

## THE IMPACT OF ADRIAN GRIFFIN'S OBSESSIVE LOVE DISORDER TOWARDS CECILIA IN *THE INVISIBLE MAN*

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Adrian Griffin's obsessive behaviors and their impact on Cecilia Kass in the movie *The Invisible Man*. Adrian is portrayed as a successful scientist who suffers from Obsessive Love Disorder (OLD), which leads him to control and dominate his partner. The research aims to describe Adrian's obsessive behaviors and the impact of his obsessive behavior on Cecilia. The analysis applies Forward and Buck's theory of Obsessive Love Disorder and uses a qualitative descriptive method. The findings reveal that Adrian demonstrates seven out of eleven OLD behaviors: thrill of a new romance, romance to rejection, denying the undeniable, acting out through self-punishment, obsessive pursuit, acts of revenge, and the savior complex.. Additionally, three types of violent actions were found: emotional violence, violence against property, and physical violence. These violent actions had an emotional and physical impact on Cecilia. In conclusion, the findings indicate that Adrian's obsessive love is driven by fear of losing Cecilia and a desire to maintain power. His behaviors escalate into violent actions that cause Cecilia severe psychological suffering, including fear, helplessness, and isolation.

Keywords: *The Invisible Man*, Obsessive Love Disorder, Impact

### INTRODUCTION

*The Invisible Man*, directed by Leigh Whannell, presents a psychological horror narrative that explores themes of obsession, control, and abuse. The story centers on Adrian Griffin, a wealthy and intelligent scientist, whose relationship with Cecilia Kass quickly turns from romance to domination. Adrian isolates Cecilia from her social environment, monitors her every move, and manipulates her through psychological and physical control. Even after Cecilia escapes, Adrian continues to terrorize her by faking his death and using advanced technology to remain present in her life. Adrian's behavior illustrates characteristics of Obsessive Love Disorder (OLD), a psychological condition described by Forward and Buck (2002) as an unhealthy fixation that blurs the boundaries between affection and obsession. According to Goldman (n.d.), people with OLD often mistake obsessive feelings for genuine love, failing to recognize the unhealthy patterns behind their actions. Similarly, Leo (n.d.) explains that OLD can manifest in extreme jealousy, possessiveness, and even stalking or other harmful behaviors, which align closely with Adrian's conduct in the film. OLD is often driven by fear of abandonment and a need for control, which may escalate into emotional, physical, and psychological harm. In the film,

Adrian's obsession manifests in multiple controlling and abusive actions that deeply affect Cecilia's mental health, leaving her in fear, isolation, and despair. While previous studies of *The Invisible Man* have focused on Cecilia's trauma, defense mechanisms, or Gothic elements of the film, no studies have examined Adrian's behavior through the lens of Obsessive Love Disorder. This research, therefore, investigates how Adrian's obsessive behaviors are portrayed and how his violent actions impact Cecilia. By applying Forward and Buck's theory, this study aims to contribute to literary and psychological discussions on the representation of pathological love in film.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is related to the field of literature. Psychology of literature is used as the basic approach to analyze Adrian Griffin as a fictional character who reflects psychological problems. Applying the hypothesis of Obsessive Love Disorder (OLD), which is backed by psychological theory from Forward and Buck, this study examines how Adrian's obsessive behaviors are portrayed throughout the narrative and analyzes the psychological and emotional impact these behaviors have on Cecilia.

### 1. Psychology of Literature

Psychology of literature studies how literary works reflect human psychology, showing how fictional characters embody real mental and emotional experiences. Literature often portrays characters with depth, revealing hidden motivations, trauma, and psychological disorders. According to Wellek & Warren (1956), psychological approaches in literature can illuminate aspects of human nature that scientific psychology may struggle to capture. Eagleton (2011) also emphasizes that literary theory provides a way to link human experience in literature with wider cultural and psychological contexts. In this study, the psychology of literature is applied to analyze Adrian Griffin in *The Invisible Man* as a representation of Obsessive Love Disorder (OLD).

