



## **The Analysis of Lily Bloom’s Trauma in Colleen Hoover’s *It Ends with Us***

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<b>ARTICLE INFO</b>	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
Received: 17 March 2025	This study investigates the representation of trauma in Colleen Hoover’s <i>It Ends with Us</i> through the experiences of the main character, Lily Bloom. The objective is to identify how Lily’s trauma is reflected, its causes, its effects, and the coping mechanisms she employs. A psychological approach is applied, drawing on the theories of Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and James Pennebaker, with descriptive qualitative analysis used to examine textual evidence from the novel. The findings show that Lily’s trauma is reflected in repetitive behaviors such as shuffling cards and in dissociative experiences like hallucinations. The primary cause of her trauma is her father’s domestic violence, while its effects include difficulties in relationships, emotional conflict, and instability, but also resilience and post-traumatic growth. Expressive writing functions as her main coping strategy, helping her process painful memories and ultimately break the cycle of abuse. This study concludes that <i>It Ends with Us</i> portrays the psychological complexity of trauma and emphasizes the role of literature in representing recovery. The research contributes to trauma studies and literary analysis by demonstrating how fiction can reveal the lived realities of trauma survivors and provide insight into pathways of healing.
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### **1. Introduction**

Trauma is one of the most pressing psychological issues studied across disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and literature. It refers to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope, often resulting in long-term emotional, cognitive, and behavioral consequences (Jeenah & Moosa, 2012; Narayan, 2012; Streeck-Fischer, 2021). While some survivors can recover and

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regain stability, many continue to experience intrusive memories, anxiety, and emotional instability that may persist for years or even a lifetime. The persistence of trauma highlights the importance of understanding both its causes and how survivors attempt to cope with its consequences.

Scholars have long debated how trauma should be understood and represented. Freud (1915) emphasized that trauma should not be seen merely as a physical injury but as a wound of the mind, shaping memory and perception in ways that are often unconscious (Cash, 2022; Garland, 2018; Pedersen, 2015). Building on this perspective, Judith Herman (1992) argued that trauma produces psychological distress that simultaneously draws attention to unspeakable experiences while concealing them. Cathy Caruth (1996) further explained that trauma is characterized by delayed responses, repetitive intrusions, and hallucinations that blur the boundaries between past and present, making it difficult for survivors to distinguish reality from memory. More recently, James Pennebaker (2016) has shown that expressive writing can function as a therapeutic tool, allowing individuals to externalize their suffering and integrate painful experiences into a coherent life story (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005; Joplin, 2000; Juth, Arigo, & Smyth, 2020; Singer et al., 2022). Together, these theories provide a foundation for examining how trauma is both experienced and narrated.

Literary texts play a crucial role in representing trauma, as they give voice to experiences that are often silenced or overlooked in everyday life (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, 2020; Allen, 2022; Forcinito, 2022). Trauma fiction frequently depicts characters who struggle with memory, language, and identity, offering readers insight into the psychological consequences of violence and abuse. By narrating trauma, literature not only reflects the lived realities of survivors but also provides spaces where readers can empathize, reflect, and gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of human suffering (Lim & Lye, 2024; Peterson, 2022; Salihi & Othman, 2024). As such, the study of trauma in literature contributes not only to literary criticism but also to broader discussions in psychology and cultural studies.

Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* (2016) is one such novel that engages with trauma in a powerful and accessible way. The story follows Lily Bloom, a young woman who grows up in an abusive household where her father repeatedly assaults her mother. Although Lily herself is not directly abused, she internalizes the cycle of violence and develops coping mechanisms, such as card shuffling and diary writing, to manage her emotional pain. As an adult, Lily enters a relationship with Ryle Kincaid, a neurosurgeon whose initial kindness gives way to violent outbursts. Confronted with the same cycle of abuse that defined her childhood, Lily is forced to confront her memories, reevaluate her coping mechanisms, and make life-altering decisions for herself and her future child.

Lily's character illustrates several dimensions of trauma as theorized by Freud, Herman, Caruth, and Pennebaker. She demonstrates the intrusive nature of memory and the repetitive return of violence into her life, consistent with Caruth's concept of belated trauma. Her silence and conflicted emotions reflect Herman's idea of trauma as both

revealing and concealing an unspeakable truth. At the same time, her reliance on expressive writing, particularly through diary entries addressed to Ellen DeGeneres, echoes Pennebaker's findings on writing as a therapeutic outlet. By analyzing Lily's experiences, *It Ends with Us* can be read not only as a romance novel but also as a narrative of trauma, survival, and post-traumatic growth.

