's relationship is marked by both love and violence, despite their difficulties; they remain profoundly in love and attempt to resolve their differences. Thus, just like her mother Lily decided to give him a third chance, in order to work their relationship out, and help him how to manage his temper, yet Lily was aware that her husband Ryle was hurting her, as she claims: "I'm in love with a man who physically hurts me. Of all people, I have no idea how I let myself get to this point" (Hoover, 2016, p. 281).

However, their relationship hits a breaking point as Ryle's fury grows violent and even worse with each chance she gives him, and she understands that she cannot continue to take the violence. The last incident that happened between them was the drop that overflows the cup for Lily, where he attacked her without giving her the chance to even explain herself. It was after Ryle found Lily's teenage diary, and reading about her first love Atlas, this made him consumed by jealousy. Ryle assaulted her and bit her in order to take her tattoo off, since he discovered it has to do with Atlas, as she says: "The pain from his teeth piercing my collarbone rips through my shoulder and down my arm" (Hoover, 2016, pp. 264-265).

Additionally, their relationship depicts the gradual escalation of abuse, from emotional manipulation and gaslighting to physical violence, and the impact it has on Lily's mental health and sense of self-worth, although, she was conscious that he was harmful, yet she was always afraid of losing him, as she explains: "He's going to leave me. Or he's going to hurt me" (Hoover, 2016, p. 230).

Overall, Lily was subjected to severe bodily and psychological harm as a result of Ryle's physical abuse; she sustains scratches and bruises as a result of Ryle's violent outbursts. Not only are these wounds painful, but they also act as a continual reminder of the trauma she experienced. In addition to the psychological and sexual abuse Lily endured from her spouse, which harmed her more than being physically hurt, the abuse had a significant emotional impact on her sense of self-worth and her capacity for trust.

2.6 Sexual Abuse

In *It Ends with Us*, Ryle violated her sexually during a fight in Colleen Hoover's book because he was envious. Lily is severely affected by the sexual abuse and finds it difficult to process what has happened (Hoover, 2016, pp. 265-275). She struggles between wanting to stand up for herself and not put up with this type of conduct and her love for Ryle. She also reevaluates her relationships and values as a result of the abuse, which brings up sad memories from her past, as she mentions: "All I can see when I squeeze my eyes shut is my mother crying on our old living room couch" (Hoover, 2016, p. 266).

Furthermore, there is no excuse or justification for sexual abuse, and Ryle's actions towards Lily cannot be excused or condoned, thus, the way Ryle behaved is suggested to be a result of his own psychological problems and emotional conflicts, such as his fear about commitment and his need for control. However, it is essential to understand that the sexual assault is never the victim's fault; therefore, Lily cannot be blamed for keeping the diary where she was narrating about Atlas. Ryle chose to treat her abusively, hence it is his responsibility to take accountability for his actions and seek help to address any underlying issues that may have contributed to his behavior (Hoover, 2016, pp. 280-284).

Additionally, Lily first found it difficult to accept the sexual assault she endures at Ryle's hands. She initially tries to explain away his actions and takes responsibility for what transpired; believing that perhaps she gave him mixed signals or led him on. Lily eventually makes the decision to put her own security and wellbeing first and separates from Ryle after he physically

attacks her. Although she finds it difficult to make this choice, she knows she cannot continue to be in a relationship with someone who has the potential to physically and sexually abuse her. Yet as time passes, Lily starts to see the abuse for what it is and understands that Ryle's behaviour was not her fault. She struggles with the prospect of breaking up with Ryle as she feels increasingly conflicted about her affections for him, especially given that she admires him and is aware of his difficult past.

Moreover, Lily struggled to make a decision about her relationship, especially when she realized that she was pregnant, in the end, she decided to take action to protect herself and her baby, as well to stop the cycle of violence. Her experience serves as a testament to the value of self-love, establishing boundaries, and defending oneself against abuse, as she says: "my mother went through it. I went through it. I'll be da**ed if I allow my daughter to go through it. I kiss her on the forehead and make her a promise. "It stops here. With me and you. It ends with us" (Hoover, 2016, p. 361).