### 2. Obsessive Love Disorder

Obsessive Love Disorder (OLD) is described by Forward and Buck (2002) as a condition where affection becomes dominated by fixation, control, and fear of abandonment. Unlike healthy love, OLD is driven by insecurity, jealousy, and dependency. Although not formally recognized in the DSM-5, it has been linked to broader psychological discussions on attachment and rejection. Fisher et al. (2016) explain that romantic love activates brain systems related to addiction, which may help explain why obsessive lovers experience intense withdrawal when rejected. This makes OLD a powerful framework for understanding how obsession distorts relationships in literature. These behaviors illustrate how obsession can distort romantic relationships:

**The Thrill of a New Romance** – an intense sense of excitement and attachment during the early stages of love.

**The Idealized Lover** – perceiving the partner as perfect and flawless, often ignoring their real weaknesses.

**The Mental Sculptor** – trying to shape or control the partner’s personality, choices, or behavior to fit one’s own desires.

**The Power of Great Sex** – using sexual intimacy as a tool to maintain attachment and control.

**From Romance to Rejection** – overwhelming panic and insecurity when facing rejection.

**Denying the Undeniable** – refusal to accept the reality of rejection, often by creating alternative explanations.

**Acting Out Through Self-Punishment** – harming oneself as a way to release frustration or guilt.

**Obsessive Pursuit** – relentless efforts to maintain or restore a relationship, including stalking or intrusive behaviors.

**Revenge Fantasies** – imagining ways to punish the partner for rejection.

**Acts of Revenge** – punishing the partner for rejection through emotional, social, or physical harm.

**The Savior Complex** – the belief that one can “rescue” or “fix” the partner through control or sacrifice.

These patterns demonstrate that OLD is not an expression of love but of control, where obsession overrides respect for the partner’s autonomy.

### 3. When Obsession Turns to Violence

Forward and Buck (2002) emphasize that obsessive love often escalates into violence when the individual cannot tolerate rejection or loss of control. Herman (1992) introduces the concept of coercive control, showing how abusers maintain dominance through manipulation, intimidation, and violence, which parallels Forward and Buck’s view. Similarly, Dutton and Painter (1993) describe traumatic bonding, where victims become psychologically trapped in abusive relationships through cycles of affection and violence. These perspectives highlight how obsessive love not only harms the victim emotionally but also sustains long-term psychological trauma through fear and dependency. The theory outlines three common forms of violence associated with obsessive love:

**Emotional Violence** – psychological manipulation such as humiliation, threats, or gaslighting, which undermines the victim’s mental stability.

**Violence Against Property** – destruction of personal belongings or symbolic items as a channel for anger and control.

**Physical Violence** – direct bodily harm, representing the most extreme expression of obsession when emotional and property-related abuse are no longer sufficient.

**When Obsession Leads to Murder** – in the most extreme cases, obsession may escalate to lethal violence when the obsessive partner believes that if they cannot possess the victim, no one else should.

This framework shows how obsession is not only emotionally destructive but can also lead to coercive and harmful behaviors that place the victim at risk.