Despite its popularity, *It Ends with Us* has received limited scholarly attention within trauma studies and literary criticism. Recent scholarship has begun to address the novel, but in ways that leave important dimensions unexplored. For example, some studies apply psychoanalytic and feminist frameworks to highlight Lily Bloom's process of self-conceptualization and identity formation after abuse (Ahsan, 2023), while others classify her trauma using Caruth's categories of acute, chronic, and complex trauma through character analysis (Kamalakaran, 2024). Additional research focuses on the social mirror of domestic violence and the psychological devastation of abuse, emphasizing how Hoover's narrative raises awareness about cycles of intimate partner violence and their long-term effects (Kanishkaa & Lizy, 2023; Kamalakaran, 2024). Another line of work critiques the cultural reception of the novel, especially the tendency of some readers to romanticize Ryle Kincaid, linking this to attributional and schema-based biases in how "bad boys" are perceived (Otaiwi, Mohsen, & Yousif, 2025). Together, these studies show that the novel is increasingly used to discuss identity, empowerment, and social critique.

However, these contributions also reveal clear gaps. First, while Caruth's and Herman's trauma theories are often cited, few studies systematically map Hoover's specific narrative devices, such as diary entries, flashbacks, and letters, to psychological models of trauma like belatedness, dissociation, and memory intrusion. Second, Lily's reliance on expressive writing is noted narratively, but it is rarely connected to empirical research on expressive writing as a coping mechanism (Pennebaker, 2016) or to frameworks of post-traumatic growth. Third, current studies emphasize sociocultural and thematic interpretation but remain largely literary, with limited interdisciplinary integration that connects the novel's portrayal to psychological processes documented in clinical or experimental research. Addressing these gaps, the present study brings together trauma theory and expressive-writing research to investigate how Lily's trauma is narrated, what causes and effects are represented, and how her writing practices function as coping strategies that resonate with therapeutic processes.

To address this gap, the present study investigates four key questions: (1) How is Lily Bloom's trauma reflected in the narrative? (2) What are the causes of her trauma? (3) What are the effects of her trauma? and (4) How does she cope with her trauma? These questions are examined using a descriptive qualitative method and a psychological framework informed by Freud, Herman, Caruth, and Pennebaker.

The significance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary contribution. On the one hand, it enriches trauma studies by showing how Hoover's novel illustrates key theoretical concepts through narrative form. On the other hand, it advances literary analysis by demonstrating how fiction can illuminate the lived realities of trauma

survivors and the strategies they use to heal. Ultimately, this study highlights the role of literature in raising awareness about the complexities of domestic violence and the possibilities of recovery, offering valuable insights for both scholars and general readers.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Causes of Trauma***

Trauma is commonly defined as the psychological response to events that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. These events are often sudden, uncontrollable, and deeply distressing. Both Luthra et al. (2009) and Verma et al. (2024) highlight that common causes of trauma include being a victim of crime, witnessing domestic violence or sexual assault, experiencing child abuse, surviving natural disasters, or losing a loved one. Such events often involve a profound sense of helplessness, which becomes central to the traumatic experience. Freud (1915) conceptualized trauma as a psychic wound, emphasizing that trauma is not only rooted in external events but also in the way individuals internalize and repress overwhelming experiences. This is consistent with Herman's (1992) argument that trauma is both historical and relational, shaped by the interplay between violent events and the survivor's psychological response.

In literary contexts, traumatic causes are often depicted through narratives of family abuse, war, displacement, or sudden loss. For example, Caruth (1996) highlights that trauma often resists direct representation because the event itself is too overwhelming to be fully processed at the time of occurrence. Thus, the causes of trauma in narratives frequently reappear indirectly, through fragmented memories, silences, or repetitive imagery that reflect the survivor's inability to integrate the traumatic event into conscious memory.

### ***2.2 Effects of Trauma***

Trauma often produces enduring psychological, emotional, and physical effects. Survivors may experience intrusive memories, flashbacks, hyperarousal, or difficulty concentrating (Shafir, 2022). The trauma manifests in feelings of fear, agitation, and emotional instability, often accompanied by physical stress reactions such as increased heart rate or insomnia. These effects echo Caruth's (1996) theory of trauma as a belated experience, where the traumatic event continues to intrude upon the present in repetitive and uncontrollable ways. Similarly, Herman (1992) describes trauma as simultaneously revealing and concealing, where the survivor's silence or dissociation reflects both the need to repress the unspeakable and the impossibility of forgetting it.

