

# Beauty and the Patriarchal Beast: Men and Their Roles in Women Want(h)ing(s) in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us*

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## Abstract

This paper aimed to examine the themes of domestic violence and the roles of men and their treatment of women in a household context, as seen through Colleen Hoover's bestselling novel *It Ends With Us*. A descriptive-analytical approach was employed in interpreting the novel's underpinnings. Elements of the novel were delved through the lenses of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic approach, Biographical Criticism, and Ainsworth and Bowlby's Attachment Theory. A thorough analysis of the novel's elements reflects both the positive (provider and protector) and negative (abuser, controller, and possessor) roles of men and their treatment of women. Furthermore, the novel revealed that women dealt with the treatment they received from men through the following stages: denying the acts of abuse, fathoming the occurrence of abuse, creating an outlet to curtail abuse, and breaking the pattern of abuse. It can be concluded that *It Ends With Us* echoes the voice of a female author who witnessed domestic violence and reflects the events through a written work. Through this study, contemporary literature is not only viewed as a form of entertainment among young people but also as a reflection of the concealed reality that lies beyond closed doors, not only in the contemporary Philippine culture but anywhere in the world.

**Keywords:** contemporary literature, patriarchy, biographical literature, abusive relationship, domestic violence

## INTRODUCTION

Literature can precisely depict an ideal or undesirable relationship than other types of pop culture, as the features of a novel show more vivid variations of discourse and character development. Giroux (2013) added that violence is universal, and it is not just reflected in pop culture; it is produced through it, too. Authors, especially women, are composing narratives that urge readers to ponder about domestic violence and mental health issues, which are ongoing contemporary social justice issues that are still frequently taboo (Brantmeier, 2007). Domestic violence is a repeating theme among fictional men, and frequently their horrors are the essence of the story (Mullins, 2016). Thus, this study pointed out the issue of domestic violence using Colleen Hoover's contemporary novel, *It Ends With Us*. In this discourse, the connection between social conduct – domestic and intimate partner violence – and creative expressions through the analysis of novel contributing methodologies on addressing the issue was investigated. The importance of

this research to the role of women in society was also explored.

This paper considered how popular literature can make arguments and points in connection with the issue of domestic violence. Individuals consider literature to be as giving an impetus to readers to intervene upon themselves by utilizing the narrative content to admit the maltreatment to themselves and possibly others as a step to seeking help and healing (Nestor, 2016). To justify the title of this study, the words *Beauty* and *Patriarchal Beast* represent women and men in the household context. *Patriarchal Beast* are men who perpetrate abusive treatment on women. On the other hand, *Beauty* is used to encapsulate women in an abusive home. The word *want(h)ing(s)* in the title of this study stands for women's wants which are being affected by men's roles as traced in the novel.

No known investigation or discussion was done about the novel. In relation to the novel and its theme of domestic violence, other related studies which highlight the issue of intimate partner violence were also considered. Studies about the aforementioned issue can be found in the context of research but not in the field of literature. Moreover, studies which pertain to this genre were still scarce during the conduct of the study, which makes it a potential area for investigation, particularly those in the field of literature. Through this study, the association between the social and psychological factors and the characters' representations that contribute to the novel's underpinnings were strengthened. Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* shows the characters' development through a series of psychological phenomena that delivers empirical facts presented in the study. This study answered the following research questions:

1. How do the novel's elements reflect men's roles and their treatment of women?
2. How do women in the novel deal with the treatment they receive?
3. How are the author's personal experiences reflected in the principal character's life?

## METHODOLOGY

This research was based on the directed approach of qualitative content analysis to interpret the gathered data. The descriptive-analytical approach was utilized to present men and their roles in women's "wants" through the looking glass of Colleen Hoover's, *It Ends With Us*, which is the primary source of data for this study. This study used three approaches: (a) Freud's Psychoanalytic Criticism (Freud, 2014), (b) Ainsworth and Bowlby's Attachment Theory (Scharfe, 2017), and (c) Johnson's Biographical Criticism (Griffith, 2004). Freud's Psychoanalysis was used to study the novel's elements, specifically the male and primary female characters. Biographical criticism helped the researcher to delve further into the life of the author, Colleen Hoover further. This approach was also used to analyze the impetuses of the author and how these impetuses are related to the novel's main character, Lily. The author and the main character were linked using Ainsworth and Bowlby's Attachment Theory which discussed how the subjects' relationships contribute to the underpinning of the novel and how men's roles affect women in the novel. Another source of data gathered by the researcher was a statement coming from the author herself through electronic mail claiming that "*the author's note at the end of the book encompasses everything in full on how it (the novel) relates to my (Hoover's) life*" (Personal Communication, Hoover, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After a close reading and analysis of Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* (2016), the researcher found a number of psychological and biographical underpinnings of the novel through men's roles and how these roles affect women in the novel. The following findings were drawn:

### **Men's roles and their treatment of women as mirrored through the novel's elements**

In the novel, men's figures portray roles and behaviors that foreground the socially constructed façade of men being dominant over women. These roles brought conspiracy on how men treat women positively and negatively, as presented in the novel. Through the novel's elements and Freud's Concept of the Id, Ego, and Superego, three primary men characters in the novel to analyze their portrayed roles were examined. These three men characters--- Andrew Bloom (Lily's father), Ryle Kincaid (Lily's husband), and Atlas Corrigan (Lily's ex-boyfriend) depict positive and negative roles that prompt the development of the protagonist throughout the novel. The roles of men in the novel were cited as follows:

#### ***Positive role: men as provider***

In the novel, two men figures play the role of a provider or financial support to women, which is highlighted in this study. First, the novel discloses the protagonist's father, Andrew Bloom, as a *respectable man who brings honor to his family*. Lily describes his father as an "*adored mayor of my hometown of Plethora, Maine*" and "*owner of the most successful real-estate agency*" (p. 4). In line with the protagonist's description of her father, men, as proposed by Aina (1998), are classed as having the following characteristics: strong, vigorous, confident, and having the capacity to meet the outside world through leadership. Working as a mayor, Andrew is being regarded by the people for being a dedicated leader. Andrew Bloom's figure being head of his household (as father) and head of the society (as a mayor) emphasizes his role of being a provider. Second is the protagonist's husband, Ryle Kincaid, who is perceived as the parallel character of Lily's father, Andrew Bloom. Ryle is a successful neurosurgeon, and Lily has a similar description of her father to Ryle; "*He is compassionate. He is caring. He is smart. He is charismatic. He is driven.*" (p. 357). The description Lily has for the two men figures fits their roles as a provider, having the best jobs in Boston.

#### ***Positive role: men as protector***

Society and literature consider men as individuals having the capability to protect women and children. As Burlingham (1973) pointed out, Freud saw patriarchy more positively—as a protector. Atlas Corrigan plays a significant role in the protagonist's life as her childhood ex-boyfriend. As initially labeled on page 21, he was a "*homeless guy*" whom Lily helped secretly for several months for Atlas to survive. It is mentioned how Lily recounts Atlas in one of her diary entries this way:

*"Dear Ellen...some people just have a calming presence about them, and he's one of those people. Completely opposite of my father"* (p. 65).

In Lily's old diary (which she calls *Ellen Diaries* since she addressed the entries to Ellen DeGeneres), she writes how Atlas used to comfort her whenever her father was being obnoxious to her mother (p. 154). She runs to Atlas just to tell him how mad and depressed she is. Atlas calms Lily with rational thoughts by telling her negative situations and how moral demands guide a person's impulses on the right thing to do. According to Freud, this is the work of the Superego.

The Superego works to suppress the urges of the id and tries to make the ego behave morally rather than realistically. Because Ryle portrays an abusive role in the novel, Atlas, in contrast, has been Lily's protector from Ryle. Atlas assured Lily that he (Atlas) "*would never apologize for defending you (Lily)*" (p. 206). One time when Ryle loses his sanity, Lily frantically looks for help turning out that she memorized Atlas' contact number and dialed it. There, Atlas came and helped Lily escape from Ryle.

Atlas' ego acts, according to Freud in his concept of Ego, as the decision-making component of personality (Freud, 2004). It is the component that deals with the demands of reality. Lily's case situates Atlas in the dilemma of leaving Lily alone with Ryle or helping her escape from Ryle. Ideally, the ego works by reason. In Lily's case, Atlas must make a rational and realistic decision to solve the conflict, which is Lily being abused by her husband. Atlas then ends up helping Lily as the situation demands him to do. Atlas' decision to help Lily is his ego, telling him what seems right to do as dictated by reality. As discussed, men's positive roles, being the provider and protector in the story contributed to women's journey, specifically to women's wants and needs.

