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Faculty of Letters, Languages and Social Sciences
Department of Letters and English Language

Traditional vs. Modern Masculinity
in *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

Submitted by:

Miss. SIAMER Bochra

Supervised by:

Mrs. BENFODDA Assia

Board of Examiners

President:	Mrs. Rayhan HOUARI	MAA	Ain Temouchent University
Supervisor	Mrs. Assia BENFODDA	MCA	Ain Temouchent University
Examiner:	Mrs. Zahera HASSAEINE	MAA	Ain Temouchent University

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this work to my cherished family. My parents, Djaaf and Fadloulouch for their endless love and their prayers. My sisters Lamia, Souad, Saida, Djennet, Sirine and Ibtissem for their support, and strong encouragement. My beloved uncle Idir. My significant person and my best friend, Tayeb who was my source of strength, motivation and love throughout this critical moment. I am forever grateful for having you in my life.

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Abstract

This extended essay explores the depiction of masculinity in the novel *It Ends with Us* written by Colleen H through a comparative analysis of traditional and modern perspectives. Through examining the characters of Ryle and Atlas, the study investigates how their contrasting masculine traits and behaviours shaped the protagonist's experiences and contributed to the development of conflict and tension in the narrative. The research aims to shed light on the evolving understanding of masculinity in contemporary literature and offers insights into the power dynamics and societal implications associated with traditional and modern ideals of masculinity. Through this analysis, the study contributes to the broader discourse on gender roles, identity, and relationships in literature.

Keywords: Masculinity, Traditional Masculinity, Modern Masculinity, Contemporary Literature, Gender Roles.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

In the 21st century, American literature encompasses a dynamic and varied collection of literary works that vividly portray the intricate cultural, social, and technological aspects of contemporary America. These mark the shift from the previous characteristics of literature. The new characteristics of the evolving cultural, social, and technological landscape of the modern era made a great shift in the world of literature.

21st century American literature embraces diverse voices and perspectives, representing a wide range of cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and experiences. Many works of the 21st century American literature engage with pressing social and political issues. Authors explore topics such as racial inequality, immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, feminism, environmental concerns, and social justice. Contemporary American literature exhibits a penchant for hybrid forms and experimental storytelling techniques. With environmental issues taking center stage, 21st century American literature displays a heightened environmental awareness. Authors explore the relationship between humans and the natural world, addressing topics such as climate change, ecological sustainability, and the impact of human activity on the environment. This literary period captures the constant evolution of American society and places a growing emphasis on inclusivity and active social participation. It highlights an extensive array of diverse voices, offering multiple perspectives and exploring a wide range of themes.

These themes delve into the complexities of identity, examining issues related to race, gender, and personal sense of self. The theme of social justice and activism for instance; many works of 21st century American literature confront issues of social justice and advocate for change. Authors shed light on systemic injustices, challenge power structures, through their narratives, these works bring attention to systemic problems and actively promote the pursuit of a fairer and more inclusive society.

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Feminism as a significant aspect of social justice and activism, is prominently featured in many works of 21st century American literature. Authors use their writing to shed light on the systemic injustices faced by women and advocate for gender equality. They challenge power structures and societal norms that perpetuate gender discrimination, and explore the role of feminist activism in bringing about positive change.

Besides the theme of feminism, and in the realm of 21st century American literature, the exploration of masculinity has become as increasingly significant. As societal attitudes towards gender roles continue to evolve, literature serves as a powerful medium for examining and redefining the concept of masculinity. It provides a platform for authors to delve into the complexities of male identity, challenging traditional notions while reflecting the shifting dynamics of contemporary society.

In this era of literature, authors grapple with the multifaceted nature of masculinity, exploring its intersections with race, class, sexuality, and other aspects of identity. They delve into the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of male characters, offering nuanced portrayals that break free from stereotypical depictions. By delving into the inner lives of male protagonists, authors shed light on the internal conflicts and emotional vulnerabilities that shape their understanding of masculinity.

Additionally, 21st century American literature grapples with the far-reaching effects of technology and globalization, acknowledging their profound impact on society. What sets this literary era apart is its unyielding commitment to addressing urgent social, political, and environmental challenges. Authors fearlessly confront and dissect these pressing concerns, aiming to provoke thoughtful reflection and inspire positive change in readers.

Notable authors of this era include Jennifer Egan, notable for her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Ta-Nehisi Coates; known for his nonfiction

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works exploring race and identity, including *Between the World and Me* and *The Water Dancer*. Donna Tartt, gained popularity with her bestselling novel *The Secret History* and later received critical acclaim and a Pulitzer Prize for *The Goldfinch*. These authors explore subjects ranging from racial identity and immigration to gender dynamics and cultural displacement. Through their compelling narratives and thought-provoking themes, these authors contribute to the rich tapestry of 21st century American literature. In the last decade, a new rising author appeared in the literary scene, Colleen Hoover.

Colleen Hoover is an American author known for her success in contemporary romance and New Adult fiction. She initially self-published her debut novel, *Slammed* in 2012, which quickly gained popularity and caught the attention of readers and publishers alike. Following the success of *Slammed*, Hoover signed a book deal with Atria Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, leading to the re-release of her novels and the publication of new works. With each subsequent release, Hoover garnered a dedicated fan base and climbed bestseller lists.

Her novels, which often delve into themes of love, loss, redemption, and personal growth, have resonated with readers worldwide. Some of her most notable works include *Hopeless*, *Maybe Someday*, *It Ends with Us*, and *Verity*. Hoover's writing style is characterized by emotionally charged narratives, complex characters, and engaging plotlines.

Hoover's impact on literature lies in her ability to connect with readers on an emotional level and deliver stories that tackle sensitive and thought-provoking subjects. Her novels have earned critical acclaim, numerous awards, and have been translated into multiple languages. Her success as a self-published author also played a significant role in inspiring and empowering other independent authors, displaying the potential of self-publishing platforms and the importance of connecting with readers directly.

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It Ends with Us tells the story of a 23 years old girl, Lily Bloom who experiences both the impact of traditional toxic masculinity and the benefits of healthy modern masculinity through two main male characters. Ryle Kincaid, who is initially, portrayed as a confident and successful neurosurgeon who embodies many of the traditional traits of masculinity, such as strength, assertiveness, and self-reliance. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that Ryle's masculinity is also deeply flawed, and that his behaviour towards Lily is often abusive and controlling.

Through the character of Ryle, the novel explores the ways in which traditional gender roles and expectations can contribute to toxic and harmful relationships, and the importance of challenging these norms in order to create more equitable and healthy relationships. On the other hand, Atlas Corrigan who embraces modern values of masculinity. He is depicted as a sensitive and caring man who supports Lily in her personal and professional aspirations. He is open and honest with Lily about his past and shortcomings

The popularity of the novel on social media platforms, especially TikTok, has sparked my interest in exploring why this novel has resonated with so many readers around the world. As I delved into that engaging story, I found myself drawn to its realism and the raw emotions it evokes. The characters are relatable, their struggles and triumphs reflecting the challenges many of us face in our own lives. Moreover, the fact that this novel has inspired and affected so many people from different backgrounds and cultures is a testament to its power and relevance. As it is a source of empowerment for women who face the same situation as the protagonist.

This research work examines how popular literature can contribute to the discourse on masculinity. Readers may find literature helpful in recognizing, and addressing the harmful effects of traditional gender roles, such as the perpetuation of abusive behaviour towards women in particular, and society in general. In *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover,

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masculinity is portrayed in a complex and nuanced way, with both positive and negative aspects of masculinity on display throughout the novel.

To achieve my main concern, this study employed a close reading of the book and a feminist literary analysis to examine the representations of traditional and modern masculinity in the novel. For the approach used in the research, I relied on the qualitative approach to better examine the data collected throughout the research. I used the novel, which my research is based on *It Ends with Us* as a primary source, blogs, articles, books as secondary resources.

The aim of conducting this research is to answer the questions that were generated in my mind and crossed my mind during the reading process. Masculinity has always been a topic of discussion, debate and research. It is an integral part of the American society and is influenced by cultural and social factors. As societies change and evolve, so does the definition of masculinity. The matter of interest of this thematic study is to explore the differences between traditional and modern masculinity, with a focus on the novel through answering the following questions:

1. How did the writer explore the theme of masculinity in *It Ends with Us*?
2. How does the clash of personalities between Ryle and Atlas contribute to the development of conflict and tension in the selected novel?

It is hypothesized that:

1. The writer explores masculinity through various characters and their experiences. One of the ways the writer delves into this theme is by depicting the introvert character of Ryle. The writer examines how Ryle embodies traditional masculinity traits and behaviours and through Atlas, she explores modern masculinity. Atlas represents a contrasting perspective, exhibiting extroverted qualities and a more progressive approach to relationships.

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2. The clash of personalities between Ryle and Atlas significantly contributes to the development of conflict and tension in book as their contrasting traits, such as Ryle's dominance and aggression and Atlas's cooperative nature, create a power struggle and conflicting dynamics that drive the narrative forward. The tension arising from their opposing personalities serves as a catalyst for the exploration of complex themes, character growth, and emotional turmoil, ultimately shaping the plot and intensifying the overall conflict in the novel.

In an attempt to answer the questions above, this research paper is divided into three chapters. We will try to answer the main questions within these three chapters.

The first chapter which carries the title Definition of the Concept. It is divided into several parts. The first part revolves around understanding the meaning of the concept of masculinity through the definitions provided by scholars and some further research. The second part introduces the main forms of masculinity, traditional masculinity and its traits as well as modern masculinity and the values it stands on. The third part sheds the light on masculinity in the American society and its impact on the American individuals and on society as a whole. The last part discusses the portrayal of masculinity and its evolution through time.

The second chapter entitled Depiction of Traditional VS Modern Masculinity in *It Ends with Us* is dedicated to the analysis of characters and the portrayal of the two forms of masculinity within the novel *It Ends with Us*. This chapter is divided into two main sections, the first section focuses on the analysis of traditional masculinity through the character of Ryle Kincaid and the toxic traits of masculinity he exhibits. The second part focuses on the analysis of modern masculinity through the character of Atlas Corrigan and the healthy values of masculinity he embraces.

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The third chapter was given the title of Contrast of Characters of Ryle and Atlas compares between the two main male characters of the novel and the contrast of their personalities. The analysis focuses on the behaviours and actions of the male characters, as well as the relationships between the males and the female character. As it examines the impact of Ryle's toxic masculinity on Lily, and the benefits of embracing healthy masculinity by Atlas on Lily's mental health and emotional life.

The seventh edition of MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers was used in the works cited section, in-text citations, and some methods of writing.

Chapter One: Definition of the Concept of Masculinity

Chapter One

Masculinity has been a topic of debate for many years. Many scholars gave different definitions as well as the arguments provided to get a deeper understanding of what is masculinity. However, the majority of them share the same opinion that masculinity made a great shift in history in recent years. This chapter aims to provide an introduction to the research conducted. To see what is the meaning of masculinity in its core and what are its two main forms. Additionally, through literature and media we are aware and informed that there are different kinds of masculinities manifest in the American society, thus in this chapter we will see what kind of masculinity the American society embraces. Lastly, how masculinity is portrayed in the American literature through time.

1.1. What is Masculinity?

Masculinity usually denotes the collection of attributes, behaviours, and traits that are conventionally linked and designed for males and boys. These can comprise of physical features like dominance and strength, and psychological and emotional characteristics like self-confidence, independence, and assertiveness. Masculinity is also evident through cultural and social standards that are related to gender roles, expectations, and attitudes towards both men and women. It is important to note that the concept of masculinity is not fixed, and can differ across cultures and historical periods. It might also be influenced by individual encounters, identities, and expressions of gender, as R. W. Connell states in her book *Masculinities* that “Masculinity is not a fixed biological or natural category, but a set of constantly changing social practices and ideas” (2005).

