

## **Domestic Violence Experienced by Lily Bloom in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us***

**Izza Hanum Salsabila**

Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Surabaya  
izzahanum.20007@mhs.unesa.ac.id

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika kekerasan dalam rumah tangga (KDRT) dan pelarian Lily Bloom dari hubungan yang penuh kekerasan dalam novel *It Ends With Us* karya Colleen Hoover. Berlandaskan teori siklus kekerasan Lenore Walker, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana Lily mengalami kekerasan berulang dari suaminya, Ryle Kincaid. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa KDRT yang dialami Lily mengikuti pola siklus yang terdiri dari tiga fase; (1) Peningkatan Ketegangan (Tension-Building), ditandai dengan meningkatnya ketegangan dalam hubungan Lily dan Ryle karena pertengkaran kecil, ketidaksepakatan, dan rasa frustrasi menjadi pemicu awal. (2) Fase Kekerasan Akut (Acute Violence) yang merupakan puncak dari siklus kekerasan, di mana Ryle melakukan tindakan kekerasan fisik terhadap Lily. (3) Fase Rekonsiliasi (Reconciliation) yang menunjukkan penyesalan dan permintaan maaf dari Ryle.

**Kata Kunci:** KDRT, siklus kekerasan, rekonsiliasi, kekerasan akut

### **Abstract**

This research examines the dynamics of domestic violence (KDRT) and Lily Bloom's escape from a violent relationship in the novel *It Ends With Us* by Colleen Hoover. Based on Lenore Walker's cycle of violence theory, this research analyzes how Lily experiences repeated violence from her husband, Ryle Kincaid. Research findings show that the domestic violence experienced by Lily follows a cyclical pattern consisting of three phases; (1) Tension-Building, characterized by increasing tension in Lily and Ryle's relationship because small fights, disagreements and frustration become the initial trigger. (2) Acute Violence Phase, which is the peak of the cycle of violence, where Ryle commits acts of physical violence against Lily. (3) Reconciliation Phase which shows Ryle's regret and apology.

**Keywords:** domestic violence. the cycle of violence, tension-building, reconciliation, acute violence

## **INTRODUCTION**

Domestic violence as defined by Ganley (1986), is a serious and pervasive issue that extends far beyond physical harm. It's a systematic pattern of violent and controlling behaviors used by adults or adolescents to exert power and dominance over their intimate partner. This abuse can manifest in various forms, creating a climate of fear and control. Physical assault, sexual violence, and threats are certainly terrifying tactics, but domestic violence can also be much subtler. Perpetrators may use economic manipulation, withholding finances or sabotaging the victim's financial security, to keep them dependent and vulnerable. Psychological abuse, through verbal attacks, intimidation, and emotional manipulation, chips away at the victim's self-esteem and isolates them from support systems. The pervasive nature of this abuse leaves lasting scars on victims, both physical and

psychological. It's a critical social issue that demands immediate attention and intervention to protect victims and break the cycle of violence.

Domestic violence shatters the very foundation of a safe and loving relationship. It's not simply isolated outbursts of anger, but a vast and complex problem marked by systematic patterns of control exerted by one partner over the other (Derrington, 2010). Often fueled by a deep-seated need for dominance (Johnson, 2008), the abuser employs a chilling arsenal of tactics, both physical and psychological, to subjugate their victim. This harassment can manifest in a multitude of ways, ranging from subtle intimidation and constant humiliation to acts of brutal physical violence and even murder. The core issue at the heart of domestic violence isn't about physical strength or gender; it's about the ruthless abuse of power

and control to manipulate and terrify the victim into submission.

Typically, domestic violence follows a cyclical pattern (Walker, 1979). This cycle characterizes the recurring behavior of individuals who engage in domestic violence. Lenore Walker breaks this cycle down into three stages: the tension building phase, the acute violence phase, and the reconciliation phase.

There is an emotional tension that can heighten conflict during the tension-building stage. These behaviors include teasing, purposeful malice, and even physical assault. The offender displays anger and discontent in a way that isn't quite severe or explosive (Walker, 2009). The victim made an effort to defuse the situation by acting in ways that she believed would appease and calm the offender, or at the very least, by taking acts that would prevent the offender from becoming even angrier. They make an effort to remain silent in the face of hostility and employ common sense methods to calm down. Occasionally, they were momentarily successful, which strengthened their irrational conviction that they could manipulate the offender. It also contributes to a habit of contradictory reactions and teaches hopelessness.