The writer has found several studies that examine the same object through a psychological lens, allowing for a comparison of differences and similarities with the present study. First, Rezeki et al. (2023) examined the protagonist's defense mechanisms, showing how Cecilia uses strategies such as repression, denial, and rationalization to cope with anxiety. Second, Jadut (2023) researched antisocial personality disorder of the main character in *The Invisible Man* movie script by Leigh Whannell, identifying five personality types using Theodore Millon's theory and characterizing Adrian Griffin with antisocial traits that influence other characters. Third, Zarka (2024) analyzed *The Invisible Man* as modern Gothic horror in "The Abuser in the Machine," using a Gothic-feminist framework to show how the film represents psychological abuse (especially gaslighting), connects to feminist discourse, and uses modern technology as a tool of control. While prior studies focus on Cecilia's defense mechanisms, Adrian's personality, or the film's Gothic elements, the current research applies Forward and Buck's OLD theory to analyze Adrian's obsessive behaviors and their impact on Cecilia.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method because it focuses on analyzing human behavior as reflected in a literary work. The primary data were taken from *The Invisible Man* (2020), directed by Leigh Whannell, and its script, which provided both visual and textual materials to examine the character of Adrian Griffin. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, and previous studies related to psychology, Obsessive Love Disorder (OLD), and violent behavior. These sources were used to support the analysis and provide a theoretical foundation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data were collected through observation and documentation techniques. The film was watched repeatedly to identify scenes and dialogues that illustrate OLD behaviors and violent actions. Screenshots and transcripts were used to document and classify relevant findings. The data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis, focusing on Forward and Buck's (2002) framework of obsessive love. The analysis was divided into two categories: obsessive behaviors and violent actions. Each datum was interpreted according to the theoretical framework to reveal how Adrian's obsession escalates into violence and impacts Cecilia.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents the research findings and discussion. The findings are categorized into two parts: the first focuses on behaviors of Obsessive Love Disorder, and the second discusses the impact of violent actions towards Cecilia. Only some data is presented in this section.

### 1. Adrian's Obsessive Love Disorder Portrayed in *The Invisible Man*

The first part of the discussion focuses on the obsessive love disorder behaviors of Adrian Griffin in *The Invisible Man*. The writer uses Forward and Buck's theory, which outlines eleven distinct behaviors associated with Obsessive love disorder.

### a. The Thrill of a New Romance

At the beginning of their relationship, Adrian shows an intense passion and excitement toward Cecilia. This stage appears to reflect genuine affection, but in reality, it is the foundation of his control. The thrill of romance becomes a tool to bind Cecilia emotionally before his obsession grows darker.

#### *The Invisible Man*

(00.04.00)



**Figure 1. Adrian is hugging Cecilia while sleeping**

Adrian's action can be seen as part of *the thrill of a new romance*. Normally, couples who have been together for a long time sleep in the position that feels most comfortable, and it is rare for them to keep hugging each other tightly all night. But Adrian chooses to embrace Cecilia, as if they were still in the first stage of their relationship. This shows that Adrian wants to keep the feeling of "new love" alive, where physical closeness is a symbol of passion and attachment. For him, hugging Cecilia while sleeping is not only about comfort but also about keeping the image of a romantic bond that never fades.

### b. From Romance to Rejection

When Cecilia tries to leave, Adrian cannot accept the rejection. Instead of respecting her choice, he becomes increasingly desperate and aggressive. This refusal to let go illustrates how easily his obsession transforms from passion into panic and control.

#### *The Invisible Man*

(00.11.20)



**Figure 2. Cecilia leaves Adrian's house**

The figure above shows Adrian chasing Cecilia at night, his body leaning forward and face strained as he shouts, "Get back here!" a sign of panic and insecurity. The dark setting and

blurred background highlight his desperation, portraying him as a man unwilling to let go. This reaction reflects Forward and Buck's view of obsessive lovers, who respond to rejection with fear, anger, and insecurity. Adrian's pursuit shows his inability to accept Cecilia's decision and his strong resistance to abandonment, even at the start of the movie.

### **c. Denying the Undeniable**

Adrian refuses to acknowledge Cecilia's rejection, even when she clearly resists his vision of their future. His behavior shows that denial is a strategy to maintain control at any cost. This stage reflects the inability of obsessive lovers to accept reality when it contradicts their desires.

#### ***The Invisible Man***

**(01.22.02)**



**Figure 3. Adrian denying rejected to have a baby by Cecilia**

TOM. Agree to have the baby... and go back to him.

You really think he didn't know you were secretly using birth control?