### ***Negative Roles: Men as Possessor, Controller, and Abuser***

Some events in the novel that shows negative roles of men based on Freud's concept of the Id, which was traced in the novel's men figures and how these men treat women, were also cited. The symbolism in the novel rendered by Ryle's and Andrew's characters, in one way or another, relates to their roles and their treatment of women. Ryle, being a surgeon, is a significant symbolism that may be associated with the concept of life and death threatening as it is termed. Moreover, Andrew's character being a Mayor of Plethora, and owner of a real-estate agency, are symbolisms that highlight his role of being dominant (mayor) and possessive (businessman). These roles symbolized and foreshadowed the superiority and abusive acts that Andrew performs in the novel. The following are the cited findings.

#### *Possessor*

The novel first displays the character of Ryle Kincaid with a possessive personality. Ryle expressed this behavior when he mentioned that success was the only thing he wanted in life and that he did not want to have children. Lily asked him whether he was talking about "*professional success? Or social success?*" Ryle replied with "*Both*" (p. 22). This motivation of men as represented by Ryle's character is explained in Freud's concept of the Id, as the most primitive part of the human mind, acts according to the "pleasure principle" – the psychic force that motivates the tendency to seek immediate gratification of any impulse (Freud, 1908). Success brings gratification to oneself and society. Characterizing other man figures in the novel, Lily's father, Andrew Bloom, shows similar traits as well, which according to Lily, is "*selfish and greed*" (p. 118).

Andrew Bloom is a mayor who is expected to be compassionate to his people, yet one incident in the novel reveals his domineering trait. Lily narrated how his father refused to help an old man, and as stated in her Ellen Diary, she narrates: "*I asked my dad if we could give him (old man) some money and he told me no, that he works hard for his money and he wasn't about to let me give it away...and people like my father are the problem*" (p. 118). Through this event in the novel, the character shows how Andrew's desire for his own takes over him. The Id, according to Freud, is the most selfish part of our mind. Freud stated that the Id knows no judgments of value: no good and evil, no morality – only the fulfillment of immediate desires (Freud, 1908).

### Controller

A controlling person usually stems from deep-rooted insecurity that the person attempts to deny or suppress. Instead of reflecting and working on this self-doubt, one tries to gain control over others to make themselves feel the power they lack (Mazur & Booth, 1998). With this definition, the novel demonstrates how Ryle's character changes from being abusive to a sweet, gentle husband to Lily. There was one incident when Ryle found out Atlas' contact number inside Lily's phone case. When Lily tried to chase the furious Ryle, he pushed Lily down the stairs, and she went unconscious. When Lily finally gained consciousness and was able to confront Ryle, she asked him to leave her apartment, but Ryle told her, in a "*now calm and gentle voice*," that "*Lily, you fell down the stairs, about five minutes ago... You're hurt, Lily. I'm not leaving you alone*" (p. s234). This manner displayed by Ryle, according to psychology, is a kind of manipulation called gaslighting, a dominant behavior found in an abuser who deceitfully uses manipulative strategies such as making the victim feel confused about herself, such as making the victim imagine things, and giving them "crazy-making" statements (Dorpat, 1996). Explaining the connection between two individuals in a gaslight setting, Stern (2007) categorizes it into a gaslighter and a gaslightee. The novel depicts this kind of connection between the characters of Andrew Bloom and Jenny Bloom (Lily's parents). Lily explained how her father would hit her mother and then spend the next two weeks making up for it. Lily recalls her childhood, witnessing her parents as she imparts on how her father made it up for them; "*he would do things like buy her (Jenny) flowers or take us out for a nice dinner...he would buy me stuff because he knew I hated it when they fought*" (p. 17). This makes Andrew Bloom the gaslighter, and Jenny Bloom and Lily as the gaslightees in this novel.

### Abuser

An abuser may perform the act through a pattern of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse. As stated by Graham and Rawlings (1991), the abused and abuser might be dating, living together, wedded, divorced, or separated. The novel foregrounds the abusive relationship of the principal character, Lily, and her mother with their husbands, which portrays numerous incidents that show how Andrew (Lily's father) abused Jenny (Lily's mother). Lily brings back the readers to how Andrew perpetrated Jenny by reading Lily's Ellen Diaries as flashbacks of her childhood. There, Lily recounts the first incident where Andrew backhanded Jenny and knocked her straight to the floor (p. 64). Another entry from Lily's diary was the above-mentioned incident which takes place in the garage where Andrew hurt Jenny for occupying his parking space.