2.7 Psychological Abuse

Lily, the protagonist of the novel faced psychological abuse first from her father throughout her childhood. As she was a victim of domestic abuse, Lily's father physically and verbally abused her mother, and he also emotionally manipulated and gaslighted Lily. Thus, the psychological abuse that Lily faced was insidious and had a profound impact on her self-esteem and relationships as an adult.

In Addition to the physical abuse Lily faced from Ryle, she was also a victim of psychological abuse which was as damaging as physical hurt, and had a profound impact on her self-esteem and mental health, as she claims after each incident that happened between them: "The realization of what just happened hurts worse than the actual action […] I'm hurting so much on the inside" (Hoover, 2016, pp. 187-188), Lily explained that the physical hurt and pain is nothing compared to the harm she was feeling from inside, as she says: "No physical pain could even compare to what my heart is feeling in this moment" (Hoover, 2016, p.231), as well she

emphasized that the emotional abuse cannot be healed, contrary to the physical one, as she explains: "she can't fix all the parts of me Ryle broke on the inside" (Hoover, 2016, p. 271). Moreover, Lily faced a series of different types of psychological abuse, yet they all lead to the same consequences that a victim can feel.

2.7.1 Gaslighting

It is a form of psychological manipulation in which an individual or group intentionally undermines someone's perception of reality. According to the American Psychological Association (2020):

> gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse that involves the abuser denying the victim's perceptions of reality, memory, and sanity in an effort to manipulate and control them. This can cause the victim to feel confused, anxious, and uncertain about their own thoughts and feelings, leading to a loss of confidence and self-esteem. (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Moreover, this involves manipulating someone into questioning their own memory, perception, or sanity. An abuser may deny events or make the victim feel like they are crazy or irrational. In the novel *It Ends with Us*, we notice that Lily was gaslighted by her husband Ryle, in the second incident that occurred between them, where he pushed her down the stairs, and claimed that she fell off after she regained consciousness, as she says: "He grabs my wrists and pushes me away from him […] 'you fell down the stairs' he says. 'You're hurt' […] I close my eyes again and try to remember why he's angry […] but I didn't fall he pushed me" (Hoover, 2016, pp. 230-231). Ryle's denial of the incident made Lily feel even more crazy, as he made her doubt her own memory, yet this was not the only time where he used such tactics of psychological abuse, which is the most damaging.

2.7.2 Humiliation

It refers to the act of deliberately causing someone to feel ashamed, degraded, or embarrassed. It involves actions or words intended to undermine a person's dignity, self-worth, or social standing. According to the American Psychological Association (2020):

> Humiliation is an emotion that arises when a person feels that they have been degraded, shamed, or made to feel inferior by another person or group. It can be a form of emotional abuse that is used to control or dominate someone, and can lead to feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and depression. (American Psychological Association, 2020).

This signifies that it consists of putting someone down, criticizing their actions or beliefs, or making them feel small and insignificant. It can include name-calling, insults, and verbal attacks. Lily was humiliated by Ryle since the first time they met, as she claims: " 'If you live over there, why are you here? Your boyfriend live here or something'. His comment somehow makes me feel cheap" (Hoover, 2016 p10).

Furthermore, Lily was clear with him about her intentions in relationships, where she explained to him that she seeks for a serious engagement (Hoover, 2016, pp.21-23), thus their relationship's intentions and goals were different, yet Ryle insisted to push her limits and to change her mind using an extremely inappropriate way, he was insulting her to get to his aim, as she says: " 'I want to f*** you' […] 'you're beautiful. I'm a guy. If you were into one-night stands, I would take you downstairs to my bedroom and I would f*** you' " (Hoover, 2016, pp. 20-21), Ryle's comment affected Lily where she felt uncomfortable and ever shocked, as she claims: "I can't get over the fact that he just said that. Out loud. Maybe because he's a neurosurgeon and I never pictured someone so educated throwing around the word f*** so casually." (Hoover, 2016, p. 21). This shows Lily's surprise and disbelief at hearing him, particularly a neurosurgeon, using a profanity so casually. She felt ashamed after he told her such a word, which clearly affected her psyche.