As the tension increases, the victim becomes more afraid of impending danger until she loses control of his aggressive reaction patterns. Weary of the constant tension, the victim usually withdraws from the abuser, fearing she may unwittingly set off an explosion (Walker, 1979). At this point, there is no way to stop the acute violent incident without help. Every now and then a woman speeds up the inevitable explosion in an attempt to better control its location and timing and better position herself to experience less discomfort and harm. Eventually, the victim will be able to predict when the inevitable violence will occur. In the second phase, the unchecked tension that built up in the first is released (Walker, 1979). Usually, the victim experiences physical and verbal abuse, which can leave them terrified and perhaps seriously injured. In an attempt to fend off attacks, the victim covered as much of their faces and body as they could. In the event of an accident, it typically occurs in this second phase.

The abuser may provide a sincere apology, try to assist the victim, exhibit warmth and regret, and give them presents and promises during the reconciliation phase. At this point, the victims of abuse could swear never to use violence against themselves. The goal of this activity is to influence the victim back into feeling hopeful and secure. In the early stages of a relationship, while the initial love is still strong, the victim is more likely to accept the genuineness of the abuser. The abuser's persuasive performance combined with their desire to perceive the

positive aspects of their relationship can renew hope for a better future. But this hope is frequently misguided.

During the reconciliation phase, abusers attempt to win back their victims with apologies, affection, and promises to change. This act is a manipulative ploy to create a false sense of security and reignite hope, especially early in a relationship (Walker, 2009). Blinded by love and the abuser's convincing performance, victims are more likely to believe in a possible change. However, this hope is misplaced. The abuser's loving behavior simply mimics their courtship tactics, effectively trapping the victim back in the cycle of violence.

Literature has become a powerful weapon against domestic violence. Writers weave narratives that expose its harrowing realities, educating the public far beyond simple storytelling. Novels, for example, offer intimate glimpses into abusive relationships. As Toni Morrison (1987) stated that fiction is the truth inside the lie. Through characters, readers experience the victim's emotional turmoil, isolation, and fight for survival. Novels expose the manipulative tactics and power imbalances that define domestic violence. This journey allows readers to not only witness the abuse's impact but also empathize with the victim. By fostering understanding and breaking the silence, novels become agents of social change, transforming stories into tools for a better future.

In relation to domestic violence in literary works, this study aims to analyze a novel entitled *It Ends With Us* by Colleen Hoover. This novel follows Lily Bloom's fight to escape her past and forge a future free from abuse. Haunted by a childhood marred by her father's violence, Lily seeks solace in Boston, building a new life. There, she meets Ryle, a successful doctor who seems ideal. But love takes a dark turn as Ryle's hidden volatility surfaces. Lily grapples with the agonizing choice: protect herself from his violent outbursts or hold onto a love tinged with fear. Meanwhile, the return of Atlas, a childhood friend who offered her protection, reignites old feelings, forcing Lily to confront what she truly desires. As Ryle's behavior escalates, Lily must choose – love that threatens her safety or a path towards healing and happiness.

Concerning domestic violence, there have been several recent study projects on domestic violence in various literary works. Yuliana conducted the first study in 2020, which aims to reveal various forms of domestic violence directed at the main character Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye*. This study investigates and responds to this problem using Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory and Ganley's theory of domestic violence. Based on the analysis findings, Pecola Breedlove, the main female character in the novel, experienced domestic violence in the form of sexual, physical, and psychological violence.

The study found that domestic violence is the result of one person's dominant behavior towards another person. Superiority motivates people to discriminate and mistreat others.

In addition, Apriani's study in 2020 explores its portrayal in Dini's *La Barka*. Here, Dini depicts various forms of abuse – physical, emotional, and sexual – highlighting their impact on female characters' lives and identities. Kartika's research, using Steel's *Journey*, examines similar themes. Through Paula and Margie's framework, this study identifies forms of abuse, while Wolf and Mill's theories illuminate Maddy's (the protagonist) resistance. Maddy endures emotional and sexual abuse but resists by seeking personal agency – expressing her opinions, making choices, and defying control.

While Yuliana's study offers valuable insights into the diverse forms of domestic violence in *The Bluest Eye*, it primarily focuses on analyzing the violence itself and its impact on the victim. This leaves a gap in exploring the victim's agency and the specific processes involved in escaping the abusive situation. Apriani's analysis of domestic violence depicted in *La Barka* also provides a comprehensive understanding of its various forms and their consequences. However, these studies do not explicitly explore the victim's strategies or the specific steps they take to escape from the cycle of abuse.

While these two studies offer valuable insights into the diverse forms of domestic violence, they primarily leave gaps in different literary works and the theories used. To fill this gap, the author intends to explore domestic violence in the novel *It Ends With Us* using Lenore Walker's cycle of violence theory.