These occurrences convey how women in the guise of Jenny and Lily in the novel are being battered by the head of their household. The same physical abuse is also evident in Ryle's behavior towards Lily, where Ryle pushes Lily into the kitchen, which leaves an injury on Lily's eyes (p. 230). Given that psychological abuse helps the abuser to take control of every situation, as pictured in the novel, both Andrew and Ryle came up to a severe act of abuse which involves physical, emotional, psychological maltreatment, and sexual abuse. These negative roles of Ryle and Andrew being a possessor, controller, and abuser represents the patriarchal culture's role of showing dominance and authority over women.

Table 1 depicts the positive and negative roles of men and their treatment of women. The table presents men figures and their portrayed roles as mirrored through the novel's elements--- characterization, dialogues, symbolism/significations, and the protagonist's point of view. Such

underpinnings are also the product of the analysis and interpretation of the novel and its primary characters through Freud’s Psychoanalysis.

*Table 1: Analysis of Men’s Role Through Characterization, Dialogues, Symbolisms, and Protagonist’s Point of View*

|                             |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Characterization            | <b>Andrew Bloom</b><br>- Father of the protagonist.<br>- Head of the household (father) and his community (Mayor).  | <b>Ryle Kincaid</b><br>- Husband of the protagonist.<br>- Superior in his field (neurosurgeon).<br>- Has psychological trauma.<br>- Parallel to Andrew Bloom<br><i>“You married a neurosurgeon. You are not necessarily strapped for cash”.</i><br>- neurosurgeon | <b>Atlas Corrigan</b><br>- Ex-boyfriend of the protagonist.<br>- Calm<br>- From “homeless” to a successful man.<br><i>“I would not apologize for defending you.”</i><br>-Chef/went to the military. |
| Dialogues                   |   |   |   |
| Symbolism/signification     | *N/A  |   |   |
| Protagonist’s point of view | - Mayor of plethora.<br>- Owner of real estate agency.<br><b>Power and possession.</b><br><br><i>- “he said he works hard for his money, and he wasn’t about to let me give it away.” - “my father is abusive.”</i> | <b>Threatening; Life and Death.</b><br><br><i>- “I’m in love with a man who physically hurts me.”</i>   | <b>Care and protection</b><br><br><i>- “some people have a calming presence, and he’s one of those people. Opposite of my father”.</i>  |
| <b>Characters</b>           | <b>Andrew Bloom</b>   | <b>Ryle Kincaid</b>   | <b>Atlas Corrigan</b>   |
| <b>Rendered Roles</b>       | Provider<br>Abuser<br>Possessor<br>Controller   | Provider<br>Abuser<br>Possessor<br>Controller   | Protector   |

\*Andrew Bloom, Lily’s father, does not have any dialogue in the novel.

**How women dealt with the treatment they received from men**

This area of this study discussed its relevance in society on how women cope with domestic violence. The study also presents awareness among the society on why some women stay in an abusive relationship as reflected in the women characters in the novel. Freud's psychoanalytic aspects emphasize the understanding of an individual's personality and how one deals with the impulses around. Under the pressure of anxiety, the human ego is sometimes forced to take extreme measures to relieve the pressure (Freud, 2004). These measures are called defense mechanisms whose function is to deny and falsify reality that may be too hard and painful to accept (Tyson, 2006). Hence, along this area of study, the researcher organized women's coping through the following stages, which are based on Health Talk Organization's *Women's coping strategies for domestic violence and abuse* (2020). Results may or may not include defense mechanisms:

***First stage: denying the acts of abuse***

Denying and rationalizing are ways for women to believe that what is happening to them is a normal part of life and relationships. As defense mechanisms, denial and rationalization happen side by side when one does not accept the truth of a situation, satisfying the id through rationalizing their behavior or others' behavior (Rajeevan, 2011). The protagonist, Lily Bloom, and her mother, Jenny Bloom, displayed these defense mechanisms over the abuse they experienced. For instance, Jenny Bloom would cover up most of the injuries she gets to hide the wrongdoings of her husband to most people. In an incident where Andrew raped Jenny with Lily watching in the kitchen, Jenny told Lily not to call the police since Andrew has a reputation for their town as a mayor. Instead, Jenny told Lily that "*he's (Andrew) drunk...Just let him sleep it off, and it'll be better tomorrow*" (p. 155). Jenny, justifying Andrew's behavior, is a known kind of defense mechanism---rationalization. According to Freud, rationalization is a reasonable opinion that is used by people to reduce anxiety brought by their unacceptable reality (Boeree, 2006). Alongside rationalization is denial. This can be seen in an episode where Lily and Jenny both deny Andrew's abusive conduct on the scene in their garage wherein Andrew threw Lily off, which caused a cut on her forehead. Jenny told Lily to "*tell them you slipped on the ice*" (p. 110) to cover up the incident. On Lily's Ellen Diaries, she recounts that "*things that hurt her (Jenny) just get swept under the rug, never to be brought up again*" (p. 156).