2.6.3 Blaming

According to the journal "Psychology and Aging": "Blaming refers to the tendency to assign responsibility for a negative event to oneself or another person" (Birditt & Fingerman, 2005, p. 79), which means it is a cognitive process that involves assigning responsibility for a negative event or outcome to oneself or another person. It can be a natural response to situations in which we feel vulnerable or threatened, but it can also be a maladaptive coping strategy that perpetuates negative emotions and behaviours. In this context, Lily was a victim of blaming from Ryle against his bad reactions as well as his loss of control to his emotions.

For instance, in the first incident that happened between them, where Ryle burned his hand, he placed the blame on Lily, and all he cared about was his hand rather than him hurting Lily for laughing, she says: "'G****it, Lily,' I hear him say. 'It's not funny. This hand is my f***ing career'" (Hoover, 2016, p. 185). Additionally, Ryle blamed her for not being able to focus on his life and career, due to the thought of her and that he was thinking about her all the time, as she claims: "'Did you seriously just knock on twenty-nine doors so you could tell me that the thought of me is making your life hell and I should have sex with you so that you'll never have to think of me again?'" (Hoover, 2016, p. 70), Ryle was blaming her for being in a relationship, as she says: "I didn't want a relationship! I didn't want this stress in my life!" (Hoover, 2016, p. 200). This highlights the conflict between Ryle and Lily, regarding their differing expectations and desires within the relationship. Ryle's blaming attitude implies that he holds her responsible for the challenges or difficulties they are facing.

2.6.4 Manipulation

It refers to the act of controlling someone or a situation through cunning, deceptive, or exploitative means. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, which defines manipulation as:

> The action of manipulating or the state of being manipulated; skillful or artful
> management or handling, especially by artful, unfair, or insidious means, with a

view to gaining an advantage, controlling a situation, or influencing or directing the

behaviour of others (1989).

In other words, manipulation is the act of influencing someone or something in a clever or devious way, often with the intention of gaining an unfair advantage or achieving a particular outcome. It involves the use of tactics such as deception, coercion, or subtle persuasion to steer the behaviour or thoughts of others towards a desired end. Furthermore, Ryle was manipulating Lily's feelings from the beginning, since she felt like Ryle was unclear about his feelings toward her and that made her frustrated, where his actions were not the same as his words; Ryle was not into commitment and did not want any relationship, yet he was treating Lily as if they are dating:

> I can't tell what you want, Ryle! And every time I get to the point where I start not
> to give a s**t, you show up again out of the blue! You show up at my apartment
> door, you show up at parties stop flirting with me. […] Stop hanging pictures of me
> in your apartment. And stop sending me flowers. Because when you do those
> things, it doesn't feel *good*, Ryle. It actually kind of hurts (Hoover, 2016, pp. 89-
> 90).

Additionally, Lily took responsibility for Ryle's abusive behaviour, as well as, for fixing him. Lily initially tries to rationalize Ryle's behaviour and blames herself for provoking him. However, it is important to note that this is a common response among survivors of abuse and does not amount to justifying or excusing the abuser's actions, Lily felt guilty for each incident that happened between them, as she claims after the first incident: "That wasn't me. I laughed at him when I should have been concerned" (Hoover, 2016, p. 189). In addition, while the second incident where he pushed her down the stairs, she believed that it was out of jealousy and him thinking that she was cheating on him, Lily was manipulated to think that Ryle was not hurting her, as she states: "It was an accident. He thought I was cheating on him. He was hurt and angry and I got in his way" (Hoover, 2016, p. 242).