## METHODOLOGY

This study delves into the portrayal of domestic violence in Colleen Hoover's *"It Ends With Us,"* going beyond mere identification of the abuse. The author meticulously builds a case for this claim. First, a thorough examination of the novel is conducted. This close reading ensures not just a surface-level understanding of the plot, but a nuanced grasp of the story's progression and the complex dynamics between characters. This initial phase lays the critical groundwork for the analysis to come. Next, the author meticulously selects sentences and phrases that directly connect to the portrayal of domestic violence. These highlighted sections become key pieces of evidence, meticulously chosen to build a robust foundation for the analysis. Finally, the author leverages Lenore Walker's (2009) cycle of violence theory as a framework for data collection. This established theory serves as a valuable tool, allowing the author to systematically identify the specific stages of violence experienced by Lily Bloom

throughout the novel. By integrating close reading, meticulous evidence selection, and a recognized theoretical framework, this study offers a comprehensive and insightful analysis of domestic violence within the narrative.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ryle and Lily's relationship was marred by a recurring pattern of domestic violence. This cycle of violence consisted of three distinct phases: tension-building, acute violence, and reconciliation. These phases will be examined in detail in the following section.

### Tension Building Phase

The cycle of domestic violence begins with a simmering pot of tension. Arguments and emotional outbursts become more frequent, creating friction between partners. This can eventually escalate into physical violence. The abuser might express unhappiness and anger, but it hasn't reached a violent outburst yet (Walker, 2009). Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* portrays this phase through Ryle and Lily's encounters with rising tension before things turn physical.

*"...He holds it up, then tosses it toward me. 'Did you get a chance to read that yet?' I blow out a breath of relief. 'Not yet,' I say, my eyes falling to the article. 'Read it out loud.' I glance up at him. 'I'd like you to take off your shirt first. Then read it out loud.' I stare at him, trying to gauge his behavior. ...I set the paper down, pull off my shirt, and then pick the paper back up. I start reading the article out loud. ...I stop reading and look up at Ryle. 'It's a long story,' Chef Corrigan stated. 'It was an homage to someone who had a huge impact on my life.' ...I put the newspaper on the counter. 'I don't want to read anymore.' My voice cracks on its way up my throat." (Hoover, 2016:204-205)*

The main source of tension was Ryle's jealousy upon learning that Atlas was still able to recall his past with Lily. When Ryle interrupted the apparently peaceful exchange by asking Lily to read the piece aloud, tension started to build. The words "Read it aloud" are used to indicate the scene. Lily is constantly on edge due to Ryle's erratic conduct, which is a defining feature of the tension-building stage.

Then, it appears that Ryle is trying to take control of the situation and Lily's body as he demands that she take off her shirt before saying, "I'd like you to take off your shirt first." This exercise of control is consistent with Walker's portrayal of the victim as someone who acquiesces to abusers' requests in order to make them feel better. Walker contends that in order to subdue their

victims and create tension, abusers frequently employ coercive control techniques.

Lily's anxiety about Ryle's capricious behavior is evident in her internal monologue, "trying to gauge his behavior," and her eventual compliance, "I set the paper down...start reading." Lily finally gave in and undressed, reading the paper even though the scenario made no sense. Walker's theory that victims feel under pressure to behave carefully so as not to upset the abuser is supported by this. In this stage, victims frequently try to placate their abusers by giving in to their requests, apologizing, or avoiding conflict entirely (Walker, 2009).

*"Ryle takes two swift steps forward and grabs the newspaper, He picks up where I left off, his voice loud and angry now. "When asked if the girl was aware he named a restaurant after her, Chef Corrigan smiled knowingly and said, 'Next question.' " The anger in Ryle's voice makes me nauseous. "Ryle, stop it." I say calmly. "You've had too much drink." (Hoover, 2016:205)*

This scene's progression shows us more tension developing, which fits in well with Lenore Walker's cyclical model of domestic violence's idea of the tension-building phase. Ryle disregards Lily's boundaries and is moving toward domination as evidenced by his "two swift steps forward" and his grasping of the newspaper. The threat level is increased by this physical action. His voice gets "loud and angry," scaring Lily even more and intensifying the situation.

Little opposition is encountered when Lily tries to take back control by saying, "Ryle, stop it." Ryle ignores her appeal and carries on reading, emphasizing how powerless she is. In addition to reflecting the woman's desperate attempt to placate the abuser—a frequent strategy in abusive relationships—blaming alcohol, saying, "You've had too much drink." This emphasizes the disparity in power and her waning influence on the circumstance. The intimidation aspect is increased by Ryle's aggressive acts and irate tone. Lily tries in vain to calm him down, and the next phase increases the likelihood of violence.

Divergent opinions in a relationship can sometimes lead to periods of tension building (Walker, 2009). Divergent opinions may exist over matters like childrearing, money matters, or the relationships between friends and family. These distinctions may give rise to arguments and annoyance. Couples may experience increased tension if they are unable to effectively discuss their differences. Couples may find it difficult to communicate their wants and feelings to one another or to listen intently to one another.

