

Comparative study of the novel *It Ends With Us* and its Adaptation

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Abstract : Adapting a written text into a visual medium involves transformation, selection, and reinterpretation of its content, as the narrative shifts from a language-based form to an image-driven representation. This is evident in the case of *It Ends With Us* by [Colleen Hoover](#), a widely acclaimed contemporary novel known for its emotional depth and sensitive exploration of themes such as domestic violence, romance, family history, and trauma. The adaptation of this novel seeks to preserve the emotional intensity embedded in the written narrative while translating it into a visual storytelling format that is accessible to a broader audience. In this process, certain elements are inevitably modified or condensed to suit the cinematic form. Therefore, the present paper undertakes a comparative analysis of *It Ends With Us* as both a novel and a film, focusing on key aspects such as narrative structure, characterization, thematic development, emotional impact, and the limitations imposed by each medium. The findings of this study demonstrate how [Colleen Hoover](#), as the original author, effectively conveys the inner emotions and psychological motivations of the characters through the written form, while the film adaptation translates these elements into visual and performative expressions. The contrast between the narrative approaches of the novel and the film highlights the immediacy of emotional engagement experienced by the reader and the heightened social awareness evoked in the viewer. Ultimately, this comparative study illustrates how different media forms employ distinct techniques to present the same story, thereby shaping audience perception and interpretation in unique ways.

Keywords: Adaptation, Comparative Study, Narrative Structure, Characterization, Emotional Impact, Domestic Violence, Visual Storytelling, Literature and Film

Introduction:

The study of how literature is adapted into cinema is an important area within media studies and comparative literature, as it examines the transformation of narrative from a written to a visual medium. While reading a book, audiences engage with the text through imagination, guided by the author's narrative voice, descriptive language, and interpretive commentary. In contrast, films and television series present the story through visual imagery, spoken dialogue, and actors' performances, thereby creating a more immediate and sensory experience. *It Ends With Us* by [Colleen Hoover](#) is a contemporary novel that is emotionally intense and addresses complex themes such as domestic violence, toxic relationships, love, and personal growth through resilience. The novel's widespread popularity and emotional depth have made it a significant candidate for screen adaptation. The primary objective of this paper is to compare the original novel *It Ends With Us* with its film adaptation, focusing on how both versions represent the same storyline, themes, and characters. Additionally, the study aims to analyse the similarities and differences in narrative technique, emotional impact, character portrayal, and thematic emphasis across the two mediums. Furthermore, it seeks to identify how certain elements of the novel have been modified, condensed, or simplified in order to meet the structural and aesthetic demands of cinema and to create an effective and engaging visual narrative.

Glimpse of the Novel:

It Ends With Us by [Colleen Hoover](#) is narrated from the first-person perspective of Lily Bloom, a young woman whose life is deeply shaped by her childhood experiences of witnessing domestic abuse, where her father inflicted violence upon her mother. This traumatic past continues to influence Lily's emotional responses and decisions in her adult life. As the narrative unfolds, Lily becomes involved in a relationship with Ryle Kincaid, a successful neurosurgeon who initially appears kind, caring, and emotionally attentive, but gradually reveals a pattern of violent behavior. This relationship becomes further complicated by the reappearance of Atlas Corrigan, Lily's former boyfriend, who symbolizes emotional safety, stability, and unconditional love. Through the use of a first-person narrative, [Colleen Hoover](#) effectively conveys Lily's inner thoughts, emotional conflicts, confusion, fear, and psychological turmoil. The novel provides a powerful and realistic portrayal of the complexities faced by victims of domestic abuse, particularly highlighting the difficulty of leaving an abusive relationship due to emotional attachment, hope for change, and societal expectations. Rather than romanticizing abuse, the narrative presents it as a painful and cyclical experience, emphasizing that breaking free from such a cycle requires immense courage, self-awareness, and inner strength.

Social Learning Theory:

"Reinforcement purges our mind, soul and body with or without our knowledge" (Suganya et al., 879). What individuals repeatedly observe and experience in their social environment can significantly shape their attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle. Social Learning Theory, developed by [Albert Bandura](#), explains how people learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of relationships, individuals often model their behavior based on what they have observed in others,

such as parents, partners, peers, or even characters represented in media. These observed behaviors influence communication patterns, conflict resolution strategies, and emotional expression within relationships.

Role models within one's social environment, including family members, friends, and fictional figures, play a crucial role in shaping an individual's perception of what constitutes a healthy or unhealthy relationship. Both positive and negative relational experiences act as reinforcement or punishment, thereby influencing future behavior. A key concept within Social Learning Theory is self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform certain behaviors effectively. In relationships, individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to communicate clearly, manage conflicts constructively, and sustain healthy interpersonal bonds. This belief system directly affects relationship satisfaction and stability.