Masculinity has existed as a concept since centuries ago, and its origins go back to ancient civilizations. The Greeks, for example, had a concept of masculinity that emphasized physical strength, courage, and self-reliance. They viewed masculinity as an essential component of their society and placed great importance on the development of these traits in

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young men. “The ancient Greeks had a word for it ‘andreaia’ which means manliness, courage and virility. It was the defining quality of a true Greek man, who was expected to show these attributes in all aspects of his life, from work and play to war and love. Paul Cartledge,

Similarly, in ancient Rome, masculinity was closely linked to ideas of power and dominance. Roman men were expected to be strong, assertive, and competitive, and were encouraged to take on leadership roles both in their families and in society as a whole. These ideals of masculinity were also linked to ideas of virility and sexuality, with Roman men expected to have numerous sexual partners and to demonstrate their sexual prowess

Throughout history, masculinity has been shaped by a variety of factors, including cultural and social norms, religious beliefs, and economic conditions. In many societies, the concept of masculinity has been closely linked to ideas of power and domination, with men expected to assert their authority over women and other marginalized groups. ~~This~~ ~~Which~~ explains Jackson Katz’s definition of masculinity “Masculinity is a hierarchy in which some men are considered more manly than others, and in which women are considered inferior to men.” in his famous book *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help* published in 2006.

This has led to the development of toxic forms of masculinity, characterized by aggression, violence, and a lack of empathy for others. However, there have also been efforts to redefine masculinity in more positive ways. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the harmful effects of toxic masculinity and a push towards a more inclusive and egalitarian model of masculinity. This has involved redefining masculinity to include qualities such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and a willingness to be vulnerable.

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There are various types of masculinity that have been identified and studied by scholars based on different cultural, social and individual contexts. While the categorization of masculinity can vary depending on the theoretical framework or perspective used, there are two broad categories of masculinity, which are traditional masculinity and modern masculinity. Each category has its own characteristics and ideals.

1.2. Traditional Masculinity

Traditional masculinity has been the social norm for centuries. It is characterized by the belief that men should be strong and stoic, and that they should be the breadwinner of the family. This has been a source of pride for men, but it has also been a source of stress. Traditional masculinity has also led to a sense of competition between men, as they strive to be the best in their field. This has resulted in a culture where men are expected to be tough, and to hide their emotions. This can be damaging to men's mental health, as they are not encouraged to express their feelings.

The concept of traditional masculinity has its roots in patriarchal societies where men held positions of power and authority over women and other marginalized groups. The traditional male role was defined in opposition to femininity, which was often seen as weak, passive, and emotional. Men were expected to embody strength, courage, and rationality, while women were associated with softness, nurturing, and intuition. It is defined as well as hegemonic masculinity. The dominant and idealized masculinity in a society is referred to as hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity frequently involves the subordination of women and other marginalized groups.

It is a concept that describes how dominant ideas about masculinity are created and maintained. It is a system of power that privileges certain masculinities over others, and has been used to explain the gender inequality that exists in our society. Hegemonic masculinity

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encompasses ideals of "proper" male behaviour in addition to physical prowess and aggression. It concerns how men should conduct themselves and be perceived in society.

Traditional masculinity is, often, referred to as "toxic masculinity". It is not meant to imply that masculinity itself is toxic, but rather that certain societal expectations placed on men can be damaging such as; objectifying women, lad culture, relying on violence to resolve differences, using "boys will be boys" as a justification for bad behaviour and domestic abuse.

Over the past several years, toxic masculinity has become a catchall explanation for male violence and sexism. The appeal of the term, which distinguishes "toxic" traits, has grown to the point where Gillette invoked it once in a viral advertisement against bullying and sexual harassment.

The advertisement features news clips of reporting on the #MeToo movement, as well as images showing sexism in films, in boardrooms, and of violence between boys, with a voice over saying: "Bullying, the Me Too movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity, is this the best a man can get?" (Weaver)

Around the same time, the American Psychological Association introduced new guidelines for therapists working with boys and men, warning that extreme forms of certain "traditional" masculine traits are linked to aggression, misogyny, and negative health outcomes. At its core, traditional masculinity is characterized by certain traits and behaviours that are expected of men such as introversion i.e. suppression of emotions, dominance and aggression. Toxic masculinity often leads to harmful attitudes and actions towards women, as well as reinforcing harmful gender norms and expectations.

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1.2.1. Introversion

It is a defining characteristic of traditional masculinity, where men are often expected to maintain a stoic and unemotional exterior. This expectation is deeply ingrained in many cultures and has been perpetuated by societal norms and gender roles. However, the suppression of emotions can have significant negative consequences for men's mental health and well-being.

Traditional masculinity places a high value on emotional control and toughness, often to the detriment of men's emotional health. Boys are socialized to suppress their emotions from an early age; with messages such as "boys don't cry" or "man up", reinforcing the idea that showing vulnerability is a sign of weakness. According to Addis and Hoffman, "Boys are told from a young age that emotions are not acceptable, and that they have to be strong, independent, and self-reliant."

This suppression of emotions can have long-term negative effects on men's mental health. "Studies have found that men who adhere to traditional masculine norms are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, as well as engaging in risky behaviours" (Levant et al., 2016). These negative outcomes are often the result of men feeling unable to express their emotions, leading to feelings of isolation and helplessness.

The suppression of emotions in traditional masculinity is also closely tied to the concept of dominance and power. Men who display emotion are often viewed as weak or submissive, while those who exhibit dominance and aggression are seen as strong and in control. This reinforces the idea that emotions are a sign of weakness and that true masculinity requires a lack of emotion.

However, research suggests that the suppression of emotions is not a natural or inevitable aspect of masculinity. A study by and colleagues found that men who were more comfortable with their emotions and who sought help for mental health issues were more likely to have

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positive self-esteem and a sense of identity (Mahalik et al., 2003). This suggests that a shift away from traditional masculine norms can have positive effects on men's mental health and well-being.

The suppression of emotions is a defining characteristic of traditional masculinity that has significant negative consequences for men's mental health and well-being. This expectation is perpetuated by societal norms and gender roles, which reinforce the idea that showing vulnerability is a sign of weakness.

1.2.2. Dominance

In the context of traditional masculinity, dominance is a key trait that has been associated with men for centuries. The concept of dominance is often linked with power and control, and is considered a key attribute of the male gender role. Men are expected to be dominant in a variety of contexts, including in their relationships with women, in the workplace, and in social situations.

The concept of dominance has been a defining feature of traditional masculinity for centuries. In many cultures, men have been socialized to be dominant and to assert their authority over others, particularly women. This has been reinforced through societal expectations, cultural norms, and gender roles, which have created a framework that supports male dominance. As Michael Kimmel notes in his book *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* "Male power is as much a matter of norms, beliefs, and expectations as it is of brute force or economic privilege" (67).

The expectation of male dominance is particularly evident in heterosexual relationships, where men are often expected to take charge and be in control. This can manifest in a variety of ways, including controlling behaviour, dominance in decision-making, and the use of physical force or aggression. As David Gilmore notes in his book *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* "The association of masculinity

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with dominance is ubiquitous" (1991). This expectation of dominance in relationships can lead to negative outcomes for both men and women, including relationship conflict and violence.

In addition to dominance in relationships, traditional masculinity also emphasizes dominance in the workplace. Men are often expected to be assertive, competitive, and aggressive in their careers, and to strive for positions of power and influence. This can create a hostile work environment for women and other marginalized groups, who may face discrimination and harassment as a result of male dominance. As Sandra Bem notes in her book *The Lenses of Gender*, (1994).

The expectation of dominance in traditional masculinity can have negative effects on men themselves. Men who feel that they are unable to live up to these expectations may experience feelings of inadequacy, shame, and anxiety. This can lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, as well as social isolation and withdrawal.

1.2.3. Aggression

It is a behavioural characteristic that is commonly associated with masculinity. In traditional and toxic masculinity, aggression is often linked with ideas of dominance, power, and control. It is considered a desirable trait that is necessary for men to assert their authority over others. This essay explores the concept of aggression in the context of traditional and toxic masculinity, with a focus on its effects on individuals and society.

Traditional masculinity is characterized by a set of rigid gender roles, where men are expected to be dominant, assertive, and aggressive. These traits are often associated with leadership, strength, and competitiveness. In this context, aggression is seen as a necessary tool for men to achieve their goals and assert their authority over others. As Michael Kimmel argues in his book *Angry White Men*, "The anger and aggression of men is the dark underbelly of traditional masculinity." (2013).

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Toxic masculinity takes this idea of aggression to an extreme level, promoting violence and intimidation as a means of maintaining power and control. This can lead to a range of harmful behaviours, including physical violence, sexual harassment, and bullying. According to Jackson Katz, "Toxic masculinity is a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status, and aggression." *The Macho Paradox*. Toxic masculinity promotes the idea that men must be aggressive in order to be considered "real men." This can lead to a culture of violence, where men feel pressure to prove their masculinity through violent means.

Aggression in traditional and toxic masculinity can have harmful effects on individuals and society as a whole. Men who adhere to these ideals may feel pressure to suppress their emotions and act in ways that are harmful to themselves and others. This can lead to mental health problems, substance abuse, and interpersonal conflicts. In addition, aggressive behaviour can have a negative impact on relationships, with men who engage in violent or controlling behaviours causing harm to their partners and families.

One of the most significant manifestations of aggression in the context of traditional and toxic masculinity is domestic violence. Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour that is used by one partner to gain and maintain power and control over the other. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in four women and one in nine men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner contact sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking with impacts such as injury, homicide, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder, use of victim services, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between traditional and toxic masculinity and domestic violence. Men who adhere to these ideals are more likely to engage in violent and controlling behaviours towards their partners. As G. P. Koocher and J. C.

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Keith-Spiegel argue in their book *Ethics in Psychology and the Mental Health Professions* "Traditional gender role socialization patterns promote an orientation toward dominance and power over women that may contribute to the perpetration of violence."

Aggression is a harmful characteristic that can have negative effects on individuals and society as a whole. Men who adhere to these ideals may feel pressure to suppress their emotions and act in ways that are harmful to themselves and others.

Traditional masculinity has been a prominent aspect of society for centuries, shaping the way men view themselves and interact with others. Its emphasis on strength, dominance, and emotional suppression has been criticized by scholars and activists as being harmful and oppressive to both men and women. While the concept of traditional masculinity is still prevalent in many societies, there is a growing recognition of the need to redefine and challenge it.

1.3. Modern Masculinity

The traditional definition of masculinity has seen a drastic shift in recent years. The traditional gender roles that once defined men have been replaced by a more modern, progressive understanding of masculinity "Negative stereotypes did play an important role in the construction of modern masculinity" (Mosse 1996).

The emphasis on physical strength and dominance has been replaced by a focus on emotional intelligence and self-care. Men are now encouraged to express their emotions openly and take care of their mental and physical health. Throughout history, societies have relied heavily on the construct of masculinity as a cornerstone for men's actions and conduct across various cultures. Conventional notions associated with masculinity-included attributes such as robustness, resiliency, and autonomy while emotional openness and fragility were often condemned.

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Nonetheless, contemporary or fresh perspectives on manhood have arisen in recent times that challenge this traditional outlook - labeled modern or new masculinity. The #MeToo campaign alongside heightened attention to gender parity has played a vital part in enabling this transition by creating consciousness around the need for change and redefining the traditional meaning of masculinity.

A modern masculinity ethos recognizes that men can also be sensitive, vulnerable, and emotionally intelligent. This new approach to masculinity emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships, mutual respect, and consent, as well as encouraging men to show their emotional side and express their feelings, embrace the modern values and develop empathy for others

A modern masculinity ethos recognizes that men can also be sensitive, vulnerable, and emotionally intelligent. This new approach to masculinity emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships, mutual respect, and consent, as well as encouraging men to show their emotional side and express their feelings, embrace the modern values and develop empathy for others. Healthy masculinity is a concept that encourages men to be emotionally aware and have a balanced view of their gender identity.

1.3.1. Extroversion

“Masculinity is not about suppressing emotions, but about learning to express them in a healthy way.” Unknown. The concept of modern masculinity is continually evolving, and one of the key shifts is the emphasis on emotional openness and vulnerability. Historically, men were expected to be stoic and suppress their emotions, but modern masculinity encourages men to be more in tune with their emotions and express them openly. To be vulnerable means to open up and share your true thoughts and emotions, even if it means exposing your weaknesses or insecurities.

