



## Escapism Strategies Due to Trauma in Paula Hawkins' The Girl on the Train- Analytical Study

استراتيجيات الهروب وفقاً للصدمة في رواية باولا هوكينز (فتاة القطار) -دراسة تحليلية

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### Abstract

The research paper focuses on the escape techniques used by everyone from Paula Hawkins' book "The Girl on the Train" and how they relate to previous trauma. The main focus of this research paper is the psychological, social and behavioral responses of Rachel Watson, Megan Hipwell and Anna Watson. Each character has their own way of escaping their respective trauma but their stories also provide new perspectives about who they are and how they relate to others in the world. The escape technique used by Rachel Watson is through alcohol as a way of finding relief from her painful reality. Similarly, the infidelity of Megan Hipwell is representative of her search for meaning in a world that lacks purpose, while Anna Watson's possessiveness represents her struggle with insecure feelings. Further, understanding escape as both a personal coping mechanism and global phenomenon will have great significance in the current dialogue surrounding trauma and mental health...

**Keywords :** Escapism ,Trauma ,Psychoanalysis, Coping Strategies

### الخلاصة

تركز هذه الورقة البحثية على أساليب الهروب التي استخدمها جميع شخصيات رواية باولا هوكينز "الفتاة في القطار"، وكيفية ارتباطها بالصدمة النفسية السابقة. وينصب التركيز الرئيسي لهذه الورقة على الاستجابات النفسية والاجتماعية والسلوكية لكل من رايتشل واتسون، وميغان هيبويل، وأنا واتسون. لكل شخصية طريقتها الخاصة في الهروب من صدمتها، لكن قصصهن تُقدّم أيضاً منظوراً جديداً حول هويتهن وكيفية تفاعلهن مع الآخرين في العالم. تلجأ رايتشل واتسون إلى الكحول كوسيلة للتخفيف من واقعها المؤلم. وبالمثل، تُمثّل خيانة ميغان هيبويل بحثها عن معنى في عالم يفترق إلى الغاية، بينما يُمثّل تملك أنا واتسون صراعها مع مشاعر انعدام الأمان. علاوة على ذلك، فإن فهم الهروب كآلية تكيف شخصية وظاهرة عالمية سيكون له أهمية بالغة في الحوار الدائر حالياً حول الصدمات النفسية والصحة العقلية...الكلمات المفتاحية: الهروب، الصدمة، التحليل النفسي، استراتيجيات التأقلم

### 1. Introduction

It is common for individuals to partake in escapist behaviors to provide a break from their everyday stresses such as dream-driven fantasies, frequent daydreams or addictions. This gives a brief period in which they feel "normal" because they no longer feel the negative emotions or responsibilities related to the hardships of life. Many times, for those who have suffered trauma, using these same escapism methods may be one way of coping with the emotional suffering associated with the memories of the traumas and the trauma as a whole. Many authors use escapism throughout their works as a way of showing how the characters are dealing with the struggles they face internally, and in many cases also relate to larger, broader societal issues and psychological themes..

The relationship between trauma and escapism is a common thread throughout Paula Hawkins' award-winning novel "The Girl on the Train." The three main characters (Rachel Watson, Megan Hipwell, and Anna Watson) are all involved in a complex web of tragedy and maladaptive ways of coping with these tragedies. Rachel is a woman who has been traumatized by her use of alcohol as a method of coping with her past after a painful divorce. Rachel exemplifies the self-destructive aspects of escapism. She spiraled out of control because of her addiction to alcohol; she lost her job, friends, and family as a result of her addiction. Rachel exemplifies the self-destructive aspects of escapism and is reminiscent of countless real-life cases where people have relied on drugs or alcohol to cope with their problems. Megan embodies an outwardly deceptive form of escapism. In her quest for meaning and self-worth,

Megan engages in various secretive behaviors (i.e., she engages in sexual affairs with multiple men), which represents another way that some people escape from their problems. Anna exhibits an obsessive and defensive manner toward her family, which reflects another way that Anna escapes from her own problems. Although each character is different, they all share similar experiences with escapism that demonstrates how common and relatable escapism is for people.

This study will focus on the escape methods used by characters in a work, as well as using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory to help us analyze the motivations of characters in processes affecting their behavior due to trauma, including all psychological, social and behavioral factors that develop from unresolved trauma. This study will use Freud's concept of the unconscious mind as a tool for exploring how each intends to seek resolution from their trauma through immediate pleasure and remaining in an escape mode. We will also explore how unresolved trauma may impact a character's life today.

This study takes a character-based approach to examine how one's history affects behaviour. Rachel uses alcohol as a crutch to cope with her emotional distress, while Megan engages in reckless and secretive behaviour as a result of the grief and resentment from her past and the fact that she feels unfulfilled by her current situation. Finally, Anna's obsessive behaviours are interpreted as attempts to gain some sense of power to mitigate her fear and insecurity. This study will enhance the knowledge of the different ways individuals respond to trauma and how trauma impacts the psychological processes associated with their behaviours.