***Second stage: fathoming the occurrence of abuse***

Abusers often try to influence the senses of what is real for the victim (McKee & Payne, 2013), known as gaslighting. One will further realize the abuse if the perpetrator shows constant possessiveness and a controlling attitude. This will later lead to repetitive physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological maltreatment showing the signs of an abusive relationship. It can be inferred in the novel that Lily understood that Ryle was being abusive to her when Ryle pushed her down the stairs. This can be pictured from her line: "*...here I am with bruises and cuts on my body at the hands of the man who is supposed to love me. At the hands of my own husband*" (p. 243). Lily then completely realized that she was in an unhealthy relationship after receiving a cycle of abuse from her husband. Any woman like Lily and her mother can be a victim of domestic violence and hide this truth from people. However, if the abuse becomes a norm, the victim then realizes that the relationship could be a detrimental one. Once a victim accepts the reality, one will try to minimize the abuse through building channels and diverting one's focus away from the abuse.

***Third stage: creating an outlet to curtail abuse***

An abused woman's outlet and the social support she has may reduce the impact of abuse on mental health. Building an outlet that will make the victim less stressed and more relieved about her surroundings will benefit the mental health of abused women. Experience of domestic violence is moderated by perceived social support and affects the mental health outcomes of the victim (Lortkipanidze & Javakhishvili, 2012).

In the first part of the story, where Lily was reminiscing her childhood, she mentioned that “my (her) outlet used to be gardening. Anytime I was stressed, I'd just go out to the backyard and pull every single weed I could find” (p. 6). As gardening used to be Lily's outlet during her childhood when they were still residing in Maine, this outlet developed to more than just a “small garden” into a now “Flower Shop” which she owns as she moved to Boston. This could also be a representation of how she grows from a teen girl represented by her small garden into a woman, represented by a flower shop---as her name “Lily Bloom” suggests. These two related images (small garden and flower shop) were also suggesting a transition on how she moved from a cycle of her life being a “girl” to a “married woman” (just as how she moved from Maine to Boston). This turn in the story evoked how Lily used outlets to vent her emotions into something that is not harmful to anyone. In psychology, this is termed as sublimation, which was proposed by Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund Freud. Through sublimation, people can transform unwanted impulses into something just like an outlet that is harmless and often n helpful. In research done in Jakarta, Indonesia by Feist & Feist (2014), it is specified that people like Lily drop their anxious feeling to another person or object to reduce their anxiety feeling. In Lily's case, it is her Ellen Diaries that serves as the object and Ellen DeGeneres as the person wherein Lily releases her anxiety. This type of defense mechanism is called displacement. Displacement runs by redirecting unacceptable urges onto a variety of people or objects so that the original impulse is disguised or concealed (Feist & Feist, 2014).

#### ***Fourth stage: breaking the pattern of abuse***

As women stay in an abusive home, circumstances and situations bring them to anxiety which causes them to question the legitimacy of what is happening around them, including the people as well. A psychologist writer, McLeod (2009), claimed that some defense mechanisms are considered more “mature.” Two such “mature” strategies are sublimation and intellectualization.

Intellectualization is a defense mechanism is employed for a range of reasons, mainly to minimize one's anxiety. It is when a person avoids emotional aspects and focuses on quantitative facts of the situation that affects a person's reasoning. As for the characters in the novel, intellectualization was seen in Lily's behavior when she chose to disregard her yearning for Ryle to be their baby's father by staying together as a complete family and for Ryle to stay as her husband. These logics allowed Lily to ignore her emotional viewpoints towards Ryle--- her desire for him to be a good father, and her desire for him as her husband, to come up with a more rational decision. Analyzing Jenny Bloom's (Lily's mother) response to her abusive relationship with her husband, Andrew Bloom, it can also be inferred that intellectualization which is mentioned as a “matured” defense mechanism, yet has its characteristic of being unhealthy when employed. Though it is revealed that Jenny chose to stay with Andrew for Lily's sake, Lily realized the difference between the choice she made and her mother's choice in her line:

*“...the difference between the two of us (Lily and Jenny) is that she had more to worry about. She didn't have the financial stability that 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. I have a feeling reasoning kicked her a time or two” (p. 282).