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According to researchers, emotional openness is a critical aspect of modern masculinity. "Men who are more emotionally expressive, who have higher levels of empathy and caring, and who are more comfortable with the experience of vulnerability are more likely to be satisfied with their relationships, to have more friends, and to have greater life satisfaction." (Kimmel, *Angry White Men*)

Moreover, emotional openness is also essential in developing healthy relationships with others. As Ronald Levant notes, "The emotionally intelligent man can express his feelings, listen to his partner's feelings, and use his understanding of his own and his partner's emotions to deepen their intimacy." This statement emphasizes how emotional openness can help men build and maintain healthy relationships with their partners and others around them. Research has shown that men who are more emotionally expressive and comfortable with vulnerability tend to have more satisfying relationships and greater life satisfaction. For example, a study conducted by the American Psychological Association found that men who communicated their emotions to their partners reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction, while men who suppressed their emotions reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

However, embracing emotional openness can be challenging for men, as it requires them to challenge traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Terry Real, a therapist and author, notes, "The boy code has socialized boys and men to regard themselves as machines, cut off from their feelings." Meaning traditional masculinity has conditioned men to suppress their emotions, making it challenging to embrace emotional openness.

Extroversion in the context of modern masculinity represents an important shift in the way that men are encouraged to engage with their emotions and with others. By embracing emotional vulnerability, men can foster deeper connections and relationships, promote mental health and well-being, and challenge traditional gender norms that limit men's emotional

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expression and connection. Ultimately, by promoting emotional openness in men, we can create a more just, equitable, and inclusive society for all.

1.3.2. Cooperation

Cooperation in the context of modern masculinity is the ability and willingness of men to work collaboratively with others toward common goals and objectives. Cooperation involves being able to communicate effectively, listen actively, and respond respectfully to others, as well as being able to recognize and value the contributions of others.

Moreover, cooperation in the context of modern masculinity involves a recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusivity in achieving common goals. This may involve being open to different perspectives and approaches, as well as being willing to challenge one's own assumptions and biases. By embracing diversity and inclusivity, men can foster a more equitable and just society, and can work to overcome systemic barriers and inequalities.

Furthermore, cooperation in the context of modern masculinity involves a recognition of the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in effective collaboration. This may involve being able to recognize and respond to the emotional needs and experiences of others, as well as being able to express one's own emotions in a way that promotes mutual understanding and respect.

Overall, cooperation in the context of modern masculinity involves a deep understanding of the importance of working collaboratively with others, valuing diversity and inclusivity, and promoting emotional intelligence and empathy. By promoting cooperation in men, we can foster healthier relationships, promote mental health and well-being, and challenge traditional gender norms that emphasize individualism and competition over collaboration and cooperation.

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1.3.3. Empathy

It is for men to understand and share the feelings of others, particularly in a world that is rapidly changing and becoming more diverse.

In today's society, men are being called upon to recognize and understand the experiences of people from different backgrounds and cultures, as well as to respond in a compassionate and supportive way. This requires an openness to different perspectives, an ability to listen actively, and a willingness to challenge one's own biases and assumptions.

To promote empathy in modern masculinity in modern society, it is important to encourage men to engage in emotional expression, to learn about and respect different cultures, and to actively seek out diverse perspectives. This can help to break down barriers and promote understanding, leading to a more inclusive and supportive community. Additionally, it is important to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and encourage men to embrace vulnerability and emotional intelligence, which can lead to stronger and more fulfilling relationships.

Modern and healthy masculinity involves rejecting traditional gender stereotypes and embracing a more fluid and inclusive view of gender. It means recognizing and valuing the diversity of experiences and perspectives that exist within our society, and actively working to promote social justice and equality for all.

Healthy masculinity also means being emotionally intelligent and empathetic, and recognizing the importance of emotional expression and vulnerability. This involves understanding and managing one's own emotions, as well as being able to connect with and support others in a compassionate and understanding way.

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In essence, modern and healthy masculinity is about moving away from outdated and harmful ideas about what it means to be a man, and embracing a more positive and inclusive view of masculinity that is grounded in respect, empathy, and social responsibility.

1.4. Masculinity in the American Society

Masculinity has been a central theme in American society for decades, shaping everything from cultural norms to political discourse. However, the concept of masculinity has evolved over time, with different generations of men grappling with changing social, economic, and cultural landscapes.

The post-war era was marked by a resurgence of traditional masculinity, as soldiers returned home from the front lines and sought to re-establish their place in society. This was reflected in popular culture, with movies, TV shows, and literature celebrating the tough, stoic, and self-reliant male hero. This era also saw the rise of the "breadwinner" model of masculinity, in which men were expected to be the primary providers for their families and to project an image of strength and authority in the workplace.

However, the 1960s and 70s brought a wave of social and cultural change that challenged traditional notions of masculinity. The civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, and the Vietnam War all contributed to a growing sense of disillusionment with the status quo. This era saw the emergence of a new form of masculinity, one that valued emotional expression, vulnerability, and empathy. This was reflected in the rise of countercultural movements like the hippie movement, which rejected traditional gender roles and embraced a more fluid and inclusive view of gender.

The 1980s and 90s saw a backlash against this more progressive view of masculinity, as men sought to reassert their dominance in the face of new challenges like globalization and the rise of feminism. This era was marked by a renewed emphasis on traditional gender roles,

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with men expected to be strong, aggressive, and competitive in both the workplace and the home. This was reflected in popular culture, with movies like Rambo and Die Hard celebrating the tough, hyper-masculine male hero.

However, the 21st century has seen a new wave of change in the way American society views masculinity. The #MeToo movement, Black Lives Matter, and other social justice movements have brought issues of gender, race, and social justice to the forefront of public discourse. This has led to a growing recognition of the harmful effects of toxic masculinity, and a renewed emphasis on promoting healthy, positive forms of masculinity that prioritize empathy, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. According to Daily News;

Conforming to the norms of the “masculinity ideology” can result in suppressing emotions and masking distress in young boys as well more risk-taking and aggressive behaviour and a lack of willingness to seek out help. The report additionally contends this can lead to traits like homophobia and pave the way for sexual harassment, bullying and violence against others and themselves.

The APA also invoked a series of sobering statistics to emphasize that “traditional masculinity — marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance and aggression — is, on the whole, harmful.”

This quotation highlights the negative consequences of adhering to traditional masculine norms, also referred to as the "masculinity ideology." The quotation argues that conforming to these norms can lead to the suppression of emotions and the masking of distress in young boys, which can result in more risk-taking and aggressive behaviour. The report also suggests that this can lead to traits like homophobia and pave the way for sexual harassment, bullying and violence against others and themselves.

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The American Psychological Association (APA) has conducted extensive research on traditional masculinity and its effects on mental health, and the report cited in the quotation highlights some of the sobering statistics that support the idea that traditional masculinity is harmful. For example, men are more likely to die by suicide than women, and this is attributed in part to the socialization of men to suppress their emotions and not seek help when in distress. Men are also more likely to engage in risky behaviours such as substance abuse and dangerous driving, and are more likely to be victims of violent crime.

The report argues that traditional masculinity, marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance, and aggression, is harmful as a whole. These traits are associated with a range of negative outcomes, including poor mental health, interpersonal conflict, and violence. The report suggests that promoting more positive and healthy forms of masculinity, such as emotional expressiveness, empathy, and social connectedness, can help to reduce the negative effects of traditional masculinity and promote better mental health outcomes for men.

The APA highlights the need for a more nuanced and critical understanding of masculinity and its effects on mental health. By recognizing the harmful effects of traditional masculine norms and promoting more positive and healthy forms of masculinity, we can work towards creating a society in which men feel empowered to seek help when in distress and are able to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

1.5. Portrayal of Masculinity in the American Literature

Masculinity in American literature has evolved significantly over time, reflecting the shifting roles, expectations, and values of men in society. Here we will delve into the portrayal of masculinity in American literature, examining how it has been shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts. By analyzing selected works from various periods, to

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elucidate the diverse ways in which authors have engaged with the concept of masculinity and its implications on the American male identity.

1.5.1. Early American Literature: Founding Fathers and Frontier Heroes

In the early days of American literature, masculinity was often tied to the ideals of the founding fathers and the rugged individualism of frontier heroes. Works such as Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* showcase men as self-reliant, resourceful, and resilient figures. These characters embody the virtues of hard work, determination, and bravery, which were seen as essential for taming the wilderness and establishing a new nation.

The early days of American literature were marked by a portrayal of masculinity closely tied to the ideals of the founding fathers and the rugged individualism of frontier heroes. Works like Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* presented characters who embodied the virtues of self-reliance, resourcefulness, and resilience. These ideals were seen as crucial for taming the wilderness and establishing a new nation. While this idealized image of masculinity played a significant role in shaping early American literature and societal expectations, subsequent works would go on to challenge and deconstruct these notions, leading to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of masculinity. The enduring legacy of these early portrayals continues to influence discussions on gender, power, and national identity in American literature and society.

1.5.2. 19th Century: Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and the Civil War

The 19th century saw a shift in the portrayal of masculinity with the rise of Romanticism and Transcendentalism. Writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville explored the darker aspects of human nature, while Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau

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championed individualism and self-discovery. Masculinity in this period was characterized by introspection, emotional depth, and a connection with nature.

The Civil War also had a profound impact on the depiction of masculinity. In works such as Walt Whitman's "Drum-Taps" and Stephen Crane's "The Red Badge of Courage," the horrors of war exposed the vulnerability and fragility of men, challenging traditional notions of bravery and heroism.

The 19th century witnessed a transformative period in the portrayal of masculinity in American literature. Through the rise of Romanticism and Transcendentalism, writers like Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, and Thoreau explored introspection, emotional depth, and a connection with nature as integral components of masculinity. The horrors of the Civil War further challenged traditional notions of bravery and heroism, exposing the vulnerability and fragility of men. The aftermath of the war led to a reevaluation of masculine identity and contributed to the portrayal of complex and multifaceted male characters. The literary contributions of this era continue to shape our understanding of masculinity and have left a lasting cultural and intellectual impact on subsequent generations of writers and readers.

1.5.3. Early 20th Century: Modernism and the Lost Generation

The early 20th century saw a further transformation of masculinity in American literature. Modernist authors like Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner portrayed disillusioned, alienated men struggling to find meaning in a rapidly changing world. The "Lost Generation" of writers, disillusioned by World War I, questioned traditional values and sought to redefine manhood in the face of disillusionment, fragmentation, and existential crisis.

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1.5.4. Mid-20th Century: Post-War America and the Beat Generation

Post-war American literature continued to grapple with the complexities of masculinity. Works such as J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* examined the pressures and expectations placed on men in a conformist, materialistic society. The Beat Generation, including writers like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, rebelled against societal norms and embraced a more fluid, countercultural vision of masculinity that valued personal freedom and self-expression.

The early and mid-20th century witnessed a significant shift in the portrayal of masculinity in American literature. Modernist authors and the Lost Generation grappled with disillusionment, fragmentation, and the redefinition of manhood in the face of a rapidly changing world. Post-war literature further examined the pressures and expectations placed on men in a conformist society. The countercultural Beat Generation challenged societal norms and embraced a vision of masculinity rooted in personal freedom and self-expression. These literary movements and works continue to shape our understanding of masculinity and contribute to the ongoing conversation surrounding gender, identity, and societal expectations in contemporary literature and society.

1.5.5. Late 20th Century to Present: Postmodernism and Beyond

In recent decades, American literature has further deconstructed and reimagined masculinity. Postmodern authors like Don DeLillo, Toni Morrison, and David Foster Wallace have explored the fragmentation of identity and the impact of mass media, technology, and globalization on the male psyche. Additionally, contemporary authors like Junot Díaz, Colson Whitehead, and Jesmyn Ward have broadened the conversation on masculinity by examining the experiences of marginalized men, including people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals.