*"We were discussing his career. He's finished with his residency now and there's a three-month specialized course in Cambridge, England, he applied for. He'll find out soon if he was approved, but that's not why I was upset. ...I became upset when he discussed what he wanted to do after the Cambridge trip was over. He was offered a job in Minnesota at the Mayo Clinic and he wants us to move there. ...I can't leave Boston. My mother lives here. Allysa lives here. He told me it was only a five-hour flight and that we could visit as often as we wanted. I told him it was pretty hard to run a floral business when you live several states away. ...At one point he knocked a vase full of flowers off the table and onto the floor." (Hoover, 2016:192)*

The aforementioned quotation demonstrates how Ryle and Lily's disagreements cause friction. At first, the talk seems innocuous, but tension arises from Lily's unsaid dissatisfaction with the prospect of their going to Minnesota. This is in line with Walker's theory of creating tension, which is about small arguments brought on by resentment and disagreements that start small. The way Ryle dismissed his wife's worries, saying things like "five-hour flight, visit often," also suggested a possible power imbalance. Walker contends that the abuser may start to exercise control during the phase of creating tension by subtly manipulating the victim or showing indifference to her feelings.

Ryle then responds to Lily's emotional state of "upset" by physically knocking the vase off the table. Though not mentioned directly, Ryle's actions suggest that if tensions keep rising, there may be more violent outbursts. Furthermore, Lily's reluctance to articulate her desire to stay near her family—as evidenced by her statement, "I cannot leave Boston"—suggests a dynamic that might impede honest communication. Walker disclosed that victims may behave extremely cautiously and be cautious with their words and behavior throughout the time of developing tension. Because the victim attempts to avoid situations that could incite the abuser's rage or violent conduct, it's as if they are walking on eggshells.

### **Acute Violence Phase**

A critical step in the cycle of violence is the acute violence stage. The tensions and dangers that accumulated during the preceding phase are finally resolved during this phase (Walker, 1979). The victim experiencing violence, such as physical and sexual abuse, is indicative of this phase. The

domestic abuse case between Ryle and Lily in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* comes to a physical confrontation when Ryle hits Lily.

Ryle's first act of physical violence occurred when Lily made fun of him and it caused tension between the two of them. Things went well for them at first, even romantically. Just back from the hospital, Ryle went up to Lily who was in the kitchen preparing food and gave her a hug. Then he informed her that he was chosen to perform the uncommon procedure of separating conjoined twins. But Ryle was getting hungry, so they had to cut their chat short. Ryle noticed the dish he'd placed in the oven earlier had burned as he dashed to the kitchen. The quotes that follow serve as examples of this type of physical violence.

*"The casserole falls from his hand and lands on the floor, shattering everywhere. ...I start laughing as soon as I realize he didn't even think to use a pot holder. ... 'I', instantly not laughing anymore. I'm on the floor, my hand pressed against the corner of my eye. In a matter of one second, Ryle's arm came out of nowhere and slammed against me, knocking me backward. There was enough force behind it to knock off balance. When I lost my footing, I hit my face on one of the cabinet door handles as I came down. My shoulders begin to shake and huge, hurt-filled tears spill down my cheeks. I'm a little in shock, ... 'Oh my God. You pushed me, Ryle.' The realization of what has just happened hurts worse than the actual action."* (Hoover, 2016:143-145)

Ryle reached for the dish without thinking and took it without donning gloves. This resulted in his hand getting wounded. Then Ryle tossed the dish everywhere, causing a flurry of activity across the kitchen. A burned casserole that spills to the ground is a warning of escalating hostilities. After seeing the incident, Lily laughed at Ryle "I start laughing." It may be seen as nervousness or Lily trying to minimize the issue as a protective technique. The abuser's abrupt and aggressive move is described as "Ryle's arm came out of nowhere and slammed against me, knocking me backward," indicating that physical violence had occurred. This improves the portrayal of the severe beating episode. The abuser is acting aggressively and with the intention of hurting the victim.

The awful truth of the extremely violent stage of Lenore Walker's cycle of violence is eloquently captured in this episode. Ryle's abrupt and forceful hit, which caused Lily to tumble to the ground and smash against a cupboard door, represents the physically aggressive aspect of this phase of violence. "When I lost my footing, I hit my face on one of the cabinet door handles as I came down."

This sentence pictured how her face striking the cabinet handle emphasizes even more how seriously the injuries were to her body.

Walker explains that during the acute period of violence, victims frequently experience extreme dread, uncertainty, and powerlessness. It was the circumstance and state that Lily encountered. She said, "Oh my God," demonstrating how appalled she was by the horror of what had occurred. "You pushed me, Ryle," indicates hurt and outrage at what had happened, places the blame squarely on the abuser, and conveys the hurt that the action had caused. When combined, these quotations create an unsettling image of a violent episode. The victim's injuries, the attack's suddenness, and the victim's panic all serve to highlight the violent stage's traits in Walker's cycle of violence.