While trauma is often associated with negative consequences, scholars have also identified the possibility of positive transformation following adversity. This phenomenon, known as post-traumatic growth (PTG), refers to the capacity of survivors to develop new perspectives, resilience, and strengths after trauma. Naik and Khan (2019) highlight that trauma survivors often report increased gratitude, spiritual growth,

emotional intimacy, and a greater appreciation for life. Levy (2015) similarly emphasizes that post-traumatic growth involves discovering new possibilities and reconfiguring life priorities. From a psychological perspective, PTG demonstrates that trauma does not always end in pathology; instead, it can catalyze adaptive change. In literary studies, this is often represented through characters who, after suffering abuse or loss, develop resilience or find meaning in reconstructing their lives.

### ***2.3 Expressive Writing as a Coping Mechanism***

One of the most influential coping strategies for trauma is expressive writing. Developed by James Pennebaker in the 1980s, expressive writing involves writing about personal upheavals, traumatic experiences, or emotional struggles as a way of processing and integrating them into one's life narrative (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, 2016). Research shows that this practice provides psychological relief, reduces stress, and enhances overall well-being (Bryan & Lu, 2016). In his studies, Pennebaker observed that students who engaged in expressive writing often cried while recounting trauma but later reported emotional clarity and a greater sense of control.

Expressive writing allows trauma survivors to transform fragmented, intrusive memories into coherent narratives. As Pennebaker and Smyth (2016) argue in *Opening Up by Writing It Down*, humans have a fundamental need to externalize their experiences and "reveal ourselves to others," even if only through private writing. Herman (1992) also supports this view, suggesting that recovery requires a reworking of the past to reclaim the present and future. For adult survivors of childhood trauma, expressive writing provides a safe space to revisit painful experiences and construct meaning out of them (Batten et al., 2002).

In literary texts, expressive writing often appears as a narrative device, where characters cope with trauma by writing diaries, letters, or confessional notes (Dunnack & Park, 2009; Kunt, 2015; Wilhelm & Crawford, 2020). In *It Ends with Us*, Lily Bloom relies heavily on diary writing as a therapeutic outlet, echoing Pennebaker's findings. Her letters to Ellen DeGeneres serve not only as a record of her pain but also as a way of reconstructing her fragmented memories into a coherent personal narrative. This demonstrates how literature can reflect psychological practices of coping, blurring the boundaries between therapeutic writing and fictional narration.

## **3. Methods**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. As Lawless and Heymann (1999) note, descriptive techniques are particularly useful when a problem must be clearly defined and explained. The primary data source is Colleen Hoover's novel *It Ends with Us* (2016), with specific attention to quotations and passages that reflect the experiences of the main character, Lily Bloom. These textual excerpts serve as the basis for identifying the reflections, causes, effects, and coping mechanisms of Lily's trauma. In addition to the primary text, secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and previous studies on trauma theory are used to support the

analysis and provide theoretical grounding. The data are analyzed by interpreting relevant textual evidence in light of trauma theories proposed by Freud (1915), Herman (1992), Caruth (1996), and Pennebaker (2016). This approach allows for a systematic examination of Lily Bloom's psychological experiences and their representation within the novel.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

##### 4.1 *The reflection of Lily Bloom's trauma*

Lily Bloom's experiences of trauma are reflected in her actions and journal writings, which illustrate coping strategies as well as symptoms consistent with traumatic intrusion.

“..shuffling cards just calms me down sometimes and gives me something to focus on.” (Hoover, 2016: 26)

In her journal writings, she pretends to write to Ellen DeGenerous. As she states, she is experiencing trauma symptoms, she finds comfort in shuffling cards, it helps her to focus.” *I felt so defeated, but I was too scared to say anything to her about it.*” (Hoover, 2016: 84) In here, Lily is stuck due to what happens after her mother told her not to tell anyone about what happened.

“I walked straight to the kitchen and I opened a drawer. I grabbed the biggest knife I could find and . . . I don't know how to explain it. It was like I wasn't even in my own body. I could see myself walking across the kitchen with the knife in my hand, and I knew I wasn't going to use it.”

As the writer explains in the theory section, Caruth (1996) Stated that people who experience trauma will experience the appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. In Lily's journal writings, she describes how she feels at the time; she grabs the knife in a conscious state, knowing she's not going to use it. It suggests that Lily has been experiencing hallucinations.