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The portrayal of masculinity in American literature has undergone significant transformations, reflecting the evolving roles, expectations, and values of men in society. From the rugged individualism of frontier heroes to the introspective Romantic and Transcendentalist figures, from the disillusioned Lost Generation to the countercultural Beat Generation, and from the postmodern deconstruction of identity to the exploration of marginalized experiences, American literature has provided a rich and diverse tapestry of male characters and perspectives. By examining these works, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of masculinity and the ongoing quest to define the American male identity.

The portrayal of masculinity in recent American literature reflects a profound transformation and reimagining of gender roles. Postmodern authors have explored the fragmentation of identity and the influence of mass media, technology, and globalization on the male psyche. Contemporary authors have broadened the discourse on masculinity by examining the experiences of marginalized men, including people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. American literature encompasses a diverse range of male characters and perspectives, from the rugged individualism of frontier heroes to the introspection of Romantic and Transcendentalist figures, from the disillusionment of the Lost Generation to the countercultural vision of masculinity embraced by the Beat Generation. Through the exploration of these works, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of masculinity and the ongoing quest to define the American male identity in a rapidly changing society.

To conclude, masculinity puts pressure on men expecting them to be tough, rigid and dominant, which is something against the human instincts, regardless the gender. The social factor pushed masculinity to the limit. It dictates to men how they should behave, feel and think. Many scholars dealt with the topic of masculinity in their books. It is clear that they divided masculinity into two forms, which are traditional masculinity and modern

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masculinity. The first one is obviously considered toxic to many of the American citizens. Moreover, the second one is the positive and healthier form and the most embraced by the American men recently. Furthermore, modern masculinity has made a turning point in the history of the American literature. Which made the writers integrate the positive traits of masculinity in their writings in order to get rid of the traditional stereotypes of masculinity.

In the next chapter we will examine the concept of masculinity within the novel entitled *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover, analysing the two male characters who portray the two forms of masculinity and we will depict the toxic and healthy traits of masculinity.

**Chapter Two: Depiction of
Traditional VS. Modern
Masculinity in *It Ends with
Us***

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It Ends with Us is a novel written by Colleen Hoover. This novel treats different themes; however, the writer sheds the light mainly on the theme of masculinity. Which she portrays through two male characters who have a direct relationship with the female protagonist Lily Bloom. This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will be dedicated to the analysis of traditional masculinity in the novel through the character of Ryle Kincaid. This character will be examined deeply by depicting his traditional traits. On the other hand, the second section will be dedicated to the analysis of modern masculinity in the novel through the character of Atlas Corrigan. This character is the example of modern masculinity that manifests in the novel that we will try to educe.

2.1. Traditional Masculinity in *It Ends with Us*

In *It Ends with Us* Colleen Hoover highlights different themes. However, this novel explores a very important and a crucial topic that created a huge debate among readers on social media platforms, which is masculinity. The writer successfully dealt with this topic from different angles. Hoover focused on both sides and forms of masculinity in her novel to show the impact of each form on the individuals and in this novel. We have the example of the protagonist Lily Bloom who experiences the impact of both forms masculinity through two main male characters Ryle Kincaid and Atlas Corrigan. The male characters in *It Ends with Us* exhibit a range of masculinities, from toxic traits to positive traits. Ryle Kincaid, one of the main characters, embodies traditional, toxic masculinity.

The exploration of masculinities in the novel sheds light on societal pressures and expectations placed on men and women. Society expects men to be strong, dominant, and in control of their emotions. On the other hand, women are expected to be nurturing, caring, and

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submissive. The novel challenges these expectations by showing that men can display different types of masculinity, and women can be strong and independent.

It Ends with Us depicts traditional masculinity through the character of Ryle Kincaid, who exhibits controlling and abusive behaviour towards his romantic partner Lily. Ryle believes that he is entitled to make decisions for Lily without her input or consent, and becomes physically violent when she challenges his authority. He also shows a lack of empathy towards others and refuses to acknowledge any wrongdoing on his part. The novel illustrates how toxic masculinity can manifest in different forms.

Ryle demonstrates a number of negative characteristics that are frequently connected to archaic ideas of masculinity. His controlling conduct, unrestrained rage, and emotional repression not only put those around him in danger but also cause his relationships to slowly fall apart. Ryle's acts are seen as reflecting a problematic societal construct as more is learned about his past and the elements that influence him. Furthermore, as Ryle's acts worsen, they highlight the destructive effects that toxic masculinity can have on others and show how crucial it is to correct these behaviours.

2.1.1. Introvert Character of Ryle

“He sighs heavily and runs a hand through his hair. He opens his mouth to speak, but then clamps it shut again.”(16) Ryle suffers with emotional introversion, which poses a big hurdle in his relationship with Lily, as the plot develops.

Ryle Kincaid, one of the main characters of Hoover’s international bestseller book. He was introduced as a thirty years old, gifted neurosurgeon and charming man who exhibited some traditional traits at the beginning of the story. He is a competitive person who tends to be the best neurosurgeon.

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Ryle's emotional detachment is clear right away in the novel. When Lily and Ryle first met at the rooftop, Lily told him so much about herself and her personal life. She told him about the family she grew up in, her studies, her age and even her plans for the future. Yet, Ryle shared very things about himself. His profession and his previous relationships. However, he did not mention his biggest secret that shaped his personality until after their marriage when things got worse “What I’m about to tell you isn’t going to hurt you, okay? It’s all in the past. But Allysa thinks you need to know. And . . . so do I.” (188)

When Ryle reveals his secret, Lily felt betrayed. Because she felt that he was not completely honest with her and that was not something that should be hidden. Especially after he told her that his anger issues were because of that sad accident “You have to believe that. Allysa wanted me to tell you all of this because since that happened, *there are things I can’t control. I get angry. I black out.* I’ve been in therapy since I was six years old. But it is not my excuse. It is my reality.” (189)

The impact of keeping a secret was very awful from Ryle’s behalf. Because of not sharing such an important thing, Lily could trust her husband anymore. This secret was the reason why he abused her at first place. It was what led to an emotional huge distance between them.

Ryle's fear of vulnerability is what kept him emotionally distant. He believes that sharing his most private thoughts and emotions might result in rejection or criticism from Lily, which caused him to feel inadequate or ashamed. It is a sign of a manifestation of traditional masculinity in the novel.

He has had trouble trusting others and developing meaningful emotional connections as a result of emotional trauma he has endured in the past. This traumatic, significant event of his childhood was when Ryle was six years old, accidentally shot his brother and killed him.

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This particular memory shaped his personality as a stoic and an introvert person, which built him as a person who has anger issue that he is not able to control his temper.

Ryle's emotional remoteness from Lily was a major obstacle in their relationship. They are unable to connect and comprehend one other fully, and this resulted in misunderstandings and poor communication that damaged their relationship. This lack of emotional transparency made it difficult for Lily to empathize with Ryle's experience and understand how it has shaped him as a person.

Ryle's behaviour illustrates the consequences that stoicism can have on a relationship. The inability to express emotions and being vulnerable can create feelings of separation and distrust between partners. Because of holding onto the toxic traits of traditional masculinity, Ryle lost his partner's trust. By analysing Ryle's character, we gain valuable insight into how traditional masculinity can manifest and negatively influence individuals and those around them.

2.1.2. Dominant Mind-set of Ryle

“My whole life, I knew exactly what I'd do if a man ever treated me the way my father treated my mother. It was simple. I would leave and it would never happen again.” (190) From her previous experience, Lily never expected to live such an experience but she ever had, she knew exactly what she would do if a man ever abused her, simply leave him and never let the history repeat itself.

Years later, Lily meets Ryle Kincaid and their relationship starts smoothly. When their relationship progresses, Ryle became obsessed with her and started to show his negative traits. Showing up unannounced, not letting her eat alone with her mother and hanging her picture in his apartment. Which at first looked like signs of love. But things shifted in their first date,

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Ryle hits Lily when he accidentally burned his gifted hand even though he admits that he did not mean to hurt her;

“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 me off balance. When I lost my footing, I hit my face on one of the cabinet door handles as I came down.

Pain shoots through the corner of my eye, right near my temple.

And then I feel the weight.

Heaviness follows and it presses down on every part of me. So much gravity, pushing down on my emotions. Everything shatters.” (146)

This was a clear red flag from Ryle’s part but Lily was manipulated by his apology right away; “I’m so sorry. I just . . . I burned my hand. I panicked. You were laughing and . . . I’m so sorry, it all happened so fast. I didn’t mean to push you, Lily, I’m sorry.”(146).

In this section, I will discuss the forms of dominance as a traditional and a toxic trait that manifest in the selected novel *It Ends with Us* through the character of Ryle Kincaid to gain a profound understanding of the intricate dynamics and nuanced dimensions of masculinity, power, and control within the context of this compelling literary work.

Dominance is concept that is often used in the context of social group violence and other forms of abuse. Scholars define dominance as a pattern of behaviour in which one partner seeks to control and dominate the other partner through various means, including physical violence, exercising power over others and controlling them, emotional abuse, manipulation of feelings, and gaslighting. These forms of dominance in this novel fall under the concept of Domestic Violence, which is the main theme of the book. All forms of

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violence, even those that are not usually physically aggressive, are included in domestic violence such as the verbal violence.

Those forms are depicted in the novel through a toxic male character Ryle Kincaid, the intimate partner of the protagonist, Lily Bloom. The first form of dominance that manifested in the novel was the physical violence. Ryle is a character who has anger issues that we see in beginning of the novel as a foreshadowing when he was in the rooftop kicking chairs before noticing the presence of an audience; “He kicks the chair repeatedly, over and over. Rather than give way beneath the blunt force of his foot, all the chair does is scoot farther and farther away from him.” (8)

Ryle’s uncontrollable temper and anger issues led the protagonist to experience physical violence repeatedly. On her first experience, Lily puts the blame on herself thinking she should not have laughed at him and it was all her fault. He manipulated and gaslit her by his apologies.

Then, he did it again. Ryle pushed Lily on the stairs almost causing her a concussion;

“He pushed me away.

““You fell down the stairs.””

But I didn’t fall.

He pushed me. Again.

That’s twice.

You pushed me, Ryle.” (181)

This time it was because of his unnecessary jealousy from her old childhood friend. Whom she met in Boston after long years.

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Jealousy is also one among the forms of toxic traits in intimate partner relationships. It can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as making accusations of infidelity. As it is often used as a way to control the partner's behaviour and limit their interactions with others.

This was the case when Ryle hit Lily for the second time. Ryle tried to control Lily's circle of friends, especially male friends, and make it smaller. Lily previously told Ryle about her past relationship with her childhood friend Atlas. When Ryle finds Atlas' number hidden in her phone case, he accused her to have an affair with him. He could not hide his anger and irritation as Lily explains; "He chunks my phone clear across the room and it crashes against the wall, shattering to the floor." (180). His excessive jealousy and possessiveness broke the links of trust between them.

Abusers employ gaslighting and manipulation to exert control over their partners. Ryle Kincaid constantly employs these strategies in "It Ends with Us" to control Lily and keeps his grip on power over her.

Here Lily recalls the moments of her childhood when she witnessed her father abusing her mother. She finds herself stuck in this marriage with an abusive. She thinks about all the moments she wondered why her mother did not leave her father. Lily starts considering leaving him and break this circle. However, Ryle uses his strategies to gaslight and manipulate her.

Every time Ryle did hit Lily, he apologized, saying he did not mean to hurt her and that he was simply overwhelmed, that is when he engages in gaslighting and manipulation. He then offers useless explanations for his actions, claiming that he was stressed out and had a horrible day at work. By doing this, Ryle deflects responsibility from himself and places it on external factors, leading Lily to question her own judgment of the circumstance and her own emotions. Ryle lacks empathy and refuses to acknowledge any wrongdoing in his behaviour.

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He does not see how his actions are toxic or damaging. This highlights how toxic masculinity can lead to a lack of self-awareness and refusal to accept responsibility

Then when hurting and abusing became a habit of his, he used manipulation in his apologies, often using them as a way to regain control over Lily. For instance, after he hits her, he apologizes and tells her that he wants to change and that he needs her help to do so, so that they can raise their daughter together. He makes Lily feel responsible for his behaviour, and in doing so, he shifts the focus away from his own actions and onto Lily's response to them. Ryle told Lily "*I'm sorry*" over twenty times throughout the novel after abusing her physically or emotionally. However his behaviour never changed.