Ultimately, Ryle manipulative character made Lily shoulder the responsibility once again, where she convinced herself, that it was due to her keeping precious memories from her teenage lover Atlas, which made Ryle acting with such violence, in her words:

> Yet somehow, in the midst of all my hatred, there are waved of reasoning that flow through me. I start to things like 'But I shouldn't have had the magnet. I should have told him about the tattoo from the beginning. I shouldn't have kept the journals' (Hoover, 2016, p. 282).

Lily experienced a mix of intense hatred and moments of self-reflection. Despite feeling consumed by hatred, she begun to have waves of reasoning that prompt self-criticism and reflection on their own actions and choices. She adds, as well:

> The fight about the magnet, the article, the things he read in my journal, the tattoo. None of that would have happened if I would have just let go of atlas and thrown it all away. Ryle wouldn't have had anything to be upset with me about. I pull my hands up to my face after that thought, upset that there's a part of me trying to blame Ryle's reaction on my lack of closure with atlas (Hoover, 2016, p. 288).

However, as the story progresses, she begins to realize that his actions are not her fault and that she cannot control or change him. She also comes to understand that abuse is never acceptable and that it is important to prioritize her own safety and well-being.

2.6.5 Harassment

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), harassment is defined as "the act of persistently troubling or persecuting (someone) with unwelcome remarks or actions.". This means, harassment refers to the behaviour that is intended to disturb, annoy, intimidate, or threaten someone repeatedly.

Hence, Lily was as well a victim of harassment from Ryle, where he took a picture of her on the day they first met, as she says: " 'Don't move,' he says, reaching for his phone again. He

walks closer and holds it up as if he's about to snap a picture of me. I almost object […] I have no idea what he plans to do with that picture" (Hoover, 2016, p. 25). Eventually, Lily found out that Ryle was hanging the picture as a frame in his apartment without her permission, thus, this made Lily full of anger and rage towards him, she says: "I bring my hand to my neck, because my blood feels like it's bubbling. It's really warm in here […] the more I stare at the picture, the angrier I get. The man has a picture of me hanging in the apartment" (Hoover, 2016, p. 87).

Overall, with everything mentioned the psychological abuse that Lily faced from Ryle was deeply damaging and had a profound impact on her self-esteem and mental health. It was a powerful portrayal of the complexity of abusive relationships and how it can be difficult to recognize and leave them, thus it has an impact on the victim that cannot be healed, as she mentions: "I feel robbed of the joy a mother should have when she finds out she's pregnant. I feel like Ryle took that from me last night and it's just one more thing I have to hate him for" (Hoover, 2016, p. 285).

Moreover, what Lily faced was insidious and had a profound impact on her self-esteem and relationships as an adult. It was a complex portrayal of the lasting effects of abuse and trauma, and how it can continue to affect individuals long after the abuse has ended, thus ending the cycle of abuse is the only solution to gain the inner peace, as Lily does:

> Cycles exist because they are excruciating to break. It takes an astronomical amount of pain and courage to disrupt a familiar pattern. Sometimes it seems easier to just keep running in the same familiar circles, rather than facing the fear of jumping and possibly not landing on your feet (Hoover, 2016, p. 360).

This captures the essence of the challenging nature of breaking cycles and patterns in one's life. It emphasizes the difficulty and discomfort involved in disrupting familiar patterns and cycles, highlighting the immense pain and courage required to initiate change, as it leaves long-lasting harm.

2.8 Trauma

The novel *It Ends with Us* shows how the abusive behaviour of Lily's father has a lasting impact on her, leading to her struggles with self-worth and trust in romantic relationships, while her father's abuse is primarily physical towards Lily's mother, it is emotional towards Lily, which can be just as damaging and long-lasting. It explores the complexity of the victim-abuser relationship by showing the conflicted emotions that Lily experiences towards Ryle later on, who she still loves despite his harmful conduct. This portrayal is important because it highlights the psychological grip that an abuser can have on their victim, and how difficult it can be for the victim to break free from the cycle of abuse, as she claims:

> I don't want her to live like I lived. I don't want her to see her father at his worst
> […] because no matter how many good moments she might share with Ryle
> throughout her lifetime, I know from experience that it would only be the worst
> ones that stuck with her (Hoover, 2016, p. 360).