Additionally, this research also helps in understanding how escapism is more than a form of coping; it is a bigger social phenomenon with social/relational consequences. In this way, literature can be used to examine modern-day issues involving mental health and humanity today. Through this analysis, the reader will receive useful information regarding the complicated relationship between trauma and the use of escape mechanisms and how they are presented in current literature using *The Girl on the Train* as an example..

### **Freudian Framework**

Freud's theories on psychoanalysis will provide for a detailed analysis of the character and give us insight into how they behave in response to trauma. Things we will examine are: - The unconscious mind: by looking at how repressed memories and feelings affect our behavior and decision making.

- Coping Strategies: Identify example coping strategies employed by each character to deal with trauma and how these coping strategies are exhibited within their behavior - Id, Ego, and Superego: Analyze the balance of the id, ego, and superego within each character and how they all experience conflict in their own/other's lives as they work through their traumas..

### **Data Collection**

The analysis will include textual excerpts from the literary work (directly quoted and representative form) as supporting evidence demonstrating the means by which the characters escape their realities. Systematic organization and compilation of this evidence according to the themes of (1) trauma and (2) escapism will provide ample material for in-depth character studies. Scholarly or peer-reviewed journal articles and/or critical analysis essays will also be included as secondary resources to contribute additional information to the discussion and to provide a basis for understanding the results...

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Overview of Escapism and Trauma in Literature**

Literature often uses escapism as an important motif. Through the use of different methods including drug and alcohol abuse, daydream fantasy, and other relationships, many authors have shown how their character's responses to trauma are indicative of their psychological mindsets, as well. Contemporary men's and women's fiction is heavily influenced by escapism; characters are usually navigating complex emotional terrains that have been impacted by personal loss, societal norms, and traumatic events. When a work of literature utilizes escapism the author focuses on the character's internal turmoil and demonstrates how those coping strategies shape their relationship with themselves, others, and their overall well-being. Exploring literature related to the theme of escapism gives readers insight into the human mind and provides examples of how individuals try to make peace with traumas..

### **Explanation of Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory**

Sigmund Freud proposed that Freud's psychoanalytic theory is the primary way of looking at the psychological aspect of human behaviour in relation to trauma through the use of defence mechanisms and the role of unconscious desire within the structural model of the psyche. These three components of Freud's theory in relation to trauma, provide us with a comprehensive understanding of how trauma is processed by our mind and how it affects our

thought processes, emotional reactions, behaviours, and future behaviours. Freud argued that there are many aspects of our behaviour that are influenced by our unconscious thoughts/desires. The unconscious mind works outside of our conscious awareness, but it greatly influences and impacts our emotions and behaviours. Our traumatic experiences can be stored in our unconscious mind as repressed memories which create emotional conflict and pain from trauma. As a result of repressed memories and feelings regarding past traumatic events, people often try to find ways to escape this distress through avoidance/distraction (to protect against confronting their memories/emotions associated with the trauma) by relying on their unconscious minds; Freud also developed the notion of unconscious defense mechanisms, which represent how individuals universally employ these unconscious methods (e.g., denial, repression, projection...etc.) to help themselves deal with feelings of anxiety and stress and to help the ego feel "safe" instead of rejected or abandoned.

Feeling overwhelmed; While these defenses may temporarily relieve pressure, they generally lead to escapist behavior (the attempt to distance oneself from uncomfortable truths or painful realities), rather than face these feelings or issues head on.

Freud's theory of the mind using a structural modality allows us to understand how traumatic experiences disturb the balance of forces within the id, the ego, and the superego. The id consists of our biological instincts and drives (e.g., fulfilling our instinctual need for immediate gratification), while the superego consists of our sense of morality, values, and societal norms regarding acceptable behaviours. The ego serves as the intermediary between the id and the superego to ensure rationality and balance for the individual. When one experiences trauma, the ability to have balance within the individual is typically disrupted. This usually results in the id's need for immediate gratification being stronger than the ability of the ego to provide rational thought processes and the ability to engage in behaviours that would ultimately be beneficial to the individual over time.

Freudian Psychoanalytic theory is one approach that can be used to analyze the characters in Paula Hawkins' novel "The Girl on the Train." By examining the traumatic pasts of Rachel, Megan, and Anna with this lens, it becomes apparent that each character has developed different methods for coping with their trauma; the various ways in which trauma manifests for these characters can be seen through the ways in which unconscious drives, defense mechanisms, and psychological conflicts pertaining to their Id, Ego, and Superego have found expression..