Lily again received physical violence from Ryle as can be seen from the following quote:

*"He grabs my wrist and pushes me away from him."* (Hoover, 2016:179)

Acts of physical aggressiveness include both pushing and grabbing. Snatching the victim's wrist, a delicate spot frequently used for communication denotes an attempt to restrict the victim's freedom of expression and control over their body. Pushing the victim away highlights the aggressor's intention to establish control and isolate themselves from the victim. The push's vague intensity raises the possibility of pain or at least discomfort. These behaviors are consistent with Walker's definition of acute violence.

This phase of acute violence is marked by severe and perilous acts of both physical and emotional violence carried out by the perpetrator against the victim (Walker, 2009). Physical violence refers to actions that use force to harm or control another person. This may involve beatings, stabbings, shootings, and other forms of physical abuse (Hooks, 2008). In Ryle and Lily's household, they were not only involved in this dreadful stage once. As illustrated in the following dialogue, Ryle once again physically attacked Lily.

*"Where did you get that magnet, Lily?" What? My heart feels like it begins beating in reverse. Why does he keep asking me this? His fingers are still moving inside of me, and his eyes still look like they want me. But his hand. The hand that's wrapped in my hair begins to tug harder and I wince. "Ryle," I whisper, keeping my voice calm, even though I'm beginning to shake. "That hurts." His fingers stop moving, but his gaze never leaves mine. He slowly pulls his fingers out of me and then brings his hand up around my throat, squeezing gently. His lips meet mine and his tongue dives inside my*

*mouth. I take it, because I have no idea what's going through his head right now and I pray I'm overreacting. I can feel him hard against his jeans as he presses into me.*" (Hoover, 2016: 204)

This excerpt from the novel portrays a complicated and troubling scenario, effectively illustrating the acute violence stage in Lenore Walker's cycle of violence. The passage depicts a moment that initially appears sexual but rapidly turns unsettling and possibly violent. The phrase "His fingers are still moving inside of me, his eyes still look like they want me" implies a physical act of intimacy. However, the subsequent phrase, "But his hand," introduces a pause, creating a sense of discomfort. This interruption disrupts the sequence, signaling that something is wrong with the situation.

The phrase "his eyes still look like they want me" is crucial. It evokes a sense of uncertainty. On one hand, it could indicate that Ryle desires Lily, but on the other hand, it may point to a possessive or aggressive attitude masked as desire. This ambiguity contributes to the unsettling nature of the situation. Lily might feel uncertain about Ryle's true intentions, creating an atmosphere of danger and unpredictability. Although the encounter begins with sexual overtones, the change in tone and the ambiguity of the abuser's gaze suggest a potential for violence. This corresponds with the acute battering incident in Lenore Walker's cycle, where acts that appear intimate can quickly shift into violent and controlling behavior, culminating in physical violence in the following scene.

"The hand that's wrapped in my hair begins to tug harder and I wince." This sentence portrays a physical act of aggression. The act of pulling the hair is painful, and Lily's wince is a reflexive response to that pain. This is a clear depiction of the acute violence incident, as the physical aggression serves as a form of abuse. This description links the action (hair pulling) to the acute violence phase. Physical abuse is a key feature of this stage in Lenore Walker's cycle of violence.

Lily tries to calm Ryle by softly saying his name, "Ryle," and downplaying the pain with "That hurts." Her trembling, despite her effort to stay composed, still reveals fear. This can be seen as a defensive strategy employed by the victim during the acute battering incident. The victim attempts to minimize the situation in order to prevent further violence. This explains Lily's actions as an effort to protect herself. By whispering, remaining calm (even while shaking), and downplaying the pain, she is trying to de-escalate the situation and avoid provoking additional violence from the abuser. Such defensive tactics are commonly used by victims in abusive circumstances.

Ryle's fingers paused, though his gaze stayed fixed on his wife. Slowly, he withdrew his finger and touched Lily's neck, applying a gentle squeeze. This represents a moment of misplaced confidence, quickly followed by emerging threats. Even a gentle squeeze of the neck constitutes an act of intimidation and control, heightening the severity of acute violence. The perpetrator's actions were erratic and fostered a persistent sense of danger. Forced kissing "His lips meet mine and his tongue dives inside my mouth" is another demonstration of control and a blatant violation of the victim's boundaries. The internal monologue, "I have no idea what's going through his head right now and I pray I'm overreacting," reveals the fear and submission caused by the perpetrator's unpredictable behavior. This situation remains a clear instance of acute violence, with the abuser's actions being both manipulative and controlling.

This quote depicts a complex and troubling scenario firmly situated within the acute violent phase of Lenore Walker's cycle of violence. The perpetrator's erratic actions, physical aggression, and disregard for personal boundaries all highlight abusive dynamics. Additionally, the presence of fear, confusion, and the victim's efforts to pacify the abuser are defining features of this phase.