Ryle Kincaid serves as a compelling example of the toxic traits associated with traditional masculinity. Throughout the story, Ryle's actions and mind-set perpetuate harmful stereotypes and expectations concerning male behaviour. As it serves as an embodiment of toxic masculinity and its destructive consequences. Ryle's behaviour and beliefs, influenced by societal expectations of male dominance, displays a clear disregard for the emotions and well-being of those around him. This toxicity, ingrained throughout his upbringing, often manifests in acts of uncontrolled anger and violence, which ultimately corrode his relationships and personal growth.

From a societal perspective, if he were not successful, handsome and wealthy neurosurgeon Ryle would certainly end up in jail. That was Lily's biggest concern. She was afraid of ruining his career if she reported him as an abuser; "I could call the police, but my mind can't even process what all that entails. I don't want to give a statement. I don't know that I want to press charges, knowing what this could do to his career." (211)

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2.1.3. Depiction of Classic Masculinity in Ryle's Character

Colleen Hoover depicts traditional masculinity as a complicated and multi-layered construct in her novel *It Ends with Us* through the character of Ryle Kincaid who represents the “Alpha Male” in society. It is inevitable to discuss classic masculinity without bringing the Alpha Male, which socially, refers to a dominant and assertive man who exhibits characteristics that are associated with power and strength. In addition, it is strongly associated with classic masculinity. In terms of outward appearance, Ryle exhibits these traits associated with classic masculinity, including physical prowess, ambition, and independence. The way Ryle's character tries to dominate and control others around him, in particular, is one way that Hoover challenges some of the most harmful characteristics of classic masculinity.

Ryle's physical prowess and athleticism serve as one of the main ways he personifies the *Alpha Male* “I can tell he's tall. Broad shoulders create a strong contrast to the fragile way he's holding his head in his hands.” (7)

He has a strong and commanding presence due to his backgrounds as a successful neurosurgeon. Additionally, Ryle possesses the "Alpha Male" archetype's essential characteristics of confidence and self-assurance. He is portrayed as "dominant" and "intimidating," and he frequently asserts his dominance over others through his physical presence.

The stereotypically male characteristics of Ryle are also present in his interactions with women. He is initially captivated to Lily Bloom, the protagonist of the selected book, due to her attractiveness and subservient nature. Ryle is drawn to women who are "easy to control," which corresponds with the “Alpha Male” which defines the person who urges to dominate and control others. Another symptom of toxic masculinity is Ryle's frequent possessive and controlling conduct toward Lily throughout the book. The character of Ryle

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Kincaid in the novel portrays the absolute toxic traits of classic masculinity and perfect example of the *alpha male*.

Ryle is portrayed as being stoic in the novel. He is perceived as a man who prefers to keep his feelings to himself and who thinks that expressing his feelings or being vulnerable is a sign of weakness. Ryle's stoicism is a characteristic shared by alpha males who consider emotion display is not an admirable quality for men. Stoicism is a characteristic of alpha males that is often described in the novel chosen as a flaw that fuels Ryle's unhealthy conduct. The perils of toxic masculinity and the damaging consequences it can have on people and relationships are highlighted by Ryle's inability to express his feelings in a healthy way and his need for dominance and control.

Ryle's tendency towards violence and aggression is another example of his classic masculinity. He repeatedly violently abuses Lily, clearly transgressing her limits and demonstrating his incapacity to manage his emotions. Ryle frequently justifies his aggression by claiming that Lily pushed him to the limit in some way, which is a common justification used by abusers. Ryle always puts the blame on Lily for anything that goes wrong.

Abusers regularly engage in the toxic behaviour of gaslighting, and Ryle Kincaid is no exception. Ryle repeatedly distorts Lily's perspective of reality throughout the book, making her question her own sanity. When she confronts him about his behaviour, he continues to deny that he is abusive toward her and if so it is all her fault. Ryle frequently downplays the seriousness of his acts, giving Lily the impression that she is exaggerating or dreaming. This is a traditional gaslighting tactic when the abuser attempts to get the victim to doubt their own understanding of reality.

Ryle also exhibits a strong competitive drive and has a strong desire to excel in all aspects of his life, including his career and his relationships. These qualities are often related

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to *alpha male* archetype or the *classic man*. Indeed, Ryle is a well-trained doctor in his field as a neurosurgeon, he tends to be the best, “And I don’t just want to be a great neurosurgeon. I want to be the best in my field.” (20)

These characteristics present a nuanced portrait of Ryle's personality. He has a lot of desirable traits, like his intelligence, accomplishment and success, but he also has a lot of weaknesses that can have a big impact on others around him. It becomes clear that he is a complex, conflicted person who must face his own difficulties if he wants to be a good spouse and person as the novel goes on, and these darker sides of his character come into focus.

2.2. Modern Masculinity in *It Ends With Us*

The idea of masculinity has changed drastically in recent years. The conventional idea of what it means to be a male has been questioned in light of shifting societal standards and an emphasis on gender equality. There is a growing trend towards a new definition of masculinity that glorifies emotional maturity and vulnerability, as society becomes more aware of the harm caused by traditional masculinity. Colleen Hoover depicts this change in literature as well in her famous *It Ends with Us*.

We see this new definition of masculinity embodied in Atlas Corrigan. Atlas is Ryle's extreme opposite, he is kind, sensitive, and in touch with his emotions. He is everything Ryle is not, and he is definitely the better match for Lily. Through Atlas, Hoover conveys us that true strength does not come from dominating others, but from being able to connect with them on the emotional level.

Moreover, the characteristics that describe Atlas are his readiness to accept responsibility for his deeds. Despite the difficulties he has encountered and the mistakes he has committed, he is not afraid to accept responsibility for his actions in the past and make a

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change. This sense of responsibility demonstrates that men can be both strong and accountable, which is an essential key of contemporary, modern masculinity.

Furthermore, Atlas also demonstrates a strong sense of compassion and empathy. He can emotionally relate to Lily on a deep level and is always ready to listen to her or offer assistance when it is required. This emotional intelligence is a crucial component of modern masculinity because it demonstrates that men may be strong and masculine while still being kind and empathetic.

Colleen Hoover's portrayal of Atlas Corrigan offers readers a fresh and nuanced perspective on modern masculinity. Through his vulnerability, accountability, and empathy, Atlas is a great example for the reason that it is possible for men to be strong and masculine while also being caregivers, compassionate, and emotionally intelligent. As such, he serves as a powerful role model for men who are looking to redefine what it means to be a man in today's society.

2.2.1. Extrovert Character of Atlas Corrigan

Atlas Corrigan is a central character in our novel. He is introduced at first as a 17 years old, homeless boy who soon became a friend of Lily's. Atlas is portrayed as a successful chef and self-sufficient person who works hard to achieve his goals in life. Atlas is portrayed as a kind, compassionate, and caring person who supports Lily in her journey to break away from a toxic relationship.

The writer gives hints about how positive and healthy is Atlas as a character. He helped Lily to overcome her psychological problems and comforted her every time her parents got into a fight; *“Then he put his arm around me and pulled me to him so that my head was resting on his shoulder I don't know how he calmed me down without even talking, but he did.”* (53)

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Through Lily's journal entries, which were written to Ellen DeGeneres, we can have an idea about Atlas's life background. He and Lily share the same troubled past which is domestic violence, that is what made them connected and they could easily open up to each other.

Atlas easily interacted with Lily. Atlas told his story to Lily in the first times they knew each other. He told her the reason why he became a homeless and about his bad relationship with his parents who kicked him from the house. Atlas's vulnerability, empathy, thoughtfulness, emotional intelligence and creativity made Lily so attracted to him. He was comfortable being in touch with his emotions and expressing his feelings genuinely to her even if it was not verbal. It is what made them build the bond of trust, love and respect to each other.

Another important thing that made their bond grow tighter is that Atlas was never judgmental, he was a good listener. He never judged her decisions or mistakes, he rather tried to understand her actions and correct her.

Atlas was a caregiving person. He never missed the opportunity to comfort Lily emotionally, psychologically and physically. He was always there for her to support her and to protect her from her abusive father. Even after they met again in Boston, he protected her from her abusive husband. He pacified her and took care of her after Ryle has hit her.

He provided everything she needed, from the emotional support "When he takes another seat, he chooses the chair right next to me this time. He places a reassuring hand on top of mine. 'I have to go in to work for a few hours,' he says. 'I don't want you to leave. Stay here as long as you need, Lily. Just . . . please don't go back home today.'" (220), to the material support and the safest space to be; "Maybe that's why I'm here. I feel safer here than anywhere else I could possibly go. And Atlas has an alarm system, so there's that." (225)

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Atlas Corrigan embodies the positive and modern masculinity in the novel. His character represents the shift and evolution of masculinity. This character demonstrates the healthy traits of masculinity and more modern, such as extroversion of emotions, affection and caregiving, which allow him to challenge the traditional notions of masculinity. The novel highlights the importance of emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and healthy communication in navigating the vicissitudes of love and relationships.

2.2.2. The Peaceful Relationship between Atlas and Lily

Any relationship that exists must be built and based on mutual respect, love and peace. These are the pillars of any successful relationship to form a strong, healthy and unbreakable bond between partners. In *It Ends with Us*, these values are clearly manifesting in the relationship between Atlas Corrigan and Lily Bloom. The writer wanted to spot the light on the healthy traits that men can have and that can contribute to build a peaceful relationship rather than an aggressive one.

Lily grew up in an unhealthy household where her father physically abused her mother. That led her to distrust people around her and it was difficult for her to get in a relationship, “*I’m not growing up in a household with a great example of how a man should treat someone he loves, so I’ve always held on to an unhealthy amount of distrust when it comes to relationships and other people.*” (116). Lily's unstable relationship with her father and his toxic behavior has left her with unresolved emotional wounds. Suddenly, the *homeless boy*, Atlas Corrigan, showed up in her life and changed it drastically “*Atlas is changing me*” (117).

After meeting Atlas, Lily could slightly start to trust people and believe that there is good and worthy in them. Atlas and Lily’s similar past had a heavy impact on their relationship, which made them trust each other and build a strong bond with each other that

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lasted for so long despite their separation. Eventually this strong bond made the relationship evolve in different ways.

Initially, Atlas treated Lily with kindness and respect. As childhood friends, they formed a strong bond, and Atlas was always there to protect and support her. However, their relationship took a different turn when they reconnected as adults. Atlas is now a successful chef and has a reputation for being the best cook in Boston. Despite their long separation, he still harbored feelings for Lily and pursued her relentlessly.

In addition, Atlas treated Lily with respect is by valuing her opinions and feelings. Unlike the other men, she knew in her life. When Lily told Atlas about her difficult past and her fears about her current relationship with Ryle, Atlas listened attentively and offered her support. He did not try to discount or dismiss her concerns, but instead, he validated her feelings and encouraged her to do what is best for herself.

Atlas treating Lily with respect was his willingness to put her needs first. When Lily was in a difficult situation and needs help, Atlas dropped everything to be there for her ““Where are you?” he says again. I can hear panic in his voice. I can hear him walking, moving stuff around. I hear a door slam on his end of the phone.” (211) He supports her emotionally and physically, even when it meant putting his own needs aside. His actions demonstrated that he valued Lily's well-being and was willing to prioritize her needs over his own.

Another way in which Atlas showed respect for Lily was by being honest and vulnerable with her. Throughout the novel, Atlas opened up to Lily about his past and his feelings for her. He trusted her with his deepest fears and insecurities, and he is always willing to listen and offer support in return. Which was not something familiar to Lily, so that made their relationship unique.

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In the novel, we see a powerful portrayal of love in the relationship between Lily Bloom and Atlas Corrigan. Their story is one of resilience, forgiveness, and growth, and it offers insights into the many dimensions of love and how it can make a difference in our lives from worst to best.