##### 4.2 *Causes of Trauma*

The chapter begins with Lily Bloom, an adult, meeting Ryle Kincaid; her future partner. Ryle shows up to Lily on top of a rooftop clearly upset, and kicks a chair out of frustration. Following that, it is revealed that Lily had just returned home from her father's funeral, and Ryle, a practicing neurosurgeon, had recently lost a patient. Despite the fact that they have never met, Lily confides in Ryle that her father used to abuse her mother.

“My father was abusive. Not to me—to my mother. He would get so angry when they fought that sometimes he would hit her. 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, 15)

In this paragraph, the readers get to learn about the traumatic events Lily went through for the first time. As a kid, Lily tells her mother to leave him but it becomes the norm of their marriage, as she states on page 16: “But the abuse was inevitable with their marriage, and it became our norm”. Lily anticipates the next abuse from her father. According to Caruth (1996) people who experience traumatic events will start to combine their past and their present; Lily seems delayed in reality because of what happens next after their parents fight.

### **4.3 Effects of Trauma**

#### *1. Negative Effects*

Lily and Ryle have become very close. Ryle and Lily attend a dinner with Lily's mother at Bib's Restaurant, which is actually owned by Atlas. Lily is taken aback when she sees Atlas, recalling a childhood memory that put her in a bad mood. Atlas was very sweet to her until he moved to Boston, and after they returned home, Lily didn't talk to Ryle about Atlas. Yes, Lily mentioned Atlas when they first met, but he has never met him. When the casserole in the oven burns out, Ryle and Lily are drinking wine in Lily's apartment. Ryle opens the oven door and waves the smoke away. He gets burned after reaching the Casserole without a port and injuring his hand. She starts laughing at him while drinking three glasses of wine, and then Ryle pushes her. “In a matter of one second, Ryle’s arm came out of nowhere and slammed against me, knocking me backward..... Pain shoots through the corner of my eye, right near my temple..... So much gravity, pushing down on my emotions. Everything shatters. My tears, my heart, my laughter, my soul. Shattered like broken glass, raining down around me.” (Hoover, 2016: 138) “Goddammit, Lily,” I hear him say. “It’s not funny. This hand is my fucking career.” (Hoover, 2016: 138)

Ryle apologizes to Lily; he says everything happened so quickly that he did not intend to push her. Lily was shocked and confused, and she felt angry and sad all at the same time. She can't believe what just happened. All she could think about at the time is her father apologizing to her. Lily appears to be under pressure to put her trust in Ryle after what he did to her. She told herself a few times that she needed to be sure she could trust him. In here can be argue that Lily when it comes to relationship she finds difficulties. It occurs to Herman (1992): Lily has demonstrated that she has lasting effect and feeling anxious.

Ryle's apology brought Lily comfort. But Lily still feels disappointed in her heart, and her thoughts are inconsistent. “I can’t tell if I’m more disappointed in him or myself. Him for losing his temper in the first place or me for somehow finding comfort in his apology” (Hoover, 2016: 140) Lily is perplexed by her disappointment, not knowing whether she was disappointed because Ryles lost his temper or because she

easily forgives him, making Lily similar to her mother, who tolerated her abusive father. Another self-conflict Lily has is when she calls Atlas to pick her up after the tense exchange between Lily and Ryle. She decides to write a letter to Ellen at Atlas House, just like she did when she was sixteen. Lily has conflicting emotions that make her agitated to respond to Ryle, so knowing that they both want to have the conversation, Lily began asking him naked truths. At the time, Lily doesn't have much to say to Ryle, so she waits for him to go first and wonders how he will react. Ryle's response to her is that he didn't know what he was supposed to say either, and Lily was gathering her emotions and letting off on him.

“Yes. I kept the magnet Atlas gave me when we were kids. Yes. I kept the journals. No, I didn't tell you about my tattoo. Yes, I probably should have. And yes, I still love him. And I'll love him until I die, because he was a huge part of my life. And yes, I'm sure that hurts you. But none of that gave you the right to do what you did to me. Even if you would have walked into my bedroom and caught us in bed together, you still would not have the right to lay a hand on me, you goddamn son of a bitch!” (Hoover 2016: 240)

Lily feeling exhausted, she is tired, she press her face against pillow so she could barely breathe. “The pain in his voice ripples through me, and when I lift my tearsoaked face to look at him” (Hoover, 2016: 241).