Of course he did. He replaced them with something else. (Whannel, 2020, 01.22.02)

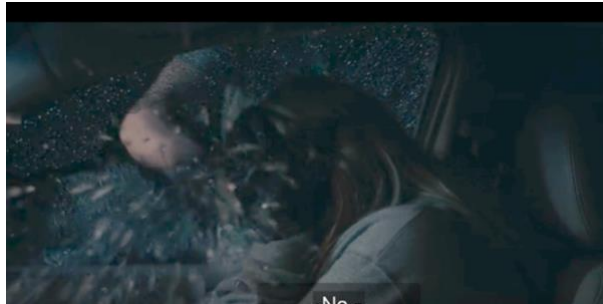
This scene illustrates Adrian's stage of denying the undeniable, as shown through Cecilia's decision to secretly use birth control, which clearly signaled that she did not want to have a baby or share the future Adrian imagined. For Adrian, however, this refusal was something he could not accept, and instead of respecting her choice, he denied her decision and forced his own vision. His behavior reflects his inability to let go of the dream of building a life and a family, even when Cecilia had already shown she did not want the same. By replacing her birth control, Adrian acted as though her rejection did not exist, choosing to continue pursuing his own desire while disregarding Cecilia's autonomy.

### **d. Acting Out Through Self-Punishment**

Adrian sometimes directs his frustration inward rather than outward. By harming himself, he releases his anger while also attempting to manipulate Cecilia emotionally. This action shows how self-punishment becomes another way to maintain power in the relationship.

*The Invisible Man*

(00.10.11)



**Figure 4. Adrian punched a car window**

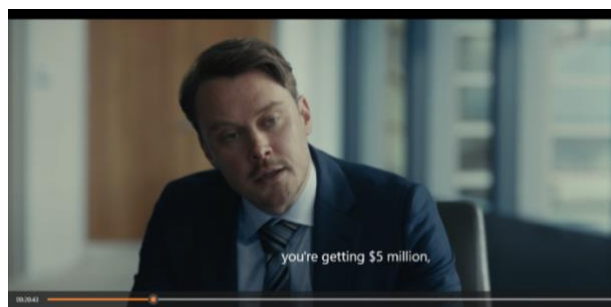
This scene captures the moment when Adrian loses control after Cecilia escapes from his mansion, and in his frustration, he violently punches the car window with his bare hand, causing the glass to shatter and leaving his hand badly injured and bleeding. His action illustrates a clear form of Acting Out Through Self-Punishment, as he directed his emotional pain into physical harm in an attempt to cope with disappointment and loss. The injury on his hand symbolizes how his inner turmoil and inability to accept rejection were externalized through self-inflicted violence, showing that instead of responding rationally or calmly, Adrian chose to channel his frustration by hurting himself.

**e. Obsessive Pursuit**

Adrian's obsession continues even after Cecilia escapes, showing that distance does not weaken his control. He uses various strategies to stay present in her life, including manipulation through wealth and technology. This persistence highlights the relentless pursuit typical of obsessive lovers.

*The Invisible Man*

(00.20.43)



**Figure 5. Adrian's Obsessive Pursuit of an Inheritance Gift**

In this scene, Adrian demonstrates obsessive pursuit by leaving Cecilia an inheritance of five million dollars, which appears generous but is actually a way to keep his presence alive after his supposed death. By arranging the money through his brother Tom, Adrian ensures that Cecilia cannot forget him. Forward and Buck describe this as “sending unwelcome gifts,” where

the gift serves not as love but as a tool of control. Adrian's use of wealth becomes a chain that keeps Cecilia tied to him, showing that his obsession continues even beyond death.

#### **f. Acts of Revenge**

When rejected, Adrian responds by punishing Cecilia through manipulation and sabotage. His revenge is not limited to her directly but also affects her relationships with others. These acts show how obsession turns destructive when love is replaced by vengeance.