Additionally, Lily was traumatized from her young age, thus trauma narratives were her only solution in order to gain her self-esteem once again. Additionally, while facing abuse with her husband Ryle, she went through a series of inner conflicts, as she started to question her worth, and she was comparing herself to her mother, after each incident. For instance, it is common for victims of trauma to experience both trauma narratives and inner conflicts as they work to process and heal from their traumatic experiences.

2.8.1 Trauma Narratives

Trauma narratives are "a cognitive-affective-behavioral account of the traumatic experience, comprising memories, thoughts, and emotions, and organized according to a narrative structure" (Schauer & Elbert, 2010, p. 107). In simpler terms, a trauma narrative is a personal account of a traumatic event that an individual has experienced. It involves the individual organizing their memories, thoughts, and emotions related to the trauma in a coherent and structured way.

Furthermore, Lily's resentment toward her father is justifiable due to how he was treating her mother and the trauma he unknowingly inflicted on them both. When she was younger, Lily kept a diary even though she refuses to admit that she wrote a diary and insisted on calling it a journal. The journal is about her childhood which is addressed to a talk show host named Elle DeGeneres, because she begun to see Ellen's show the day it aired in 2003 when she was a little girl, as she claims: "I refused to admit that I kept a diary when I was younger because that was so cliché. Instead, I convinced myself that what I was doing was cool, because it wasn't technically a diary. I addressed each of my entries to Ellen DeGeneres" (Hoover, 2016, p. 29).

Moreover, writing in the journal becomes a form of therapy for Lily, helping her to process her emotions and experiences in a safe and private way, as it is mentions: "I'll never tell him I write to you on a daily basis. That might seem a little too fan-girl" (Hoover, 2016, p. 64). The act of writing allows her to express her feelings and to gain a sense of control over her life and her future, yet she had a roller-coaster of feelings every time she picks the journal to read it, which emphasizes that Lily was still affected by her past, thus trauma can have long-lasting impact, she says: "I'm surprised to feel tears running down my cheeks. Every time I pick up this journal I think I'll be fine— that it all happened so long ago and I won't still feel what I felt back then" (Hoover, 2016, p. 119).

Hence, Lily is surprised to feel tears running down her cheeks as she reads her journal. This suggests that she was not expecting to be as emotionally affected by her own writing as she was. It is possible that Lily thought she had already worked through her emotions and processed her experiences enough to be able to read her journal without being overwhelmed. However, the emotional intensity of her memories and the difficult decisions she has to make may have made it difficult for her to maintain that emotional distance.

2.8.2 Inner Conflict

Inner conflict is a conflict that occurs in a person's or story's character mind and soul. Moreover, inner conflict is defined as a conflict experienced by humans within themselves or the internal problem of a human being (Nurgiyantoro, 2005, p. 144).

Throughout the novel, Lily's memories of her father's abuse are interwoven with her present experiences with Ryle. These memories reveal the long-lasting impact of domestic abuse on the victim's mental health and relationships. Lily's fear and mistrust of men are deeply rooted in her traumatic childhood experiences with her father's abusive behaviour.

Additionally, Lily is a complex character who experiences various inner conflicts throughout the novel. Lily's inner conflict is further complicated when she discovers that Ryle has a history of domestic violence. She is forced to confront her own experiences with abuse and her beliefs about what love should be. Lily struggles with the fear of repeating the same cycle of abuse that her mother went through, and the guilt of not standing up for herself earlier, where she was comparing her situation with Ryle to what happened in the past between her parents, each incident made Lily's childhood trauma reappear. Since Ryle's actions, even his apologies, reminded her of her father, as she mentions: "I don't hear Ryle voice this time. All I hear is my father's voice" (Hoover, 2016, p. 186), she adds: "I hate him in this moment more than I've ever hated my father" (Hoover, 2016, p. 270). This conveys a profound level of hatred, surpassing Lily's previous feelings towards her own father.