By deciding to stay with the abuser, Jenny ignored her own feelings and endured the emotional maltreatment for Lily to get a better life she thought she could not provide. Thus, making Jenny deny that her husband was abusive despite understanding the purpose of staying with him. This type of intellectualization Jenny had shown was explained as an unhealthy one since it harms the victim rather than saving them from the abuse. With the use of Freud’s psychoanalysis and the concept of defense mechanism, the researcher comes up with the conclusion that women deal with men’s treatment gradually through stages while staying in an abusive relationship. Table 2 highlights how women deal with men’s abusive treatment.

Table 2: Women’s Defense Mechanism on Dealing with Men’s Treatment

| Defense Mechanism   | Definition   | Event  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Denial              | Occurs when you refuse to accept reality or facts.   | Both Lily and Jenny deny the abuse from their husbands.  |
| Sublimation         | Redirects anxiety or strong feelings into an object or activity that is appropriate and safe.    | Gardening is Lily’s outlet whenever she is stressed.   |
| Displacement        | Directs strong emotions and frustrations toward a person or object that doesn’t feel threatening | The <i>Ellen Diaries</i> of Lily is addressed to Ellen DeGeneres as if Lily is talking to Ellen.   |
| Rationalization     | Justifies the behavior of self or other people in order for a person to move to believe in.      | Both Lily and Jenny justify the abusive behavior of their husbands.  |
| Intellectualization | Removes all emotion from one’s responses and instead focuses on quantitative facts.              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lily decides to ignore the emotional aspects, which tells her to forgive Ryle. She focuses on Ryle’s abusive behavior and leads her to end their relationship.</li> <li>• Jenny ignores her own safety and decides to stay with her abusive husband in order to give her daughter (Lily) a better life.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Jenny</p> |

### Principal character’s life as reflected in the author’s personal experiences

A biographical literary piece as an account of a person’s life is usually published in the form of a book, essay, or film. A work is biographical if it covers all about a person’s life. As such, biographical works are usually nonfiction, but fiction can also be used to portray a person’s life. In this case, the biography of the author in his or her literary work was reflected in the story (Griffith, 2004). In this study, Colleen Hoover’s *It Ends With Us* shows how Hoover’s personal experiences are reflected in the text inside a character—an individual fictionalized persona. There are glimmers of Hoover’s life that exist in the texts, and when they are compiled together, the evidence is revealed.

To show the parallelism between Hoover's experiences and the main character's life portrayal in the novel, *It Ends With Us*, the researcher evaluates the events and themes in the novel and compares them to the author's note on page 368 of the book. Henceforth, the information given by the author herself through electronic mail with the researcher is utilized in this study. Through thorough reading and analysis of the gathered sources, the following results are obtained:

***Parallel encounter: experience of abuse as the novel's central theme***

The novel highlights the theme of abuse as seen in both the life of the main character, Lily and her mother, Jenny. As discussed above, it can therefore be depicted that both characters suffered from an abusive relationship. This theme of the novel gives way to the fact that the author herself came from an abusive home as well.

Upon writing the novel, Hoover mentions in the author's note that "*It (the novel) was the most grueling thing I have ever written. At times, I wanted to hit the Delete button and take back the way Ryle treated Lily*" (p. 372). From this statement, it can be realized from the previous discussions that Ryle is an abusive husband to Lily, yet Hoover thought of changing the protagonist's character with a "more resilient woman—who made all the right decisions at all the right times." However, Hoover continues with, "*But those weren't the story I was telling. I wanted to write something realistic to the situation my mother was in.*" This affirmation from the author is supported by the author's personal response to the researcher, saying that "*I was very young when my parents were together, but I remember the abuse*" (Personal Communication, Hoover, 2019). Hoover also mentioned that "*I (She) relate to Lily personally more in her childhood than adulthood*". The previous discussions showed that during Lily's childhood, she witnessed the abuse between her mother and her father. Consequently, Hoover also witnessed the same point between her parents when she was two years old (Author's note, p. 368). With these primary sources, it can therefore be safe to say that the story covers two portions of the author's life: first, Hoover's experience as a witness of abuse, as reflected in the character of a young Lily; and second, the abuse which Hoover's mother, Vannoy, experienced as reflected in the character of the adult-Lily.