The following quotations highlight the prevalence of sexual violence in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us*. According to the cycle of violence theory, the acute violence stage is marked by the perpetrator's extreme physical aggression and outbursts of anger toward the victim. Tjørhom's 2000 study found that 40% of women who experienced physical violence from their partners also experienced sexual violence, and Coker's 2000 study found that 20% of women who experienced physical violence from their partners also experienced sexual violence.

*"His arm comes around my waist from behind. He slides a hand up my stomach and takes a firm hold of one of my breasts. His hands are digging into my shoulders as he pushes me toward the bed. ... His body comes down against mine and he takes my wrists with one hand above my head, pressing them against the mattress. **Ryle tries to muffle my screams with his mouth. I bite down on his tongue.**" (Hoover, 2016:206-207)*

The quotes from above do a great job of capturing the traits of this stage, which are characterized by violent outbursts of rage and extreme physical aggressiveness, frequently including sexual assault. "His arm comes around my waist from behind. He slides a hand up my stomach and takes a firm hold of one of my breasts," Ryle's

unwelcome physical contact and strong grasping of Lily's waist, stomach, and breast indicate a blatant increase in hostility and an effort to take charge. This physical encroachment creates the conditions for additional violence.

Ryle is physically overwhelming Lily, forcing her to the bed, and trying to stop her screams as he escalates the abuse even more. Ryle's actions, such as his attempt to mute her speech with his mouth According to studies, "Ryle tries to muffle my screams with his mouth" is likely a sexual assault, which is prevalent during the acute violence stage. Lily's desperate attempt to bite Ryle's tongue, "I bite down on his tongue," reveals her anxiety and resistance in this circumstance. Furthermore, during this difficult moment, Lily was also the victim of physical aggression once more.

He is escalating the violence even further, with Ryle physically overpowering Lily, pinning her to the bed, and attempting to silence her screams. Ryle's actions, including trying to muffle her with his mouth "Ryle tries to muffle my screams with his mouth" can be interpreted as a form of sexual assault, a common occurrence in the acute violence stage as research has shown. Lily's desperate act of biting Ryle's tongue "I bite down on his tongue" highlights her resistance and the fear she experiences in this situation. In addition, physical violence against Lily also occurred again in this tense situation.

*"His other hand feathers my shoulder as he moves the hair away from my neck. I squeeze my eyes shut, just as his fingers begin to trace across my skin, up to my shoulder. He slowly runs his finger over the heart and a shudder runs over my whole body. His lips meet my skin, right over the tattoo, and then he sinks his teeth into me so hard, I scream."* (Hoover, 2016:206)

Physical violence occurs is marked by the phrase, "His lips meet my skin, right over the tattoo, and then he sinks his teeth into me so hard, I scream." The kiss, a gesture of intimacy, transforms into a violent bite, showcasing the unpredictable and volatile nature of the acute violence phase. Lily's scream, a visceral reaction to the pain, signifies a loss of control and highlights the power imbalance between the abuser and the victim.

Often receiving violence from Ryle, Lily was brave enough to fight back. As victims of violence, women are not always silent. Most try to protect themselves as much as possible, such as covering parts of their body and face to deflect attacks (Walker, 2009). Lily tried to escape from Ryle's confines. She also tried to resist by trying to push Ryle's body. This can be seen from the following quotations.

*"I try to pull away from him, but he has such a tight grip on me he doesn't even budge. ...I start trying to fight him off me, but it's useless. He's too strong for me. He's angry."* (Hoover, 2016:206)

Lily's initial resistance, "I try to pull away from him" is evident in her attempt to pull away, showcasing a direct form of physical opposition. However, Ryle's tight grip renders her efforts futile, highlighting the power imbalance that often characterizes abusive relationships. As the situation escalates, Lily intensifies her resistance, fighting against his attempts to overpower her. However, realizing that her efforts are "useless" due to his superior strength underscores the psychological toll and frustration victims experience in such situations. Walker acknowledges that victims often resist, even if their efforts seem insignificant. This quote effectively portrays this concept.

### **Reconciliation Phase**

The reconciliation phase, which is the third stage of the cycle of violence, can be incredibly consoling to the victim. In this instance, the abuser abandons their violent demeanour and assumes the appearance of a repentant and loving spouse. Heartfelt apologies, efforts to assist the victim in healing from the abuse, and expressions of warmth, regret, and hope for a brighter future are common components of this façade (Walker, 2009).

The abuser may even persuade themselves that using violence was an isolated incident and that they will never use it again. The goal of this ornate presentation is to coax the victim back into feeling hopeful and secure. In the early stages of a relationship, while the initial love is still strong, the victim is more likely to accept the genuineness of the abuser. The abuser's persuasive performance combined with their desire to perceive the positive aspects of their relationship can renew hope for a better future.