## 2. *Positive Effects*

Departing from Lily's Childhood background, it is not so good and not so bad either. Lily grew up in an abusive family; her father was abusive to her mother. In her childhood, she likes to write a letter to Ellen DeGeneres until she turned sixteen. She is a big fan of Ellen. Her Ellen diaries are her outlet; whenever she needs to feel better, she writes down her feelings. She writes a letter to Ellen about a homeless man who lives behind Lily's house at the time; Lily's neighbor, Mrs. Burlson, who used to live there, has died, and the house is deserted and dark. When she looks at the old house, she notices a small amount of light coming from it.

“so I noticed the light right away. It wasn't bright, but it was coming from that old house. It looked more like candlelight than anything, so I went to the back porch and found Dad's binoculars. I tried to see what was going on over there, but I couldn't see anything. It was way too dark. Then after a little while, the light went out” (Hoover, 2016: 26)

Lily's bedroom window looks out onto the backyard. Lily is fascinated by the man who lives there; on her way to school, she notices something moving around behind the house—the man carrying a backpack.

Lily asking her friend, Katie, about his name and his name is Atlas: he's a senior. Kattie says to Lily that Atlas smells bad, and Lily can't help but seem to defend Atlas. From her writing that shows Atlas, the writer believes that Lily is a very caring person to treat a stranger like Atlas. "I wanted to yell at her and tell her he can't help it and that he doesn't have any running water" (Hoover, 2016: 27). Lily is the one who doesn't get physical abuse from her father. But, growing up in a household where her parents sometimes get into fights doesn't make her afraid to deal with people; instead, she is brave and wants to help people in difficulties.

Another example shows when she meet Ryle her future husband for the first time, after her father's funeral, Lily catch a flight straight to Boston and trying to find a rooftop because she really needs a fresh air and silence. She met a stranger named Ryle Kincaid on a rooftop; he is a neurosurgeon; they didn't take too long to find comfort in having a conversation, like before she met Atlas. So, they start telling each other the "naked truth." Lily is the first to tell the truth, and the naked truth is her father's funeral speech. Her mother, Jenny Bloom, asks Lily to deliver the eulogy for her father, but Lily refuses because she is uncomfortable doing so. She believes that eulogies should be delivered by those who have respect for the deceased, and she had little respect for her father as a result of what he did to her mother. Even so, her mother says that was the only thing her father would have wanted. As a daughter, she loves her father, but as a human, she hates him. Afterwards, Lily starts to give her eulogy, but she makes no mention of her father's good deeds while he was still alive.

"Hello. My name is Lily Bloom, daughter of the late Andrew Bloom. Thank you all for joining us today as we mourn his loss. I wanted to take a moment to honor his life by sharing with you five great things about my father. The first thing . . ." I look down at Ryle and shrug. "That's it" (Hoover, 2016: 17) "..... I'm not proud of it. I don't think. I mean, 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: 18).

Lily tells Ryle, about a dream opening floral shop, gardening and flowers it's her passion. Six months later, she bought a former restaurant space; there was still a table, old chairs, and other items, as well as a lot of dust. While she was cleaning, Allysa came in because she saw a "Help Wanted" sign outside. She does not need a job, but she says she is happy to help, so she offers to do the designing, and Lily eventually hires her. Lily's vision is to be brave and bold, so she came up with the idea of using darker colors to celebrate winter and death instead of the sweet side of flowers, which she makes clear to Allysa.

"Instead of painting the walls a putrid sweet color, we paint them dark purple with black accents. And instead of only putting out the usual pastel displays of flowers in boring crystal vases that make people think of life, we go edgy. Brave and bold. We put out displays of darker flowers wrapped in things like leather or

silver chains. And rather than put them in crystal vases, we'll stick them in black onyx or . . . I don't know . . . purple velvet vases lined with silver studs. The ideas are endless." (Hoover, 2016: 38)

Lily thinks differently and fairly confident about it, it's a new perspective, she interpretation about the idea very clearly, which is what makes her arriving at solutions, it is revealed as Levy (2015) people may grow in strength and shows her courage.

#### ***4.4 Lily's way of coping her trauma***

##### ***1. Expressive Writing***

Adult Lily looks back at her young self, absolving herself of what she thought or knew at the time. The first writings are about Lily's first meeting with her childhood crush, Atlas, a homeless boy. She's starting to write about how she saw someone sneak into the abandoned house behind her house and casually brings up how she shuffles cards while her parents are fighting. She had no friends when she was younger, and the people who were supposed to help her were the ones who caused her trauma, and she never saw a professional about what she had gone through. Her coping mechanism of choice was to write in her diary as if she were writing a letter to Ellen DeGeneres. It could be argued, addresses the letters to Ellen to feel better; she seems to be speaking to someone rather than simply writing everything down, Lily's only way to discuss and narrate her thoughts and feelings is to write in a diary and pretend to write to Ellen DeGeneres.