Moreover, Lily was examining her own life in light of her mother's experiences, where she was blaming her for not leaving her abusive house, yet Lily found herself stuck in the same situation, as she says: "I want to lash out at him and react like I always wish my mother would have reacted when my father hurt her, but deep down I want to believe that it was really an accident" (Hoover, 2016, p. 188), as she adds:

> I knew exactly what I'd do if a man ever treated me the way my father treated my
> mother. It was simple. I would have leave and it would never happen again. But I
> didn't leave […] I'm supposed to be the woman my mother was never strong
> enough to be (Hoover, 2016, p. 242).

Ultimately, Lily's inner conflict comes to a head when she is forced to make a difficult decision
about her relationship with Ryle. She realizes that true strength comes from making difficult
choices, and that love is not always enough to overcome deep-seated issues, Lily claims:

> The difference between the two of us is that she had more to worry about. She didn't
> have the financial stability I have. She didn't have the resources to leave and give
> me what she thought was a decent shelter. She didn't want to take me away from
> my father when I was used to living with both parents (Hoover, 2016, p. 282).

Overall, as Lily promised Ryle that she will make a clear decision about their relationships
situation after their baby is born. At the moment she gave birth, Lily resolved her inner conflict
and could make a decision. Lily chose to divorce Ryle. Making this decision was not easy for Lily.
She considered various things, and for her newborn daughter, Lily decided to divorce Ryle. She
did not want her daughter to live in an abusive family like she had been through, as she says:

> I look at Emerson and I look at Ryle. And I know that I have to do what's best for
> her. For the relationship I hope she builds with her father. I don't make this decision
> for me and I don't make it for Ryle. I make it for her. 'Ryle?' When he glances at
> me, he's smiling. But when he assesses the look on my face, he stops. 'I want a
> divorce' (Hoover, 2016, p. 358).

Eventually, Lily decided to put her love for Ryle aside, and break her family, she made this
decision neither for both of them, yet for her daughter. Lily was afraid that her daughter would
experience the same trauma she did, she wanted to avoid that her daughter would see her father at
his lowest. She finally broke the cycle of abuse before it broke them.

2.9 Conclusion

In the novel *It Ends with Us*, Colleen Hoover masterfully presents the story of Lily Bloom, a survivor of domestic abuse, and takes readers on a profound journey through the intricacies of trauma and personal growth. Through a psychoanalytical lens, we have delved into Lily's experiences, unravelling the layers of her trauma and examining the psychological dynamics that shaped her perception of self and relationships.

This psychoanalysis reveals the profound impact of abuse on Lily's psyche. It highlights the intricate interplay of unconscious desires, defence mechanisms, and the internalization of abusive patterns. Lily's early life experiences, familial dynamics, and societal influences all play a significant role in shaping her understanding of relationships and her ability to cope with the trauma she endures.

By exploring the psychological underpinnings of Lily's experiences, we gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of trauma recovery. We witness her internal conflicts, her journey to reconcile her emotions and desires, and the mechanisms she employs to protect herself. Through this exploration, we also witness her resilience challenging ingrained patterns, and breaking free from the cycle of abuse.

As we conclude our exploration, it is essential to recognize the significance of compassion, support, and empowerment in the journey toward healing and growth. Lily's story reminds us of the importance of breaking the cycle of abuse, creating safe spaces for survivors, and fostering a society that prioritizes empathy and respect.