*"I'm sorry, Lily. God I'm sorry. Please don't hate me please. It won't happen again, Lily. "But Ryle? If anything like that ever happens again... I'll know that this time wasn't just an accident. And I'll leave you without a second thought." I swear. I'm not like him. I know that's what you're thinking, but I swear to you..."* (Hoover, 2016:145-146)

Ryle expresses regret for pushing Lily in the conversation between the two of them that is shown above. He said, "I'm sorry, Lily," with genuine regret. Additionally, Ryle pledged that a similar situation would never occur again "Lily, it won't happen again," Lily melted at Ryle's earnest desire. He chose to overlook Ryle's actions, viewing them as only an inadvertent

mishap. Lily begs Ryle to swear that he won't do it ever again. She even forewarned Ryle that she would not think twice about breaking up with him if something similar occurred again.

The scene is aligned with Lenore Walker's domestic abuse cycle during the reconciliation stage. Ryle appears to have shown true remorse based on his numerous comments of regret, desire to move on, and apologies. Lily's desire for closure and her capacity for forgiveness serve as further arguments in favour of reconciliation. The authenticity of this reunion is called into question by stark contradictions that become apparent upon closer inspection. In addition to blaming Lily and emphasizing his emotions above the pain he has caused, Ryle's apology is unaccountable. He seems to be trying to control Lily's feelings and lacks true regret, as evidenced by his deceptive plea and hollow assurances.

Lily's threatened separation from him and her conditional forgiveness "But Ryle? If anything like that ever happens again... I'll know that this time wasn't just an accident" draws attention to the inherent disparity in power and the likelihood that the violent cycle will continue.

As a result, the scenario portrays a false reconciliation, hiding the underlying power struggles and lack of genuine regret that define an abusive partnership. It serves as a warning story, telling us that sorrow and apology alone are insufficient markers of real transformation. Accountability, empathy, and a will to end the cycle of violence are necessary for true reconciliation.

The reconciliation stage is also evident after the incident when Ryle discovered Atlas' number saved on Lily's phone. Overcome with jealousy, he lost control, shoving Lily to the ground and causing an injury to her temple. This aligns with the pattern described by Walker during the reconciliation stage, where the abuser seeks to care for the victim following the act of violence. Ryle demonstrated this by taking Lily to a room and tending to her wound. He instructed Lily to lie down while he completed his task. Lily, likely distressed and in pain, complied with Ryle's directive. This moment is captured in the following dialogue.

*"I feel his hands on me. Gentle, Steady, Tears are flowing and for some reason, they sting. "Lily, be still. Please." His voice is soothing. ... I try to sit up, but I feel his hand press down on my shoulder. "You have to be still until I'm finished, Lily." I open my eyes again and look up at the ceiling. It's our bedroom ceiling. "Finished with what?" My mouth hurts when I speak, so I bring my hand up and cover it. "You*

*fell down the stairs," he says. "You're hurt."*  
(Hoover, 2016:179)

The excerpt above illustrates the misleading nature of the reconciliation phase in Lenore Walker's cycle of violence. Ryle's behavior, marked by "gentle" touches and a "soothing" voice, creates the illusion of care and concern. As Walker explains, the abuser may offer heartfelt apologies, promise to change, and even attempt to make amends for prior actions (Walker, 2009). Yet, this seemingly tender demeanor conceals a darker motive—to reassert control and manipulate Lily's emotions. His firm restraint, "I feel his hand press down on my shoulder," and his dismissive excuse, "You fell down the stairs," further demonstrate his dominance and deflect accountability for his actions.

The period of reconciliation also transpired following their disagreement over Ryle's desire for them to relocate from Boston to Minnesota. Tension arose between them at that time since Lily disagreed with Ryle's choice. Ryle became so upset that he flung a vase of flowers. It was Ryle who chose to walk away for a little and then come back an hour later to carry on their conversation that led to reconciliation.

***I choose you. You are my success. As long as you're happy, I don't care where I work. We'll stay in Boston.*** "That's when I knew that I had made the right choice. Everyone deserves another chance. Especially the people who mean the most to you." (Hoover, 2016:193)

Though it appears to be a nice line, it actually exposes a deceptive strategy that was frequently used in Lenore Walker's cycle of violence during the reconciliation stage. Ryle's subsequent dramatic gesture, "I choose you," gives the impression of change and a false sense of security. Walker points out that these behaviors frequently consist of hollow assurances meant to trick the victim into thinking the abuse won't happen again. Ryle adds conditional love into the mix by saying, "You are my success. As long as you're happy..." This fosters a culture of dread and reliance, placing Lily in charge of Ryle's happiness and maybe keeping them from breaking up.

The next phase of reconciliation takes place following one of Ryle's worst physical assaults on Lily. When Ryle learned that Atlas still had feelings for Lily, he became envious. As a result, Ryle lost control and became furious, which injured Lily.