“.....I was in bed shuffling cards. I know that sounds weird, but it's just something I do. I don't even know how to play cards. But when my parents get into fights, shuffling cards just calms me down sometimes and gives me something to focus on.” (Hoover, 2016: 26)

The second evidence of Lily's expressive writing, is when her writing made a time jump of 6 months, it is significant that we get to see Lily's growth and how she separates herself from her childhood. Lily had the same experience as her mother as an adult. Ryle has hurt her a few times in their relationship. The first time Ryle hurt his hand and Lily laughs, he becomes enraged and pushes her.

The last diary she wrote as a teenager and rereads as an adult was about Atlas after seeing him for the first time in years; she feels the need to read about Atlas in the past to find closure because she is currently in a new relationship with Ryle. This part of her diary is when her father found out about Atlas and her father hit Atlas with a baseball bat. After this, teenage Lily stops writing the diary because she wants to take a break. However, Lily finds it difficult to write a letter to Ellen, she knew exactly the only thing that can make her feel better is to let it out on paper but she still processing about what happened to Atlas and to think about it alone; she felt so much pain. *“I think I'm going to take a break from writing to you for a while. Writing to you reminds me of him, and it*

*all hurts too much.*" (Hoover, 2016: 161). Here, she distances herself from her trauma; as stated by Herman, we get the rediscovery of history from this passage; she acknowledges what she has gone through, yet she feels like she needs to write it down at least one more time. When Ryle physically abuses Lily, he pushes her and chokes her. Lily calls Atlas to pick her up, and they go to Atlas's house. Concerned about the complex feelings she has, she decides to write down her feelings like she used to as a teenager while hiding in Atlas' place and staying away from Ryle. Lily writes the last entry.

"The last time I wrote to you, I was sixteen. I was in a really bad place and I was so worried about Atlas. I'm not worried about Atlas anymore, but I am in a really bad place right now. More so than the last time I wrote to you" (Hoover, 2016: 209)

We can see from that passage that Lily built her stories on the last time she wrote; she finds nothing better than not writing them down on paper. According to Pennebaker, "we need to reveal ourselves to others" (Pennebaker: 2016, 1), and she found a way through expressive writing. Lily realizes what she used to think actually is harder where she is now experiencing it: we can see Lily needs to understand her past to start a better life (Herman, 1992) she uses expressive writing as a coping mechanism as a teen and able to reread it as an adult. She finds healing from read the old journals.

In the last chapter, Lily finally breaks the cycle of abuse. She decides after the baby is born and tells Ryle she wants to divorce because she thinks about the baby's life: "It isn't until this moment that I finally make a decision about him, about us." "About what's best for our family." (Hoover, 2016: 265) She knows that if she keeps the relationship with Ryle, it will be bad for their daughter because Ryle is afraid of losing control of his emotions and hitting her. Thus, the cycle ends here; Lily doesn't want it to repeat in her daughter's life.

## 5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine Lily Bloom's trauma in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* by addressing four research questions: how her trauma is reflected, its causes, its effects, and how she copes with it. The analysis shows that Lily's trauma is reflected through repetitive behaviors, such as shuffling cards during her parents' fights, and through dissociative experiences like hallucinations. The primary cause of her trauma is her father's long-term abuse of her mother, which shapes Lily's understanding of relationships and resurfaces in her adult life. The effects of this trauma are twofold: negatively, it creates emotional conflict, difficulties in trust and intimacy, and a tendency to internalize pain; positively, it fosters resilience, self-awareness, and the determination to break the cycle of abuse. Lily's main coping mechanism is expressive writing, as seen in her diary entries addressed to Ellen DeGeneres. This practice allows her to process painful memories, revisit her past from a more mature perspective, and

ultimately make the decision to protect herself and her child by ending her abusive relationship. In conclusion, the study demonstrates how Hoover's novel portrays the complexity of trauma and recovery, highlighting both the destructive and transformative dimensions of Lily's experiences. By applying trauma theory to literary analysis, this research underscores the value of literature as a medium for understanding the psychological realities of survivors and their pathways toward healing.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

### **Authors' contribution**

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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