One of the most significant aspects of their love was their ability to forgive and grow together. When Atlas returned to Lily's life years later, he brought with him a painful past that has left him emotionally scarred and struggling with trauma. Despite the challenges they faced, Lily remains committed to him, showing empathy, compassion, and unwavering support.

Through their relationship, we see how love can be a powerful force for personal growth and transformation. Atlas and Lily both have to confront their own fears and insecurities, learning to communicate openly and honestly with each other in order to build a strong foundation for their relationship. As they work through their issues, they become stronger as individuals and as a couple, developing a deep sense of trust and respect for each other.

The love between Lily and Atlas in the novel is a powerful example of how love can transform lives, helping us to grow, heal, and become better versions of ourselves. Through their story, we see how love can be a force for forgiveness, trust, and personal growth, helping us to overcome our fears and insecurities and become stronger as individuals and as a couple. Their relationship is characterized by empathy, respect, and a deep sense of devotion, reminding us of the many dimensions of love and how it can shape our lives in profound ways.

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2.2.3. Depiction of Modern Masculinity in Atlas' Character

Modern masculinity is a term that has gained increasing attention in recent years. It refers to a shift in attitudes towards gender roles and the traditional characteristics associated with masculinity. Colleen Hoover can find one of the most intriguing examples of modern masculinity in the character of Atlas Corrigan in *It Ends with Us*. Atlas embodies many of the traits that are seen as positive in modern society, such as emotional intelligence, vulnerability, and empathy.

Atlas Corrigan is a character who displays a high level of emotional intelligence. He is able to understand and manage his emotions, and he is empathetic towards others. This is evident in his interactions with Lily, as he is able to sense when she is upset or troubled and offer support and comfort. Atlas is also able to communicate his emotions effectively, expressing his feelings openly and honestly with Lily. This emotional intelligence is a key component of modern masculinity, as it emphasizes the importance of being in touch with one's emotions and being able to communicate them effectively.

Another key trait of modern masculinity that Atlas demonstrates is frailty. Despite his tough exterior, Atlas is not afraid to show his frail side to Lily. He opens up to her about his past and his struggles, showing her his true self. This frailty allows him to form a deep and meaningful connection with Lily, as she sees him for who he truly is. In contrast, Ryle's emotional distance prevents him from truly connecting with Lily on a deeper level. Atlas's willingness to be vulnerable is a refreshing example of modern masculinity, which emphasizes the importance of being open and honest with oneself and others.

Moreover, Atlas is a character who demonstrates a high level of compassion towards others. He is able to put himself in other people's shoes and understand their perspective. This compassion is seen in his interactions with Lily and his surrounding, as he is able to

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understand her struggles and offer her support and comfort. Atlas is also able to show empathy towards Ryle, despite their rocky past, and he encourages Lily to try to understand Ryle's perspective. This empathy is a crucial component of modern masculinity, as it emphasizes the importance of being able to connect with others on a deeper level and show compassion towards them.

In addition, Atlas is a character who values honesty and integrity. He is upfront and veracious with Lily about his traumatic past, his struggles, and his feelings he grew for her. This veracity allows for a strong foundation of trust and respect to be built between them. In contrast, Ryle's tendency to hide his emotions and past prevents him from being truly honest with Lily. Atlas's commitment to sincerity and integrity is a key aspect of modern masculinity, as it emphasizes the importance of being truthful and transparent in one's relationships.

Furthermore, Atlas is a character who is determined and resilient. Despite his difficult past and the challenges he faces, he is able to persevere and make a better life for himself. This determination is seen in his decision to leave Boston and start a new life, as well as in his dedication to Lily and their relationship. This determination and resilience are important features of modern masculinity, as they emphasize the importance of perseverance and grit in achieving one's goals.

The character of Atlas Corrigan in *It Ends with Us* embodies many of the traits that are seen as positive in modern masculinity. From his emotional intelligence and vulnerability to his compassion, honesty, and determination, Atlas is a refreshing example of a modern man who is in touch with his emotions and values deep connections with others. Through his character, we see the potential for men to embrace a new vision of masculinity, one that is based on empathy, respect, and equality.

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As society continues to evolve and confront toxic masculinity, it is important to highlight positive examples like Atlas and celebrate men who challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. By rejecting toxic behaviours and cultivating positive traits, men like Atlas who embraces modernity can help create a more inclusive and equitable society. Ultimately, *It Ends with Us* reminds us that true strength lies in reconciliation with oneself first, and then building healthy relationships with others, which requires a willingness to be open, honest, and considerate.

Overall, *It Ends with Us*, is the masterpiece of the 21st century in America. It succeeded to demonstrate the meaning of masculinity and what being “a real man” means through this engaging and unique story. This chapter analyses the personalities of two main male characters of this novel who represent different kinds of masculinity. We examined the character of Ryle Kincaid who demonstrates the values of traditional masculinity. The introversion of this character and his unhealthy, dominant mind-set creates an unstable relationship with his wife, Lily Bloom, in the end she decides to leave him.

On the other hand, we have the character of Atlas Corrigan who exhibits healthy traits of modern masculinity. Thanks to the extroversion and emotional openness, Atlas was able build a strong relationship with Lily. Their relationship was basically built on mutual respect, love, honesty and devotion which made it peaceful and healthy.

The following chapter is dedicated to the comparison between the characters of Ryle Kincaid and Atlas Corrigan. These two characters have completely contrasted personalities that each of these personalities leaves a strong impact on the main character Lily, which creates an internal conflict within herself.

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Chapter Three: The contrasting Characters of Ryle and Atlas

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Relationships play a crucial role in human existence, affecting our feelings, thoughts, and actions. However, not all relationships are made equal; some can be hurtful to people while others can be a source of strength and development. Toxic and healthy relationships are two relationship types that significantly affect people's lives. Healthy relationships are defined by mutual respect, trust, and support, whereas toxic relationships can be identified by a variety of negative behaviors, such as emotional abuse, control, and manipulation.

In this chapter, we will explore the contrasted approaches that two characters, of this novel who are heavily influenced by their perspective of masculinity demonstrate. To depict and to recognize the signs of a toxic relationship and take steps to end it and to maintain a healthy relationship that will contribute to personal growth and long-term happiness. We will also examine the emotional and psychological impacts of traditional masculinity and the benefits of modern masculinity on Lily Bloom.

3.1. The Contrasted Characters of Ryle and Atlas

As masculinity is a concept that has been the subject of much debate and analysis in fields such as sociology, psychology and gender studies. At its most basic level, masculinity can be understood as the set of attributes, behaviors, and roles that are traditionally associated with men. Several writers also depict it as a crucial theme in literature because "As a kind of conscious or unconscious fantasy or projection of other worlds, literature can reveal aspects of masculinity that might not come out or be visible in daily life or in other types of cultural artifacts." Colleen Hoover is one among the writers who revealed the different aspects of masculinity in her famous novel *It Ends with Us*.

The novel revolves around the characters of Ryle Kincaid and Atlas Corrigan, who exhibit two contrasting ideals of masculinity. Ryle embodies traditional masculinity, characterized by aggression, dominance, and emotional suppression, while Atlas represents

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the values of modern masculinity such as; cooperation, empathy and emotional intelligence. Through the clash of these two characters, the novel challenges traditional notions of masculinity and emphasizes the importance of empathy and understanding in relationships.

This comparison is critical as it challenges the social expectations, and presents a clear picture that helps readers understand the spectrum of masculinity. Moreover, the contrast between the characters of Ryle Kincaid and Atlas Corrigan paves the road to readers to reflect on their own understanding of masculinity. In addition, the way it shapes their perceptions and interactions with others, as well as the impact of traditional and toxic masculinity on individuals and society as a whole.

The clash between Ryle and Atlas is evident throughout the novel in several points.

3.1.1. Introversion VS. Extroversion

Men are often expected to suppress their emotions and avoid vulnerability, as expressing emotions is seen as a sign of weakness. This can lead to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, as men may struggle to cope with emotional challenges. The novel revolves around the protagonist, Lily Bloom, who falls in love with a man, Ryle Kincaid, who appears to be emotionally stable. However throughout the story we discover that Ryle embodies traditional masculinity, characterized by emotional suppression.

Emotional suppression is a prominent characteristic of Ryle throughout the novel. He is a character who struggles with his introversion of feelings and emotions. He constantly suppresses his emotions, particularly his vulnerability and fears, to maintain a façade of strength and control. He uses emotional suppression as a defense mechanism.

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Ryle's emotional suppression makes Lily feel unsafe and unsure of her feelings. However, as their relationship progresses, Lily begins to see glimpses of emotional openness in Ryle. He confides in her about his traumatic past and struggles to overcome his emotional barriers. Lily encourages him to seek help and confront his emotions, showing her commitment to emotional openness and honesty. However, that does not last long, Ryle's emotional suppression leads to misunderstandings and conflicts with Lily all the time throughout their marriage, ultimately leading to a toxic and abusive relationship.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of emotional expression and vulnerability as part of healthy masculinity. Lily is a person who values emotional openness and honesty. So in contrast, we have the character of Atlas Corrigan who represents emotional openness. He is an extrovert character. He is not afraid to express his emotions and is empathetic towards Lily's struggles. He listens to her, understands her situation, and provides emotional support when needed. Atlas's emotional intelligence strengthens his bond with Lily and helps him build a healthy relationship with her. That opens the door for communication and a well understanding for each other.

The contrast between emotional suppression and emotional openness is clear in the novel's exploration of gender roles and expectations. Ryle prioritizes and idealizes traditional notions of masculinity. He believes that emotions are a sign of weakness and that men should be stoic and unemotional. This toxic masculinity had an awful, negative impact on his relationships with Lily and his family, since he and Lily had a baby girl but he could not be present in her life regarding his abusive and unstable behaviour, where he often resorts to aggression and violence.

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In contrast, the novel presents an alternative form of masculinity that emphasizes healthy traits of masculinity, which are considered positive and green flags that a man can demonstrate. These values embodied by Atlas, who is ready to confront his emotions and express them to the world. He is not afraid to show vulnerability and is committed to supporting and understanding those around him. Atlas challenges traditional gender roles and expectations, promoting a more sensitive and supportive form of masculinity that values extroversion and honesty. For example, when he first meets Lily Bloom, he is open about his life's situation and shows a willingness to listen to her perspective whenever she needed a listener. He also encourages her to express her own needs and desires, rather than simply shutting her down.

Ultimately, the contrast between introversion and extroversion in *It Ends with Us* highlights the importance of confronting our emotions and expressing them to others. The novel shows that emotional suppression can lead to toxic behaviours and relationships, while emotional openness can promote healthier and more fulfilling relationships. By exploring these themes, Colleen Hoover challenges traditional notions of masculinity and femininity and encourages and inspires the readers to embrace a more empathetic and honest approach to their emotions.

3.1.2. Dominance VS. Cooperation

One of the main features of traditional masculinity is the idea of male dominance and power. Men have been seen as the dominant sex, with men expected to be assertive, and in control. This idea of male dominance is deeply ingrained in many cultures and has been linked to the subordination and oppression of women and other marginalized groups. The character Ryle is the most obvious example of dominance in

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the novel. He is a successful neurosurgeon who is used to being in control of everything around him.

However, his need for control spills over into his personal relationships, leading him to become physically and emotionally abusive towards Lily. Ryle's need for dominance stems from his traumatic past, which he refuses to confront. Instead, he tries to ignore his emotions and control those around him.

He exerts his strength over others as he seeks control and dominance in his relationship with Lily, often resorting to physical and emotional abuse to assert his power. As he tries to control her in every move, becoming increasingly violent when she attempts to assert her independence.

Ryle's controlling behaviour creates an unhealthy and unsafe environment for Lily, causing her to question her relationship with him. From the beginning of their relationship, Ryle asserts his dominance over Lily in a variety of ways. He often speaks for her and makes decisions without consulting her, demonstrating a sense of entitlement and control. The most significant act he did to prove that was when Ryle bought an apartment without her input or consent of making a decision to do so “I think it’s crazy that you just went and bought an apartment without me. I feel like that’s something we should have done together.” (197)

However, the concept of male dominance is increasingly being challenged, and many people are advocating for more equitable and inclusive forms of the new masculinity. Atlas Corrigan is depicted as a male character who embodies traits of modern masculinity, which includes the value of cooperation in his relationships. Atlas's character stands in contrast to Ryle Kincaid. He respects Lily's choices and boundaries, never forcing or pressuring her into anything she does not want. Atlas's willingness to work together with Lily to overcome their challenges creates a positive

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and healthy dynamic between them. He respects Lily's decisions and opinions and never tries to control or manipulate her. Instead, he encourages her to pursue her dreams and goals, offering his support and assistance when needed.