##### ***The Invisible Man***

**(00:50:30)**



**Figure 6. Sydney is suddenly hit in the face by an unseen force**

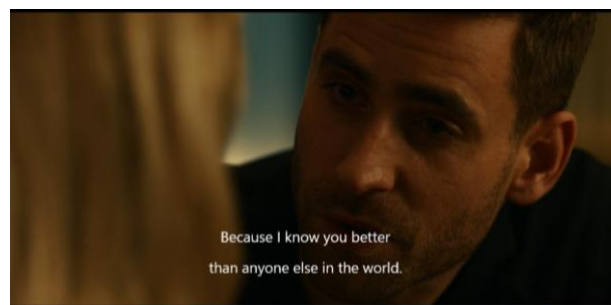
The figure above shows the moment Sydney is suddenly struck while talking with Cecilia in her bedroom, leaving her nose bleeding and making it appear that Cecilia caused the injury. Since Adrian is unseen, Sydney assumes Cecilia is responsible, and James immediately tells her to leave the house. Adrian's act is not directed at Sydney but at destroying Cecilia's bond with her only supporters. By isolating her from James and Sydney, he ensures she is left without trust or protection. This act of revenge demonstrates how far Adrian goes to prevent Cecilia from relying on anyone else.

#### **g. The Savior Complex**

Adrian places himself in the role of Cecilia's rescuer, presenting his control as care. He convinces her that only he can understand and protect her, despite being the cause of her suffering. This behavior reinforces his dominance by framing obsession as love.

##### ***The Invisible Man***

**(01.47.30)**



**Figure 7. Adrian Says He Knows Cecilia Better Than Anyone Else**



The figure shows Adrian sitting close to Cecilia during a private dinner, leaning forward with a calm face and steady gaze that creates the illusion of care and honesty, but in reality conceals his attempt to control her. His soft tone and confident manner position him as superior, as if he has the right to define her life. This is reinforced by his words, “I’m the only one who can help you... because I know you better than anyone else in the world... that shouldn’t come as a surprise” (bunniefu), which reveals a clear savior complex. Rather than offering genuine support, Adrian frames himself as the sole rescuer, presenting Cecilia’s struggles only to claim that he alone can solve them. Through this dialogue, he asserts that she is dependent on him, strengthening his self-image as her savior and reinforcing his control even after his abusive actions.

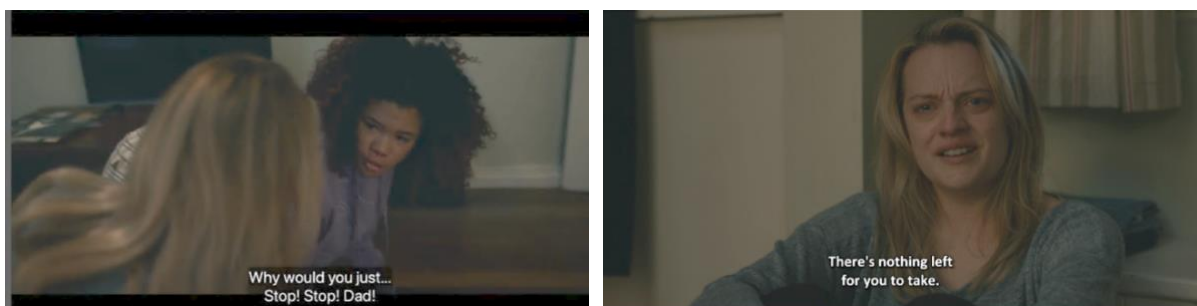
## 2. The Impact of Adrian’s Violent Actions Towards Cecilia

In this second discussion, the writer analyzes how Adrian Griffin, the main character in *The Invisible Man*, displays violent actions of Obsessive Love Disorder. Referring to Forward and Buck’s theory, which outlines four types of violent actions that can arise from obsessive love. Adrian shows three violent behaviors those behavior is emotional violence, violent against property, and physical violence. These actions are not only expressions of obsession but also have significant impacts on Cecilia’s mental and emotional state throughout the film.

### a. Emotional Violence

Adrian uses psychological manipulation to isolate Cecilia and make her question her sanity. His invisible presence makes the abuse even more terrifying, as she cannot prove it to others. Emotional violence becomes the most constant form of harm, breaking her spirit and confidence.