***Parallel characters: real person's experiences as represented by fictitious characters***

Biographical criticism states that to comprehend the content of a literary text, a critic would have to decipher certain allusions or references based on the writer's life account. These allusions include characters from the novel (Olsen, 2009). Thus, the researcher cited and analyzed the novel's characters which may be parallel to the author's life story.

The first and the most vivid character allusion is the protagonist, Lily, which is mentioned above as a reference to two people--- the young Lily as a reflection of the author's childhood and the adult Lily as the author's mother. Supporting this inquiry, the author proclaims that "*I (Hoover) fashioned Lily after my (her) mother in many ways. They are both caring, intelligent, strong women who simply fell in love with men who didn't deserve to fall in love at all*" (p. 371). The young Lily, which alludes to Hoover's childhood, is mentioned previously as a witness of abuse between her mother and father. Whereas the author's description of her mother being an "*intelligent, strong woman*" makes a reflection to Lily for deciding on leaving Ryle and being a strong independent mother. The author also highlights the fact about her mother, Vannoy, leaving Eddie, the author's father, as written on the author's note, "*...she (Hoover's mother) took the necessary steps to break the pattern before it broke us*" (p. 370). With the women characters alluding to the author and her

mother, men's character allusions are also analyzed. Character allusions help in deciphering the content of a literary piece with the available information about the author. Hossain (2017) also added that Psychoanalysis is the theory that views character association and the elements of character to aid psychoanalytic critics. Its interpretations have turned out to be one of the instruments to discover the concealed meaning of a literary piece. With this method, the fictional characters refer to individuals from the author's psyche. These character allusions are crucial aids to fathoming a biographical literary work.

***Parallel coping strategy: use of matured defense mechanism***

As remarked in the prior investigation in this paper, some defense mechanisms are considered more "matured." Two such "matured" strategies are sublimation and intellectualization (McLeod, 2009). The protagonist's (Lily) way of utilizing sublimation as a defense mechanism analyzed from the novel is by putting up a small garden which later grew into her own business--- a successful flower shop. Sublimation, as defined by Anna Freud, is the use of outlets to vent one's emotions into something that isn't harmful to anyone.

With regards to Hoover's use of sublimation, writing stories just like this novel is one way for her to release repressed emotions. In the author's personal blog titled *A Raw Blog Post*, she wrote, "I wasn't writing for a paycheck, I was writing because I had to, I wanted to, and I longed to...I hope these feelings will always be the foundation of every book I complete" (Hoover, 2014). Another defense mechanism from the novel which has equivalent to the author's personal account is intellectualization. This defense mechanism was observed in the character of Lily's mother, who may also be parallel to Hoover's mother. It was said that Jenny, the protagonist's mother, utilized intellectualization by staying in an abusive relationship so as for Lily to grow up with a complete family. Another reason was to secure that Lily would get all her needs since Jenny is economically incapable compared to her husband Andrew, who is capable of providing for Lily. This picture of Jenny in the novel is the exact mechanism Hoover's mother used. In the author's note, Hoover mentioned that "*she* (Hoover's mother) *was a mother of two daughters by then and had no money. And unlike Lily, my mother didn't have a lot of support*" (p. 370). This situation, similar to Jenny's portrayal in the novel, leads both women to ignore unnecessary feelings like sympathy for themselves. In this instance, Hoover and Jenny's anxiety both came from their concerns towards their daughters. By deciding to stay in an abusive relationship for the sake of their daughters, their anxieties are lessened. This discussion implied the use of sublimation and intellectualization, the termed "matured" defense mechanism, are herewith proven evident in both the women in the novel and in the author's personal account.

***Parallel Connection: Mother-Daughter Relationship in an Abusive Home***

To explain the parallel connection of the mother-daughter relationship between the novel and the author's personal account, the researcher looked separately at the type of attachment the protagonist established in the novel and the author's attachment using the information gathered about the author. This method is based on the psychological fact that attachment with the primary caregivers, specifically the maternal caregiver, impacts one's relationship with others. A child forms expectation of reliability and accessibility of their caregivers, as well as the safety and security that these attachment figures provide. The said attachment may be a secure attachment or an insecure attachment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1956).

