

# Literary And Psychological Journey Into Lee Brightman's Consciousness

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to analyze the character of Lee Brightman from both literary and psychological perspective. Lee Brightman is a main character in Elizabeth Haynes's novel *Into the Darkest Corner*. Lee has psychopathic traits, which fall under the dark triad personalities: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. After Catharine Bailey falls in love with him, he starts to change his attitude towards her. Lee uses emotional, psychological, and physical abuse against Catharine. This research helps to uncover the reasons behind Lee Brightman's domestic violence. In addition, this research serves as a case study of someone who has psychological problems.

**Index Terms:** Covert abuse, Domestic Violence, Manipulation, Narcissism, Overt abuse, Predatory behavior, Psychological abuse, Psychopathy, Spousal abuse.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a serious issue that exists in all societies. One should not turn a blind eye to such an issue. Because of its importance, domestic violence is discussed in many fields such as literature and psychology, which are used in this paper. *Into the Darkest Corner* novel by Elizabeth Haynes, gives insight into spousal abuse, which is one form of domestic violence. The dynamic of spousal abuse is formed between Lee Brightman and Catharine Bailey. Because of his psychological problems, Lee Brightman believes that his violence is acceptable and it is a form of expressing his love towards his wife. This paper aims to study the reasons behind Lee Brightman's domestic violence, and analyzes the character of Lee Brightman from both literary and psychological perspective. In addition, it serves as a case study of someone who has psychological problems.

## 2. WELCOME TO LEE'S WORLD

People without mental illness can consciously shift between reality and fantasy. While psychologically disturbed people believe that their fantasy is the reality, such as narcissists and psychopaths. Lee Brightman suffers from either pathological narcissism or psychopathy. The definition of pathological narcissism and psychopathy helps to decide whether Lee is a narcissist or a psychopath. In his book *Malignant Self-love: Narcissism Revisited*, Sam Vaknin defines pathological narcissism on the one hand as "... a life-long pattern of traits and behaviors which signify infatuation and obsession with one's self to the exclusion of all others and the egotistic and ruthless pursuit of one's gratification, dominance, and ambition" ("Primer"). On the other hand, his definition of psychopathy as follows:

*Psychopaths regard other people as objects to be manipulated and as instruments of gratification and utility. They have no discernible conscience, are devoid of empathy, and find it difficult to accurately perceive and decipher other people's nonverbal cues, needs, emotions, and preferences. Consequently, the psychopath rejects other people's rights and his commensurate obligations. He is impulsive, reckless, irresponsible, and unable to postpone gratification. He often rationalizes his behavior showing an utter absence of remorse for hurting or defrauding others ("Primer").*

Psychopathy and pathological narcissism are somehow similar. In fact, psychopathy is an exaggerated form of narcissism. "It is hard to distinguish narcissists from psychopaths. The latter may simply be a less inhibited and less grandiose form of the former..." (Vaknin, "Primer"). In fact, narcissists are poison to the soul; any person who is in close contact with narcissists are exposed to their soul poisoning, yet psychopaths are poison to the soul and the body. Psychopaths are more dangerous than narcissists, because they commit a criminal act. One can leave a relationship with narcissists psychologically shattered but without one physical injury. Psychopaths cause both psychological and physical harm. Catharine Bailey suffers from both physical and psychological abuse. So, this is one evidence that Lee Brightman is a psychopath. Additional evidence to support this argument is that narcissists are addicted to a drug called "narcissistic supply" which means the adulation and the admiration that they get from people who are close to them. In contrast, psychopaths do not need people that is why they get rid of them whenever they want. To psychopaths getting rid of people does not mean ending the relationship with them. It means killing them intelligently and walking away without any suspicions even from the police. To prove the previous point, the first scene of the novel describes the death of Naomi. Someone takes her body away to an empty place. Then starts to slice her body, after that, the person burns the body. Later in the novel, Lee says something important to Catharine, and she replies, "Who broke your heart, Lee? Who was it?, His reply took so long I thought he was asleep . . . and then the word, whispered into the air like a charm, like an incantation: Naomi" (251). Naomi is Lee's former girlfriend and Lee states that she killed herself, while in reality he is the one who killed her. During Halloween, Catharine Bailey decides to wear a costume that makes her look like a bride of Satan. Catharine's costume is a major symbol in the novel because it reflects the meaning of the novel, which is falling inside the devil's trap; the devil is Lee Brightman. When Catharine meets Lee, she feels fascinated by his big blue eyes and short blonde hair. This coincidence is the beginning spark for the relationship between Catharine and Lee. In Sandra Brown's book about psychopaths, a psychopath explains how he chooses his victim: "I can pick them out of a room full of people. There's just a certain look, an underlying current of vulnerability..." In the novel, Catharine meets Lee by coincidence during Halloween party as mentioned above, since this meeting, Lee starts to observe her secretly. When Lee meets Catharine for the first time, he says that he cannot believe his luck for a

moment. According to the fact that psychopaths observe their victim. This meeting may be planned by Lee and it is not a coincidence. At the second meeting, Lee and Catharine meet in the gym. Lee recognizes Catharine and he starts a normal conversation with her. He tries to remind her of him because it seems that she has forgotten him. On the third day, Catharine sees Lee in the gym again but this time she feels a strange attraction towards him, "I watched him do two laps, hypnotized by his rhythm, until someone almost fell over my gym bag and broke the spell" (32). On Sunday, 16 of November 2003, the fourth meeting at the coffee bar and this time, Catharine decides to have a serious conversation with Lee. Catharine tells Lee:

*"No, I haven't been back. Just been busy doing other things.  
I see. Family things?  
He was fishing to see if I was single. Friend things. I don't have any family. Both my parents died when I was at university, and I'm an only child" (37).*

The conversation between Lee and Catharine seems to be a normal conversation but to a psychopath every single word about his target is counted as a means of gathering information. As one psychopath from Brown's book says "...Then to check out if I'm right I'll ask a few questions and she begins disclosing at the speed of light about being lonely or having just lost someone". Lee likes the fact that Catharine is single and she does not belong to a family because it is one good trait in picking his victim.

**3. DYNAMIC OF SPOUSAL ABUSE**

Dynamic of spousal abuse discusses about psychopath's mastery of communication, mind games and overt abuse.

**3.1 Psychopath's mastery of communication**

To psychopaths a language is a lover; they use it as a weapon not for communication but for deception. Psychopaths are skilled at communication. Whenever they don't feel like answering the question; they either answer it in an intelligent way or change the subject. Lee does the same thing with Catharine, as Catharine says to Lee, "Are you a good man or a bad man?, That depends on whether you're a good woman or a bad woman. I considered this response and decided it was a clever one" (80). Psychopaths are excellent at some communication skills yet bad at others (see fig.1).

**Fig.1: From Brown's book Women Who Love Psychopaths: Inside the Relationships of Inevitable Harm With Psychopaths, Sociopaths & Narcissists. Shows the Psychopath's strength and weakness in communication**

Bad At	Good At
Unmoved by some emotional concepts.	Smooth talking and hiding communication problems
Devious motivation for communication	Semantically changing meaning of words
Language is contradictory	Mimicking and Parroting words/gestures back to people
Lack of emotional processing related to empathy, conscience, remorse, fear, sadness and disgust	Predatory 6th sense for loneliness, grief, vulnerability
Avoidance of communication they don't want to have	Non-verbal cues like body language, eye lingo and gestures/ movements

An obvious example of how a psychopath Semantically changes the meaning of words is when Lee Brightman answers questions in the court about his relationship with Catharine. Mr. Maclean investigates Lee, "MR. MACLEAN: Just with regard to the emotional problems, I would like to ask you about that further. Did you, over the course of your relationship, see any evidence that Miss Bailey would harm herself at times of emotional stress? MR. BRIGHTMAN: No. Her friends had told me that she had cut herself in the past" (3). This example shows how Lee twists and changes the words in order to appear as the victim and try to make Catharine look like the predator. First Catharine does not suffer from emotional problems. Second, he is the one who speaks badly about her with her friends and her friends never say that Catharine tried to cut herself in the past. The same example shows that Lee is a smooth talker, Lee is talking to the police about a serious issue, in addition, he is lying while speaking to them but he appears very calm and persuasive.

**3.2 Mind games**

Mind games are a psychopath's favorite tactic. In fact, they are a form of covert abuse and they meant to guarantee a full control over the target. For example, psychopaths change the order of things, or say something and then denies it, say contradictory sentences and use criticism to shake the other person's confidence and self-esteem. Mind games are also called gaslighting. Vaknin describes this type of mental abuse as the most dangerous one. "The abuser subverts the target's focus by disagreeing with her way of perceiving the world, her judgement, the facts of her existence, by criticizing her incessantly—and by offering plausible but specious alternatives. By constantly lying, he blurs the line between reality and nightmare" ("Primer"). Lee Brightman uses gaslighting with Catharine. For example, he changes the order of the things in kitchen, so Catharine questions herself:

*I put the knife and fork away in the drawer and something looked odd. The knives and forks had been reversed in the drawer. I'd shoved the clean ones back in, and they were in the wrong place— one fork nestled in with the knives, one knife in with the forks. (134)*

It is obvious that Lee's goal is to brainwash Catharine and make her look like the crazy one. In his video "How Covert Narcissists Brain Wash Their Victims", Grannon clarifies that covert narcissists also use this tactic and covert narcissists abuse their victims in a way that no one can notice or explain. It happens on the psychological level. Even victims cannot prove that there is something going on because covert narcissists make the victims question their own sanity.