The novel serves as a powerful reminder that behind the veil of trauma lies strength, resilience, and the potential for personal transformation. By delving into the psychoanalytical aspects of this novel, we not only gain a deeper understanding of Lily's journey but also cultivate a broader appreciation for the complexities of trauma and the indomitable spirit of survivors.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the characteristics of contemporary American society that contribute to psychological issues, specifically gender-based violence and trauma. Moreover, power dynamics and imbalances within intimate relationships play a significant role in perpetuating the cycle of abuse. These dynamics contribute to the abusive patterns by creating an environment where one person exerts control and dominance over the other, often leading to harm and trauma. Additionally, broader societal factors influence the prevalence of power imbalances within relationships. The imbalance of power allows the abusive partner to assert control, manipulate, and exert dominance over the other person. The abusive partner may use tactics such as emotional manipulation, physical violence, isolation, or threats to maintain power and control. The abused partner, in turn, may feel trapped, helpless, and unable to break free from the abusive cycle. Broader societal factors also contribute to the prevalence of power imbalances within intimate relationships. Cultural norms, societal expectations, and ingrained gender roles can perpetuate unequal power dynamics.

In *It Ends with Us*, the portrayal of contemporary American society both reflects and challenges prevalent cultural norms and values regarding relationships and abuse. The novel provides a nuanced exploration of these themes, offering a multifaceted perspective on societal attitudes and expectations. The novel reflects prevalent cultural norms and values by highlighting societal expectations and gender roles that often perpetuate harmful relationship dynamics. It explores the pressures individuals face to conform to societal ideals of a "perfect" relationship or marriage. These norms can include expectations of submission, sacrifice, or staying in abusive situations for the sake of preserving appearances or societal stability. By depicting characters who grapple with these norms, at the same time, *It Ends with Us* challenges these cultural norms and values by presenting alternative narratives and perspectives. The novel emphasizes the importance of individual agency, personal growth, and breaking free from harmful patterns. It encourages readers to question and challenge societal expectations that may enable or tolerate abuse. By

highlighting the impact of abuse on the characters' lives and emphasizing the need for change, the novel challenges the notion that abusive relationships should be endured or accepted as the norm. Through its portrayal of contemporary American society, *It Ends with Us* offers a critique of harmful norms while also presenting a path towards breaking free from them. By challenging prevalent cultural norms and values regarding relationships and abuse, the novel contributes to raising awareness, promoting empathy, and fostering a collective effort to create healthier and safer environments for individuals within society.

One of the significant aspects of Hoover's portrayal is her emphasis on providing characters with agency and the ability to make the right decision to break free from an abusive relationship. Rather than perpetuating the idea that one can change an abusive partner or endure the pain for the sake of love, Hoover presents Lily who actively choose to prioritize her own well-being and safety.
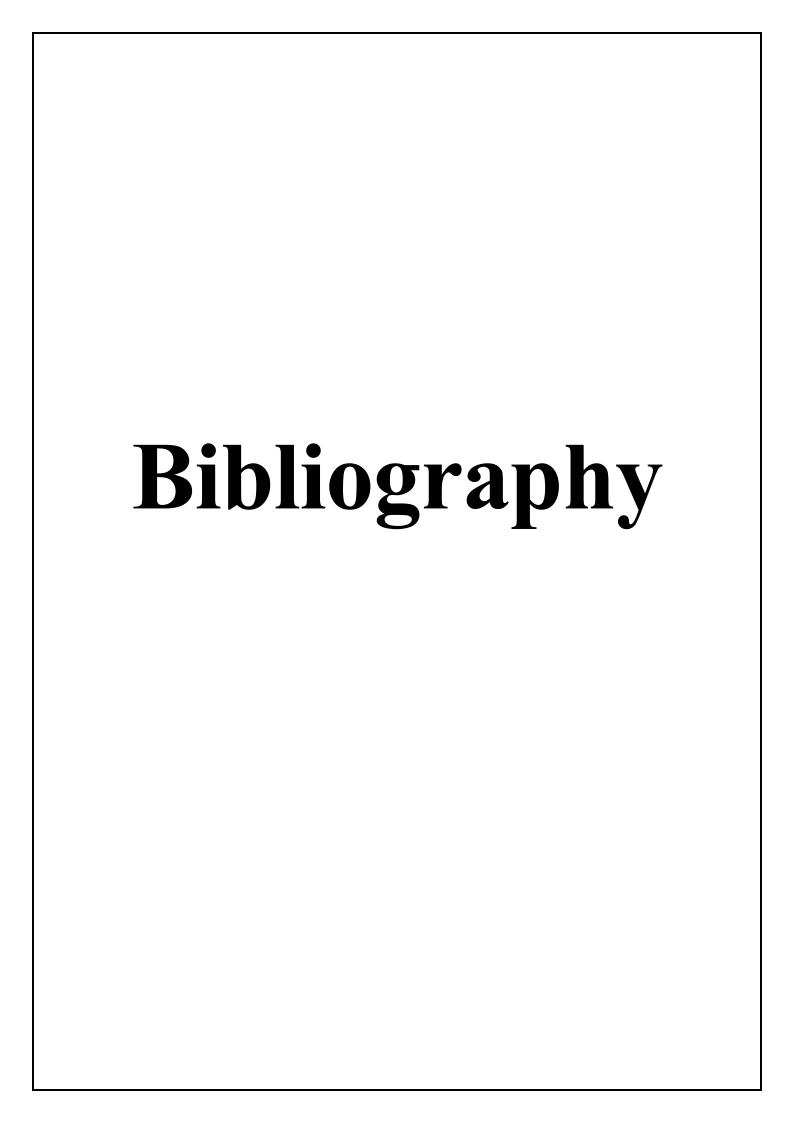
By depicting characters who break the cycle of abuse, Hoover sends a powerful message to her readers that they too have the strength and the right to escape toxic relationships. She encourages them to seek help, rely on support networks, and take the necessary steps towards reclaiming their lives.