There were people who were only capable of forming insecure attachments. In basic terms,

insecure attachment is a relationship style where the bond is contaminated by fear (Bowlby, 1944). These first few bonds were the foundation of the type of relationships one forms later in life (McDonald et al., 2006). As the novel unveils Lily's development throughout the novel, it is shown how Lily compares herself to her mother, as Lily also experienced being in an abusive relationship just like her mother. In psychology, this phenomenon of redirecting similar emotions or maybe a familiar situation that was originally experienced in childhood into one's reality is called transference (Kramer, 1994). Lily's transference was closely related to a Father-Oedipal Complex: subconsciously being attracted to someone who reminds one of his/her father or the opposite of it (Freud, 2004). Both of these features of the Father-Oedipal Complex were seen in Lily's character development. Since Lily sees Atlas as the complete opposite of her father, she becomes attracted to him, though Atlas left for a long time. Transference parallel to Lily and her mother is the consequence of the type of attachment that Lily established with her mother during her childhood. While Lily is witnessing how her mother deals with the abusive relationship her mother was involved in, Lily is subconsciously recreating the representation her mother showed during Lily's childhood.

Furthermore, one's traumatic childhood does not always mean having an insecure attachment. Research has found differences between individuals according to their attachment patterns. In contrast with insecure attachment, secure attachments report more positive self-esteem and regard for others, greater maturity, and feel comfortable engaging in friendship and intimate relationships with others without fear of closeness or distance (Sharpsteen & Kirkpatrick, 1997). The author clarifies that she relates to Lily during her childhood--- a witness of violence in their home at the age of two. Though, unlike Lily, Hoover didn't mention having difficulty with her intimate relationship. The abuse she had witnessed in her parents was never repeated or seen in her own relationship with others. In fact, Hoover is happily married to her husband, Heath, with their three sons. In the novel's acknowledgment, Hoover mentioned that she "*couldn't have chosen a better person to father my (her) children and spend the rest of my (her) life with*" (p. 376).

This fact shows that despite the numerous researches showing how witnessing IPV leads to one person's insecure attachment in a future relationship, one may still use the traumatic experiences in building a secure attachment towards others though there were possibilities that.

Hoover could have developed an insecure attachment; one factor that made Hoover build a secure attachment. This is her mother's effort to serve as an example among her daughters for leaving their father earlier than Lily's mother in the novel. Another factor is the presence of Hoover's stepfather, Vance, who attends to their family's emotional and psychological needs, playing the role of a father figure epitome. These factors reduced the exposure of children to IPV and made them closer to their maternal caregiver, allowing the children to still develop a secure attachment through their mother's positive mechanisms (Fonagy & Target, 2003). Clearly, one's childhood attachment affects his/her future relationship. Though as discussed, the effects are not always negative. This area of the study shows that Lily's character is closely related to Hoover's childhood, yet the attachment they built with their maternal caregivers differs. These different attachments show that a positive attachment still depends on how one complies with the given situation, whether to use a positive or a negative mechanism in order to cope with the anxiety brought by the past experiences.

To clearly understand the similarities between the novel's theme and the author's personal account, the researcher provides a summary of the parallelism between the author and the novel's

main character below:

*Table 3: Summary of Parallelism Between the Experiences of the Author and the Novel's Primary Character*

|                                  | <b>Encounter</b>   | <b>Characters</b>  | <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Connection</b>   |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Lily (Primary Character)</b>  | -Abuse as the novel's theme depicted in Lily's character portrayal                   | -Young Lily's childhood as a witness of IPV.<br>-Adult Lily experiencing an IPV and leaving the abusive relationship.                  | -Sublimation through gardening turning into a flower shop.<br>-Intellectualization, as seen in Lily's character leaving an abusive relationship.   | -mother-daughter relationship:<br>Insecure attachment built with the maternal caregiver |
| <b>Author (Personal Account)</b> | -Abuse between intimate partner as witnessed by the the author during her childhood. | -Author's childhood witnessing an IPV. - Author's parents were demonstrating an IPV: the author's mother leaving the abusive marriage. | -Sublimation through writing.<br>-Intellectualization as seen in the author's mother staying in an abusive relationship for the sake of her daughter and later on leaving an abusive relationship. | -mother-daughter relationship:<br>Secure attachment brought by the maternal caregiver.  |

## CONCLUSION

The themes of the novel and the gathered information about the author were utilized to help with the underpinning of this area of the study. With the employment of the biographical approach and attachment theory, the results revealed the parallel motifs of the novel alongside the author's personal account. With this analysis, it can therefore be assumed that the novel's plotline is based on the author's personal experiences.

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