#### *The Invisible Man* (00.48.00)



**Figure 8. Cecilia Pleads with Adrian after being accused of attacking Sydney**

The data appears after Cecilia is accused of hitting Sydney, when in fact it was Adrian who struck her while remaining invisible. Following this incident, Cecilia experiences severe emotional pressure and reaches her breaking point, shouting into the empty space as if pleading directly with Adrian to stop. The image shows her sitting on the floor, face wet with tears, her body weak, and her eyes filled with pain, reflecting exhaustion and hopelessness. Although Adrian is not visible, her desperate words and expressions reveal how deeply his violence has affected her, pushing her into emotional collapse and leaving her drained of strength and unable to conceal her suffering.

## **b. Violence Against Property**

Instead of always attacking Cecilia directly, Adrian often damages her belongings and sabotages her progress. By targeting her career and independence, he ensures she feels powerless. This form of violence shows how obsession can extend to the destruction of anything tied to the victim's identity.

### *The Invisible Man*

(01:04:00 – 01:07:00)



**Figure 9. Adrian stole Cecilia's portfolio.**

One of the most significant scenes of property-targeted violence occurs when Cecilia, after regaining confidence and preparing to return to her career in architecture, loses her portfolio just before an important job interview. Although she had carefully completed the work, the documents were suddenly missing, revealing Adrian's deliberate act of sabotage. During the interview, her anxious expression and hesitant responses, "I know I put them here... I apologize... I don't know what happened" expose her confusion and distress, making her appear incompetent. This is not a simple accident but a calculated effort to undermine her progress and independence. Forward and Buck (1991) note that obsessors often "lash out at the target's sources of independence or empowerment," such as careers or education, and Adrian embodies this by targeting Cecilia's professional aspirations. The impact is devastating, as the loss of her portfolio strips away not only a job opportunity but also her sense of hope and possibility, reinforcing psychological control and punishment.

## **c. Physical Violence**

Adrian escalates his obsession into physical assaults that leave Cecilia injured and terrified. These moments reveal his willingness to risk exposure to maintain control. Physical violence becomes the clearest expression of his obsession, turning into brutality.

*The Invisible Man*

(00.58.00)



**Figure 10. Adrian attacked Cecilia in the Kitchen**

In this scene, Cecilia is violently attacked in the kitchen when Adrian, while invisible, throws her across the room, slams her against the wall, and drags her across the floor, making it appear as if she is fighting against nothing. This moment represents the clearest example of physical violence, as the assault is direct, brutal, and life-threatening, leaving Cecilia both injured and emotionally devastated. The attack forces her to realize that Adrian is not only stalking or intimidating her but is fully willing to kill her. The impact is intensified by the fact that no one believes her account, even when the bruises are real. Through this act, Adrian uses physical violence to strip Cecilia of power, isolate her further, and trap her completely in fear.

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzed Adrian Griffin's obsessive behaviors and violent actions in *The Invisible Man* using Forward and Buck's (2002) theory of Obsessive Love Disorder. The findings reveal that Adrian Griffin in *The Invisible Man* demonstrates seven behaviors of Obsessive Love Disorder, namely the thrill of a new romance, from romance to rejection, denying the undeniable, acting out through self-punishment, obsessive pursuit, acts of revenge, and the savior complex. These behaviors reflect how affection is transformed into fixation and manipulation. The analysis also reveals three forms of violence: emotional violence, violence against property, and physical violence, that escalate from his obsession and leave Cecilia isolated, fearful, and traumatized. The findings confirm that Obsessive Love Disorder is not a sign of love but a pathological condition that can damage victims both psychologically and physically. By examining Adrian's character through the psychology of literature, this research enriches the understanding of how films can portray psychological disorders and their consequences. Future researchers may analyze Obsessive Love Disorder in other films or literary works using different psychological approaches.

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