Screen Adaptation Overview and Narrative Style:

The screen adaptation of *It Ends With Us* by [Colleen Hoover](#) translates the emotional intensity of the novel into a visual and performative form, requiring significant changes in narrative technique. Since cinema cannot rely on lengthy internal monologues, the filmmakers employ visual cues such as body language, facial expressions, background music, and dialogue to communicate the emotional depth that the novel conveys through language. While the film retains the core storyline, it restructures certain scenes and modifies pacing to suit cinematic flow, making the narrative more concise and visually engaging. The adaptation also places greater emphasis on Lily's relationships with Ryle and Atlas through direct interaction and performance, while condensing several secondary characters and subplots from the novel. Flashbacks are effectively used to depict Lily's traumatic childhood and her early connection with Atlas, allowing the audience to visually experience her past. Moreover, the film highlights the physical reality of abuse more explicitly, making it more immediate and, at times, deeply unsettling for viewers, thereby reinforcing the seriousness of the theme in a direct and impactful manner.

A major distinction between the novel and its adaptation lies in their narrative style, particularly in the representation of Lily's inner world. The novel is written from Lily's first-person perspective, offering readers deep insight into her thoughts, emotions, fears, and psychological struggles, with additional depth provided through her diary entries addressed to [Ellen DeGeneres](#). In contrast, the film minimizes these internal reflections and instead depends on the actors' performances to convey meaning through visual and emotional expression. This shift results in a more immediate and sensory experience for the audience, as emotions are shown rather than explained. However, it also limits the extent to which viewers can access Lily's internal conflicts and reasoning compared to readers of the novel. While the book foregrounds psychological depth and introspection, the film prioritizes emotional realism and visual storytelling, demonstrating how different mediums shape the presentation and reception of the same narrative.

Thematic treatment:

The thematic treatment in *It Ends With Us* by [Colleen Hoover](#) differs significantly between the novel and its screen adaptation, particularly in the portrayal of domestic violence, generational trauma, and the idea of love and choice. In the novel, domestic violence is presented with emotional depth and psychological complexity, emphasizing confusion, attachment, and the painful reality that love and harm can coexist within a relationship. Rather than focusing solely on physical brutality, the narrative explores Lily's internal conflict, making readers understand why victims often struggle to leave abusive situations. In contrast, the adaptation presents violence in a more direct and visual manner, highlighting its severity through explicit scenes that can be intense and unsettling for viewers. Similarly, the theme of generational trauma is deeply explored in the novel through detailed introspection, whereas the film conveys it more concisely through selected dialogues and flashback sequences, centering on Lily's conscious decision to break the cycle of abuse. The theme of love and choice is central to both versions, reinforcing the idea that love alone is not a sufficient reason to remain in a harmful relationship; however, the film communicates this message more explicitly to ensure clarity and immediate impact for a wider audience.

The strengths and limitations of each medium further shape how these themes are experienced. The novel's strength lies in its introspective and emotionally immersive nature, allowing readers to engage deeply with the characters' psychological states over time and develop a nuanced understanding of their motivations. On the other hand, the adaptation offers visual realism, immediacy, and broader accessibility, enabling audiences to witness the events and emotions unfold in a direct and powerful way. However, this comes at the cost of reduced psychological depth and the loss of some narrative layers present in the original text. Despite these differences, both forms effectively communicate the central message of the story that breaking the cycle of abuse requires immense courage, self-awareness, and a strong sense of self-worth. While the novel provides a more personal and reflective journey into Lily's experiences, the film offers a vivid and collective viewing experience, demonstrating how different media employ distinct strengths to convey the same powerful theme.

The Cycle of Abuse:

The cycle of abuse refers to a recurring pattern commonly observed in abusive relationships, characterized by phases of tension, violence, and temporary reconciliation. Initially, there is a gradual build-up of tension marked by poor communication, emotional distance, and a constant sense of unease, where the victim often feels as though they are "walking on eggshells." This is followed by the abusive phase, in which the abuser exerts control through emotional, verbal, or physical harm (Hoover, 24). In the aftermath of this incident, the abuser may express guilt or remorse, offering apologies and promises of change, which can lead the victim to believe that the situation will improve. This is often accompanied by a brief period of calm, where the abuser appears affectionate, attentive, and caring, reinforcing hope within the victim that the relationship can be restored. However, this phase is

typically temporary, and the cycle eventually repeats itself. Understanding this cycle is crucial, as it highlights the psychological complexity and emotional difficulty involved in leaving an abusive relationship. The alternating patterns of harm and affection can create deep emotional dependency, making it challenging for victims to break free. Therefore, recognizing these patterns is an important step toward intervention and recovery. Seeking support from trusted individuals, support networks, or trained professionals becomes essential in helping victims navigate their circumstances and ultimately escape the cycle of abuse.

Conclusion:

The comparative study of *It Ends With Us* by [Colleen Hoover](#) highlights the inherent challenges involved in adapting emotionally complex literary works into cinematic form. The transition from page to screen requires not only structural condensation but also a shift in narrative technique, where internal reflection must be translated into visual and performative expression. While the novel offers a deeply introspective exploration of Lily Bloom's psychological and emotional journey, allowing readers to engage with her inner conflicts, fears, and moral dilemmas, the film relies on visual storytelling, actor performance, and symbolic representation to communicate similar themes. This difference underscores the broader distinction between literature and cinema, where one privileges depth of consciousness and the other emphasizes immediacy and sensory impact. Despite these differences, both forms remain committed to portraying the central issues of domestic abuse, emotional dependency, and the struggle for self-liberation with sincerity and gravity. Furthermore, both the novel and its adaptation succeed in foregrounding the importance of recognizing abusive patterns and prioritizing self-respect over the endurance of harmful relationships.

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