Atlas also values communication and is willing to work through any conflicts that arise in their relationship. Atlas serves as a powerful example of how men can redefine masculinity in ways that promote healthy relationships and emotional fulfilment.

3.1.3. Aggression VS. Empathy

Men who conform to traditional masculine norms may find it challenging to express empathy and connect with others, as it can be seen as a sign of weakness to men who are influenced by society. Instead, they may use aggression to assert their power and maintain their status within their social group.

Ryle's aggression is rooted in traditional masculinity, which is a societal problem that encourages men to be dominant and suppress their emotions. This ultimately harms both men and women, as it leads to unhealthy and unequal relationships. In the novel *It Ends with Us*, Ryle Kincaid is depicted as a character with a tendency towards aggression. Throughout the novel, there are numerous instances where Ryle's behaviour is aggressive towards Lily, his wife. This aggressive behaviour can be analysed from different perspectives such as psychological, social.

From a psychological perspective, Ryle's aggressive behaviour can be attributed to a lack of emotional regulation. Ryle has a history of suppressing his emotions, and this has resulted in his inability to control his emotions when they surface. This lack of control can lead to explosive outbursts, which often manifest as violence towards others. An example of this can be seen when Ryle and Lily have an argument, and he hits her, accidentally, down on the table, causing Lily to have a small

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injure. Ryle's inability to regulate his emotions and temper leads to him lashing out physically, which can be interpreted as aggressive behaviour.

Socially, Ryle's aggressive behaviour can be linked to his beliefs about traditional masculinity. Ryle holds onto the belief that men should be strong, dominant, and in control at all times. This belief system can lead to a sense of entitlement and the belief that it is acceptable to use aggression to maintain control. An example of this can be seen when Ryle uses physical force to restrain Lily during their arguments, despite him repeatedly promising her to stop.

On the other hand, research has shown that developing empathy can have positive benefits for men's mental and physical health, as well as for their relationships with others. This can include improved communication, better conflict resolution skills, and greater emotional intelligence. Atlas Corrigan is the character who develops these qualities in the novel. He is a compassionate and empathetic person, who stands in stark contrast to Ryle Kincaid. Atlas displays empathy towards Lily who is a survivor of domestic violence, having grown up watching her father physically abuse her mother. Atlas, sharing the same experience, understands what Lily is going through and empathizes with her situation. Atlas's empathy is evident in various instances throughout the novel, and can be analysed from both social and psychological perspectives.

From a social perspective, Atlas demonstrates empathy by being sensitive to Lily's emotions and needs. He listens attentively when she talks and validates her feelings without judgement. For instance, when Lily confides in Atlas about her experiences with domestic violence, he reacts with compassion and understanding. He does not dismiss her feelings or try to minimize her trauma, but instead, he shares his

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own experience to show her that she is not alone in that situation and it is common. He supports her encourages her and helps her to overcome her trauma.

From a psychological perspective, Atlas's empathy can be attributed to his ability to put himself in other people's shoes. He is able to understand other people's emotions and experiences by imagining how he would feel if he were in their situation. This is exemplified in his interactions with Lily, where he is able to sense her emotional needs and offer support accordingly.

3.2. Impact of Traditional and Modern Masculinity on Lily's Experience

Both society and the idea of masculinity are evolving. Modern definitions of what it means to be a man have replaced outdated gender norms and expectations. As writers examine the effects of both traditional and contemporary masculinity on characters, this transformation is represented in literature. The opposing personalities of Ryle Kincaid and Atlas Corrigan in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* provide a clear illustration of how traditional and modern masculinity affected Lily Bloom's life. This section will examine how these two figures influenced Lily Bloom's perception of conventional, traditional and contemporary, modern masculinity.

We will look at how Lily handles the difficulties posed by these different types of masculinity through her relationships, and how they ultimately influence her perception of gender roles and social expectations.

3.2.1. Impact of the Challenges Presented by Traditional Masculinity on Lily

Traditional masculinity presents a range of challenges that impact individuals, relationships, and society as a whole. One major challenge is the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes, which can limit individuals' sense of self and restrict their

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opportunities in life. Additionally, traditional masculinity can contribute to a culture of violence, particularly against women.

While healthy relationships can provide support, security, and happiness, toxic relationships can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. Lily's toxic relationship with Ryle Kincaid has a significant impact on her mental health. Despite their initial attraction and love, Ryle's unhealthy traits lead to a downward spiral in their relationship, ultimately causing emotional turmoil for Lily

Lily's unstable relationship with Ryle Kincaid exposes her to a number of mental health issues like constant state of fear and anxiety. She is always afraid of triggering Ryle's anger and becomes hyper-vigilant in her actions to avoid any conflicts. Because she thinks that she is the cause of his anger and becomes convinced that she deserves the mistreatment. This constant fear and anxiety take a significant toll on her mental health, leading to symptoms of depression and anxiety.

During their relationship, Ryle embodied the traditional masculine role of the provider and protector, taking charge of Lily's needs and desires. Which looked romantic and gentle-man act. However, as the relationship progresses, Ryle's aggression and gas-lighting behaviour begin to manifest. Ryle's use of physical force and emotional manipulation highlight the toxic aspects of traditional masculinity, creating a power imbalance that ultimately leads to Lily's realization that she must leave the relationship.

Lily demonstrates resilience as she navigates the impacts of Ryle's traditional masculinity. She gradually recognizes the harmful patterns in their relationship and begins to set boundaries. Lily confronts Ryle about his behaviour, challenging the

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notion that his actions are acceptable or justified. This pivotal moment reflects Lily's refusal to be silenced and her determination to assert her worth and autonomy.

She struggles to come to terms with his behaviour and is torn between her love for him and her need for safety and security. She feels trapped and unable to escape the situation due to fear, guilt, and manipulation.

Lily is reluctant to leave Ryle and is often conflicted between her love for him and the fear of his violent outbursts. Being an independent thinker and a successful independent woman, during her pregnancy, Lily, finally decides to leave Ryle for good prioritizing her and her daughter's safety, so that her daughter do not face the same fate as her in any near future. By that, she rejects the socially imposed gender stereotypes and expectations of staying in an abusive marriage. For so long, Ryle's domineering and controlling manner made her doubt her own morals and convictions, forcing her to deal with the complicated effects of traditional masculinity.

Lily's navigation of the impacts of traditional masculinity through the character of Ryle is a complex and challenging process, but one that ultimately leads to her empowerment and personal growth. By recognizing the harmful aspects of traditional gender roles and expectations, and by rejecting them in favor of her own safety, security and the well-being of her mental health.

The impact of Ryle on Lily's life is significant, causing emotional turmoil and negative mental health outcomes as she struggles to reconcile her love for him with his abusive actions. She experiences anxiety and depression because of his behaviour, and her confidence and self-worth are eroded over time. Ryle's actions have a ripple effect on every aspect of her life, from her personal relationships to her social aspirations.

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Through Lily's experience, the novel illustrates the profound harm that can be inflicted by toxic masculinity.

3.2.2. The Benefits of Embracing Modern Masculinity on Lily

Lily Bloom was exposed to the negative aspects of traditional masculinity, primarily, in her childhood, through her father's abusive behaviour towards her mother. However, as an adult, her experiences with Atlas Corrigan and Ryle Kincaid provided her with a more nuanced understanding of masculinity and its impact on relationships.

While Ryle represented the negative aspects of traditional masculinity, with his controlling actions and violent outbursts, Atlas exhibited the more positive aspects of modern masculinity. He was empathetic, communicative, and supportive of Lily's goals and ambitions. Through her relationships with both men, Lily was able to see the stark contrast between toxic masculinity and healthy masculinity.

Lily chose to embrace the benefits of modern masculinity in her own life and relationships. She learned to value open communication, mutual respect, and emotional intelligence in her partner. She also worked to break free from the patriarchal expectations that had been placed upon her, pursuing her own dreams and ambitions regardless of societal norms, which helps her to regain her sense of self-worth.

Lily would not know how emotional stability and safety feel without the helping hand of Atlas. Atlas is a vital character in Lily's emotional growth, acting as a catalyst for change in her life. He encourages her to acknowledge her feelings and confront her fears. Atlas is the only person with whom Lily can express herself completely, without

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the fear of being judged or misunderstood. The impact of Atlas on Lily's emotional life can be observed in several ways.

Firstly, Atlas becomes a shoulder to lean on, a listening ear, and someone who empathizes with her. For instance, after Ryle assaults Lily, Atlas is the first person she calls. He helps her through the aftermath of the assault, providing her with emotional support and encouragement.

Secondly, Atlas encourages Lily to acknowledge her feelings and confront her fears. He provides her with a safe space to express herself, which is something she does not have with Ryle, because she got the habit of controlling her words around him so that he does not lose temper and hurt her. Atlas helps Lily to understand the root of her problems, allowing her to work through them in a healthy and constructive way. He helps her realize that it is necessary to be vulnerable and to seek help when she needs it.

Thirdly, Atlas helps Lily to develop a sense of self-worth. Throughout the novel, Lily struggles with feelings of worthlessness and shame, thinking that her marriage to Ryle was a reckless decision. Atlas always reminds her that she is a strong and capable woman who deserves to be treated with respect and dignity after all, she went through. He supports her in her decision to leave Ryle, telling her that she deserves better.

The sense of security and happiness that comes from the healthy relationship leads Lily to boost her self-confidence.

Throughout the novel, Atlas and Lily's relationship is portrayed as healthy and mutually beneficial. They communicate openly and honestly with each other and

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prioritize each other's emotional well-being. Their relationship is built on a strong base and a foundation of trust and respect, and they both work to maintain this foundation.

Based on the previous discussion of the characters of Ryle and Atlas, we conclude that these two characters or personalities represent two contrasting approaches to life. One who is devoted to his toxic masculine traits and the other is someone who embraces his feminine side such as vulnerability and sensitivity. Each of these characters had a significant impact on Lily's experience. During her marriage with Ryle, Lily was exposed to different mental health issues; fear and anxiety as well as insecurity and loss of confidence. This put Lily in a position where she had to make a decision whether to break free from that situation or accept it. Eventually, she chose to leave him. Then, Atlas showed up again in her life. His presence helped her heal from the mess that her ex-husband caused.

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General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Literature reflects reality in a number of ways. First and foremost, literature often draws on real-life experiences and events, using them as a basis for creating compelling and relatable stories that resonate with readers. Whether it is a novel, short story, or poem, literature can provide a window into the human experience, allowing us to explore complex emotions, relationships, and societal issues in a way that is both engaging and thought provoking.

Indeed, throughout the analysis of the novel *It Ends with Us* we see how literature addressed a real life social issue. The research delved into the impact of traditional and modern masculinity on Lily's experience as the protagonist of the novel. By examining Lily's interactions with both Ryle and Atlas, the study shed light on how these contrasting masculine ideals influenced her perspective on relationships and self-identity. As well as the impact of these contrasting masculine influences on Lily's cognitive and emotional processes.

The aim of this research was more precisely and clearly stated. It was revealed via the examination of traditional and modern masculinity in *It Ends with Us*, how the author portrayed these opposing ideas through the characters of Ryle and Atlas trying to show that masculinity is not one size fits all definition. Ryle was portrayed as having a standard masculine perspective that is defined by behaviours like violence and dominance when his introverted personality and dominant thinking were examined. On the other side, Atlas, with his extroverted traits and a more cooperative and sympathetic approach to relationships, served as a symbol of healthy masculinity. The tension brought on by the conflicting ideas of masculinity was demonstrated by the personality clash between Ryle and Atlas.