Through her writing, Hoover challenges the notion that abusive relationships can be salvaged or that enduring abuse is a necessary sacrifice for love. Instead, she advocates for self-respect, self-worth, and the importance of setting healthy boundaries. Overall, Hoover's approach to depicting violence and abusive relationships in her novels is notable for its commitment to portraying the realities of abuse rather than romanticizing or glossing over the topic. By doing so, she provides an alternative narrative that empowers readers to make informed decisions about their own relationships and helps to break the cycle of abuse.

In the same context, the Westerns claim that they tend to have less situations of gender-based violence as compared to Muslim women being the sole victims of abusive relationships is a misleading generalization that fails to capture the complex reality. While it is true that some Muslim women around the world face domestic abuse, it is important to recognize that abuse

knows no cultural or religious boundaries. Abusive relationships exist in every society, including Western countries like America, where countless cases have been documented. Therefore, neither religion, nor culture should be blamed. The blame should be addressed to men, according to Hoover, there is often a significant focus on why women in abusive relationships don't leave, but not enough attention is given to why men become abusive in the first place (Hoover, 2016, p. 274). Domestic violence is a pervasive problem that affects women from diverse backgrounds, regardless their faith and culture.

The findings of this thesis underscored the significance of the novel's portrayal of toxic relationships. *It Ends with Us* avoids romanticizing or trivializing abuse, instead emphasizing the destructive patterns and behaviors that can lead to emotional, physical, and psychological harm. The novel highlights the importance of breaking the cycle of abuse, empowering individuals to prioritize their own well-being and safety. In addition, this dissertation has contributed to the understanding of the characteristics of contemporary American society that lead to psychological issues such as domestic abuse and trauma. By analyzing the case of Lily, it has shed light on the profound impact of abuse on an individual's mental and emotional well-being. The psychoanalytic lens employed throughout the study has unraveled the intricate interplay between internal conflicts, defense mechanisms, and the lasting effects of trauma.

In conclusion, the psychodynamic analysis of *It Ends with Us* and the exploration of the abuse and trauma faced by Lily have illuminated the intricate workings of the human psyche. The insights gained from this study deepen our understanding of the psychological dynamics underlying abuse and trauma, emphasizing the importance of addressing and supporting individuals who have experienced such hardships. Through continued research and compassionate interventions, we can strive to create a more empathetic and healing-oriented society for survivors of abuse and trauma.

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