***"Sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm . . ."*** "Lily I love you, I'm so sorry." His words are full of panic. He's kissing me, his lips gentle against my cheek and mouth. He knows what he's done. He's Ryle again, and he knows what he's just



*done to me. To us. To our future. I utilize his panic to my advantage. I shake my head and I whisper, "It's okay, Ryle. It's okay. You were angry, it's okay." His lips meet mine in a frenzy and the taste of scotch makes me want to puke now. He's still whispering apologies when the room begins to fade out again.*" (Hoover, 2016:208)

Although the aforementioned passages from the book appear to show a reconciliation, they highlight a cunning strategy that is frequently used when Lenore Walker is in the reconciliation stage of her violent cycle. In addition to his physical restriction, Ryle's repeated "Sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry" seems more like a forced apology than a sincere regret.

Walker emphasizes that during the reconciliation stage, excuses are frequently made not out of sincere regret but rather as a means of seizing back authority and controlling the victim. "It's okay, Ryle," Lily reassured him in a whisper. It's alright. "You were angry," downplays the assault and tactfully assigns responsibility to Ryle's rage. Walker's cycle of abuse is typified by a dynamic in which the victim feels accountable for the abuser's acts. This is reinforced by this. The dimming atmosphere and the "frenzy" of his kisses paint a picture of a perplexing and maybe hazardous scenario. Lily feels scared and obligated as a result, which makes it more difficult for her to refuse or flee.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis revealed that Lily had been the victim of domestic violence at the hands of her husband, Ryle. The three stages of Lily's experience with domestic abuse are referred to as the "cycle of violence." These phases are the tension-building phase, acute violence phase, and reconciliation phase.

Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* illustrates how seemingly insignificant problems can turn into emotional tension between them during the tension-building stage. Throughout this phase, Ryle, the abuser, displays controlling behavior, jealousy, and wrath. Lily, the victim, tries to placate her husband in the interim to prevent more arguments.

Conversely, Ryle committed five acts of violence during the acute violence phase, three of which were physical and one of which was sexual. Their tension developed because of Atlas, which is what led to Ryle's aggression. This phase also emphasizes Lily's vulnerability as a victim of abuse who feels afraid and attempts to protect herself. But in the end, it fails due to the abuser's might.

While in the reconciliation phase, which examines Ryle's dishonest behavior in his relationship with Lily, is the last stage. He tells Lily he loves her and forgives her, and he swears he will change. For the victim, this reconciliation phase fosters false hope. Lily blinds herself to the fact that Ryle's forgiveness will not benefit her in the long run.

## SUGGESTION

The goal of this study is to contribute to the understudied field of domestic violence representation in literature. The goal of examining Lily's experiences in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* is to shed light on the cycle of violence. This analysis, which makes use of Lenore Walker's theory, can be a useful tool for students studying English literature, especially those who are interested in learning more about domestic violence against women in literature. This study also suggests possible directions for further investigation. It could be insightful to conduct a more thorough analysis of the many types of violence—such as sexual, physical, and emotional violence—that are portrayed in *It Ends With Us* using pertinent theories. Furthermore, examining Lily's efforts to move past her early trauma and forge a strong bond with Ryle will deepen comprehension of this book. Examining this subject can reveal how trauma can appear in different spheres of life and how individuals and couples can overcome trauma to create a better future. The purpose of this study is to stimulate more research on this book and related works to enhance our understanding of how domestic violence is portrayed in literature.

## REFERENCES

- Apriani, C., & Hayati, Y. (2020). Representation of Domestic Violence (KDRT) in La Barka: A Sociology of Literature. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Language, Literature, and Education (ICLLE 2020)*. 136-141. Atlantis Press. DOI: 10.2991/assehr.k.201109
- Derrington, E. (2010). *Domestic Violence: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ganley, A. L., Schechter, S. (1996). *Domestic violence: a national curriculum for Child Protective Services*. San Francisco. Family Violence Prevention Fund.
- Salsabila, Izza H. (2024) *Unmasking the Domestic Violence Experienced by Lily Bloom in Colleen Hoover's It Ends With Us*. Universitas Negeri Surabaya
- Johnson, M. P. (2008). *A Typology of Domestic Violence: Intimate Terrorism, Violent Resistance, and*

*Situational Couple Violence*. Boston: University Press of New England.

Tjørhom, A. (2000). The prevalence of sexual abuse in women who have experienced physical violence from their partners. *Violence and Victims*. 15(2), 187-202.

Walker, Lenore E. A. (2009). *The Battered Woman Syndrome*. New York. Springer Publishing Company.

Walker, Lenore E. (1979). *The Battered Woman*. New York. Simon and Schuster.

Yuliana, Ichwati. (2020). Domestic Violence towards Women Characters as Seen in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 5(5). 1708-1712. Doi.10.22161/ijels.55