The study aims to examine how different representations influence the emergence of conflict in the story and offer insights into the developing knowledge and how masculinity is perceived and understood in contemporary literature.

General Conclusion

Throughout the research process the hypotheses were tested and investigated, the first hypothesis is valid. The author examines masculinity via the experience of Lily. This investigation is carried out, among other things, through portraying Ryle, an introverted figure. The author highlights the societal expectations and norms connected to traditional masculinity while analyzing how Ryle exhibits traditional masculine features and actions. In addition, the author examines contemporary masculinity via the lens of Atlas. Atlas provides a different viewpoint, displaying extroverted traits and a more forward-thinking approach to interpersonal connections. Through Atlas, the author questions conventional ideas of masculinity and offers a different perspective that depicts how gender roles and expectations are always changing.

The second hypothesis is approved as well. The contrasting personalities of Ryle and Atlas greatly contribute to the emergence of tension and conflict. Their opposing characteristics such as Ryle's anger and dominance and Atlas's cooperative nature lead to a power struggle and conflicting dynamics. Their conflicting personalities create tension, which acts as a springboard for the story's deeper themes. As people work through their differences and deal with the emotional turbulence that result from their interactions, it fosters character growth and development. In addition to influencing Ryle and Atlas' respective character journeys, this personality clash also affects the novel's broader plot development and heightens the conflict.

The author adds depth to the story and develops a dynamic that keeps readers interested. The plot becomes more complicated as a result, and topics of relationships, power struggles, and personal development can be explored in greater depth.

The time limit was one of the study limitations in the conducted research. The research might not have been able to cover a wider range of perspectives or explore some topics as

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deeply as planned due to time restrictions. The sample size or the capacity to acquire thorough data may have also been impacted by the short time frame. Nevertheless, despite this drawback, the research results continue to offer insightful information and advance knowledge of the subject within the time limits.

The research questions that I have not been able to explore in as much depth as desired or cover a broader range of perspectives in my research are as follow:

1. How do the characters' journeys of self-discovery and personal growth in relation to masculinity contribute to the novel's thematic exploration of identity and empowerment?
2. How do the characters' journeys of self-discovery and personal growth in relation to masculinity contribute to the novel's thematic exploration of identity and empowerment?
3. How do the characters' journeys of self-discovery and personal growth in relation to masculinity contribute to the novel's thematic exploration of identity and empowerment?

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Appendix I: Colleen Hoover Biography

Appendix II: Synopsis of *It Ends with Us*

Appendix I: Colleen Hoover Biography

Colleen Hoover, (born December 11, 1979, Sulphur Springs, Texas, U.S.), American author who became a publishing phenomenon in the early 21st century and is known for hugely popular books that typically feature romance and dramatic plot twists. Forgoing more traditional marketing plans, Hoover self-published many of her books, which became sensations on social media, especially TikTok.



Hoover grew up in Texas. Her father was physically abusive to her mother, and the couple divorced while she was a toddler. Her mother later married, and the family struggled financially while running a small dairy farm. Hoover attended Texas A&M–Commerce, where she earned a degree in social work in 2004. She held various jobs before becoming a counselor for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, a federal program. During this time she lived in a trailer home with her husband, who was a long-haul trucker, and their three children.

Using a borrowed laptop, Hoover began writing the romance novel *Slammed* in 2011. It was originally intended as a Christmas gift to her mother and Hoover self-published the work in 2012. Although initially rejected by publishers, it began climbing best-seller lists, aided by word of mouth and enthusiastic reviews on social media platforms. The novel centres on an 18-year-old woman who moves to Michigan with her family after the death of her father. Once there, she becomes romantically involved with her neighbour, but a startling discovery forces them apart. Things are further complicated by another family tragedy. Readers embraced the romance, drama, and surprising plot turns, all of which became hallmarks of Hoover's works. The sequels, *Point of Retreat* (2012) and *This Girl* (2013), also became bestsellers.

Hoover subsequently began writing full-time. While her works span a variety of genres—including thriller and mystery—she is most notably associated with romance. In addition, she was often credited with helping establish a category known as new adult fiction. Such works typically centre on twentysomethings trying to navigate the adult world, with romantic relationships being a key element. Some, however, claimed that Hoover was a genre unto herself. Her success—in part due to devoted fans known as CoHorts—allowed Hoover to pursue unconventional deals in publishing. She signed contracts with several different houses, and she often retained the rights to her e-books. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hoover offered several of her e-books free of charge. This, along with her increasing popularity on TikTok, attracted new readers, many of whom began seeking out her older titles. As a result, Hoover’s recent and early books simultaneously appeared on best-seller lists, a rare feat in publishing.

Hoover’s best-known book is perhaps *It Ends with Us* (2016). The novel centres on Lily Bloom, a florist who grew up in a violent home. After finding herself in an abusive relationship, she remembers her own childhood, including her first love, a homeless teenager. A sequel, *It Starts with Us*, appeared in 2022. Hoover’s other notable books include *Ugly Love* (2014), in which a man and a woman agree to limit their relationship to sex, but both have trouble adhering to that promise. In *November 9* (2015) a woman has a chance encounter with a writer, who uses her as inspiration for his novel. They continue to meet every year, but she begins to question what is real and what is fiction. *Verity* (2018) was something of a departure for Hoover. The romantic thriller follows Lowen Ashleigh, a struggling ghostwriter who agrees to finish a best-selling author’s book series after the latter is injured in a car accident. However, Ashleigh begins to suspect things are not as they seem. In *Heart Bones* (2020), a teenager becomes homeless after her mother dies of a drug overdose. Forced to move in with a father she barely knows, she finds herself unexpectedly attracted to one of his

neighbours. Hoover also wrote the Maybe Someday series: *Maybe Someday* (2014), *Maybe Not* (2014; novella), and *Maybe Now* (2018).

Source : <https://www.britannica.com/art/American-literature>

Appendix II: Synopsis of *It Ends with Us*

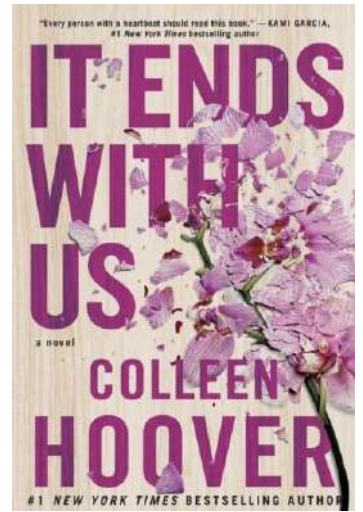
Lily hasn't always had it easy, but that's never stopped her from working hard for the life she wants. She's come a long way from the small town in Maine where she grew up—she graduated from college, moved to Boston, and started her own business. So when she feels a spark with a gorgeous neurosurgeon named Ryle Kincaid, everything in Lily's life suddenly seems almost too good to be true.

Ryle is assertive, stubborn, maybe even a little arrogant. He's also sensitive, brilliant, and has a total soft spot for Lily. And the way he looks in scrubs certainly doesn't hurt. Lily can't get him out of her head. But Ryle's complete aversion to relationships is disturbing. Even as Lily finds herself becoming the exception to his "no dating" rule, she can't help but wonder what made him that way in the first place.

As questions about her new relationship overwhelm her, so do thoughts of Atlas Corrigan—her first love and a link to the past she left behind. He was her kindred spirit, her protector. When Atlas suddenly reappears, everything Lily has built with Ryle is threatened.

Source:

https://www.bookbrowse.com/bb_briefs/detail/index.cfm/ezone_preview_number/11808/it-ends-with-us



List of Acronyms :

LGBTQ+ : LGBTQ+ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), and the "+" symbolizes the inclusion of other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. It is a term used to represent a community of individuals who have non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identities. Each letter in the acronym represents a different sexual orientation or gender identity, with lesbian referring to women attracted to other women, gay referring to men attracted to other men, bisexual referring to individuals attracted to both men and women, transgender referring to individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth, and queer or questioning referring to individuals who may have a non-normative sexual orientation or gender identity or are exploring their own identity. The "+" is an inclusive symbol that recognizes and embraces the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities beyond the initial letters.

Summary :

Masculinity is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been shaped by various factors throughout history. It encompasses a set of behaviors, traits, and expectations associated with being male in a given society. However, the understanding and interpretation of masculinity have evolved over time, reflecting cultural, social, and individual perspectives. While traditional masculinity often emphasizes qualities such as strength, dominance, and emotional restraint, modern understandings of masculinity have expanded to include a broader range of expressions, acknowledging the diversity and fluidity of gender identity and roles. Masculinity is not a monolithic concept; it is influenced by intersectional factors such as race, class, sexuality, and culture, resulting in a complex interplay of power dynamics and social expectations. The exploration of masculinity in literature, media, and academic discourse has shed light on the social construction of gender and the impact of traditional masculine norms on individuals, relationships, and society at large. As discussions surrounding masculinity continue to evolve, there is an increasing recognition of the need to challenge harmful stereotypes, promote healthy and inclusive expressions of gender, and create spaces for men to embrace their authentic selves and navigate the complexities of identity in a changing world.

Résumé:

La masculinité est un concept complexe et multiforme qui a été façonné par divers facteurs tout au long de l'histoire. Elle englobe un ensemble de comportements, de traits et d'attentes associés au fait d'être un homme dans une société donnée. Cependant, la compréhension et l'interprétation de la masculinité ont évolué au fil du temps, reflétant des perspectives culturelles, sociales et individuelles. Alors que la masculinité traditionnelle met

souvent l'accent sur des qualités telles que la force, la dominance et la retenue émotionnelle, les conceptions modernes de la masculinité se sont élargies pour inclure une gamme plus large d'expressions, reconnaissant la diversité et la fluidité de l'identité et des rôles de genre. La masculinité n'est pas un concept monolithique ; elle est influencée par des facteurs intersectionnels tels que la race, la classe, la sexualité et la culture, ce qui entraîne une interaction complexe de dynamiques de pouvoir et d'attentes sociales. L'exploration de la masculinité dans la littérature, les médias et le discours universitaire a mis en lumière la construction sociale du genre et l'impact des normes masculines traditionnelles sur les individus, les relations et la société dans son ensemble. Alors que les discussions autour de la masculinité continuent d'évoluer, on reconnaît de plus en plus la nécessité de remettre en question les stéréotypes nuisibles, de promouvoir des expressions saines et inclusives du genre, et de créer des espaces où les hommes peuvent embrasser leur authenticité et naviguer dans les complexités de l'identité dans un monde en mutation.

ملخص

الرجولة هي مفهوم معقد ومتعدد الجوانب تم تشكيله بواسطة عوامل مختلفة على مر التاريخ. إنه يشمل مجموعة من السلوكيات والصفات والتوقعات المرتبطة بكون الذكر في المجتمع المحدد. ومع ذلك، فقد تطور فهم وتفسير الرجولة مع مرور الوقت، مع انعكاس آراء ثقافية واجتماعية وفردية. بينما يؤكد الرجولة التقليدية غالبًا على صفات مثل القوة والسيطرة وضبط العواطف، فقد توسعت فهم المجتمعات الحديثة للرجولة لتشمل مجموعة أوسع من التعبيرات، مع الاعتراف بتنوع وسوالية الهوية الجندرية والأدوار. ليست الرجولة مفهومًا ثابتًا؛ فهي تتأثر بعوامل تقاطعية مثل العرق والطبقة والجنسانية والثقافة، مما ينتج عنه تداخل معقد لديناميات القوة والتوقعات الاجتماعية. أسهم استكشاف الرجولة في الأدب ووسائل الإعلام والحوار الأكاديمي في إلقاء الضوء على البناء الاجتماعي للجنس وتأثير القواعد التقليدية للرجولة على الأفراد والعلاقات والمجتمع بشكل عام. مع استمرار تطور النقاشات المتعلقة بالرجولة، يتزايد الاعتراف بضرورة تحدي الصور النمطية الضارة، وتعزيز التعبيرات الصحية والشاملة للجنس، وخلق مساحات للرجال لاحتضان أنفسهم الحقيقية والتنقل في تعقيدات الهوية في عالم متغير.