**3.3 Overt abuse**

After abusing Catharine covertly, Lee starts to abuse her overtly. Catharine later confesses about the covert and the overt abuse. Catharine says:

*He used to do this. He used to enjoy turning up unexpectedly, scaring me. He used to watch me when I was out shopping, and if he thought I'd taken too long he would beat me when I got back home. He loves mind games, and I know he would just love turning up at my place of work*

*and pretending to be someone he's not, just to see my reaction. (499)*

Lee hits, beats and slaps Catharine whenever she does something that he doesn't want her to do, he always tells her that she cannot do anything but what he asks her to do. Following is additional example for the overt abuse. Catharine says:

*Hours later, when I was finally brave enough to look in the mirror, there was scarcely a mark on my face. It had felt as though he'd broken my cheekbone. My head was aching, but on the surface of the skin there was just a barely perceptible swelling and a small red mark. As though he hadn't hit me at all. (326)*

#### 4. Lee's disorder

Besides his psychopathy, Lee also suffers from multiple personality disorder. As Vaknin says: "Abusers appear to be suffering from dissociation (multiple personality). At home, they are intimidating and suffocating monsters – outdoors, they are wonderful, caring, giving, and much-admired pillars of the community" ("Spousal"). Another famous trait of psychopathy is living a double life. As "Dealing With The Devil Prolific Serial Killer Robert Browne Documentary", presents how one psychopath kills his victim with a cold blood, then walk outside in public as if he has done nothing. Robert Browne, the serial killer in the documentary confesses about his mysterious murders. He likes to play mind games even with the police. He did not show them immediately where he buried his victims. Instead, he writes a short poem:

*Beneath the cool  
Caressing mire  
Lies seven sacred virgins  
Side by side  
Those less worthy  
Are scattered wide*

The police search and find the victims distributed around the states. Lee Brightman did the same thing with Catharine. Lee sends Catharine a letter during his time in prison. He says that he prepared a gift for her. He writes directions to show her the gift's place. Then, Catharine takes her friend and go to the place to watch Lee's surprise. The gift is Catharine's old red dress and Naomi's broken bones.

##### 4.1 Lee's reasons to abuse Catharine

Narcissists and psychopaths are very sensitive to criticism. Any comment or hint that disagrees with their world view is taken seriously by them. They are vindictive; they seek revenge for hurting their big ego. One should be careful when dealing with such people. In addition, narcissists and psychopaths are sadist. They gain pleasure out of other people's pain. Indeed, they feel superior when they inflict pain on others. Lee punishes Catharine many times just because she disagrees with him or sometimes because she does not do what he wants her to do. Vaknin clarifies why a narcissist commits sadistic acts in the following lengthy passage:

*The narcissist tends to display the sadistic aspect of his personality in one of two cases:*

1. *That the very acts of sadism generate Narcissistic Supply by playing up to the narcissist's grandiosity ("I inflict pain, therefore I am superior and omnipotent"); or*
2. *That the victims of his sadism are still his only or major Sources of Narcissistic Supply but are perceived by him to be intentionally frustrating and withholding. Sadistic acts are his way of punishing them for not being submissive, docile, obedient, admiring and adoring as he expects them to be in view of his uniqueness, cosmic significance, and special entitlement ("Primer").*

Lee enjoys inflicting pain on Catharine, which means that his acts generate narcissistic supply and he believes that he is superior by doing this. Therefore, Lee's reason to abuse Catharine is the first one.

##### 4.2 Narcissism poem

Vaknin suffers from narcissistic personality disorder. In his poem "Narcissism", he describes how it feels to be a narcissist. Following is the first stanza of his poem:

*The Toxic  
waste of bottled anger venomized.  
Life belly up.  
The reeds.  
The wind is hissing death downstream,  
a river holds its vapour breath and leaves black lips  
of tar and fish a bloated shore. ("Narcissism")*

Vaknin says that narcissism is a toxic thing within him. It is an anger, and it is something that is not pleasant at all. He uses dark metaphors to describe his narcissism, which indicates the sadness that overwhelms the narcissist all the time. Then, he describes his lost childhood, which makes him who he is now: a narcissist. Although Lee's childhood is not mentioned in the novel. Vaknin's poem suggests that someone like Lee may not be happy about who he is and that he is angry all the time. That is why he abuses Catharine all the time.

#### 5 CONCLUSION

To sum up, Lee Brightman abuses Catharine Baily because of his psychological problem, which is psychopathy. He uses the same tactics with all of his victims. First, he showers them with affection and uses his communication skills until they trust him. Then he starts to play some mind games and abuse them covertly. Finally, he starts to abuse his victims overtly and it depends on their luck whether they can escape or end up murdered mysteriously. Psychopaths believe that inflicting pain on others make them feel superior. Although, Vaknin's poem reveals how narcissists feel about themselves and how sad they feel all the time, their abuse as a child is not an excuse for them to abuse an innocent person. Nothing can justify what Lee Brightman does to Catharine Bailey.

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