### 3. Methodology

In real conditions of the study using the descriptive analytical method as a way to achieve results by analytically examining the characters and their behaviors through the events of the novel, and analyzing the impact of Freud's theories on these characters, helped in revealing their Behavior and displaying escapism depending on trauma Experienced from the events of the Novel, and finding how those behaviors based on previous studies changed their Character's to Psycho Patients, or how introverted they became, or the fact of them becoming feudal. The researcher will utilize this information as part of their analysis to determine results for this research paper..

#### Characters Analysis

For this study, it will focus on three people (Rachel Watson, Megan Hipwell and Anna Watson), who are the primary characters from The Girl on the Train. Each character will be examined in detail to clarify how they each have been affected by trauma, and how that trauma affects their behaviours as well as their individual coping mechanisms. There will be a careful analysis of their family history, relationships, and individual life problems, giving a complete picture of their psychological state..

#### A. Character 1: Rachel Watson

Rachel Watson is one of the central characters in Paula Hawkins' The Girl on the Train, and her journey is marked by deep trauma stemming from her divorce and struggles with infertility. These experiences significantly shape her psychological, social, and behavioral responses throughout the narrative. (Khan, 2019: 130)

#### B. Character ٢: Megan Hipwell

Megan Hipwell in The Girl on the Train is an essential character that displays a complex combination of trauma, escapism and the pursuit of who she is. She is dissatisfied with her life which causes her to engage in secretive activities and unhealthy relationships, resulting in her own self destruction. To better understand Megan's motivations as well as the repercussions of her actions I will evaluate her behavior, psychology and social interactions from the perspective of Freud's psycho analysis theory.. (Roberts, 2021: 80)

#### C. Character ٣: Anna Watson

The Girl on the Train features Anna Watson as its primary character who depicts insecurity through the complexity of human relationships impacted by past trauma. Anna has a pattern of being extremely possessive and paranoid because of her marriage's insecurities as well as her husband's ex-wife, Rachel. Anna's actions can be better understood by examining her psychological, social, and behavioral responses through Freudian theory of psychoanalysis in order to reveal what motivated her to act as she did, as well as the results of those actions.. (Waters, 2020: 92)

#### Psychological Behavior

Alcohol is Rachel's primary means of self-defence against her feelings of grief as she attempts to deal with the trauma of losing her husband and her inability to become pregnant. According to Freud's theories of defence mechanisms, we all are unconsciously using these various mechanisms to shield us from emotional pain. Rachel uses alcohol as a way of escaping the feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, and hopelessness associated with her major life changes (Davis, 2019: 35).

Rachel escapes into a drunken stupor to numb her pain and avoid facing the realities of life. This behaviour demonstrates that Rachel has a psychological problem. Instead of confronting her traumatic past, she chooses to drown her sorrows in alcohol. Rachel relies on alcohol because of her memories of her failed marriage and her desire for the life she used to have, during which time she can forget about her failures and become involved in a fantasy world where her life was different and better. (Miller, 2018: 47)

A good example of Rachel escaping from her world is riding the train into London and watching people from afar throughout the day. These rides cause Rachel to become highly intoxicated, so she can dull her pain and create a fantasy of how she would like to live. In her drunken state, Rachel idealizes the couple she sees from her train window, Megan and Scott, which illustrates the fact that Rachel has a strong desire for connection and wholeness in her life but, because of her using, cannot create meaningful relationships. (Van der Kolk, 2009:10)

Rachel's addiction problems intensify her trauma, resulting in repeated cycles of self-destructive behaviours. Often Rachel wakes up with little or no memory of the events of the previous night. This lack of memory causes Rachel to feel greater shame and confusion. Rachel's inability to recall her actions on a given night can lead to even more despair and isolation. The shame and confusion from her memory loss creates an emotional wall between Rachel and all her loved ones including her close family and friends. ((ZAFRAN, 2020 - WWW. highlightrn.net))

Megan's penchant for keeping things to herself forms a crucial part of who she is as a person, stemming from an underlying dissatisfaction and lack of fulfillment within her daily life. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis identifies the use of defense mechanisms by individuals in response to internal conflict. In Megan's case, she utilizes secretive behaviour and affairs as a means of evading the emotional torment associated with prior traumatic experiences, such as her childhood experiences, and the unresolved mourning she feels for the death of her first child. (Johnson, 2020: 60)

The numerous affairs Megan has had throughout her life symbolize not only her constant need for connection with others, but also the absence of real love in her life. Megan entered many relationships because she needed an outlet for all the hope and desires that were left unfulfilled during her time spent as both a wife and mother. The excitement and escape from being bored with her mundane daily routine that each new relationship offered were both positive and beneficial towards Megan's self-esteem. While it may seem like Megan is gaining self-esteem by being involved in several relationships, the opposite is true: each relationship results in Megan feeling depressed and guilty for being unfaithful to her husband and for not being who she wants to be. Thus, Megan is now faced with having not only two sets of emotions but also difficulty balancing these two sets of emotions. (Grayson, 2020: 35)

Megan is not only able to seek an escape from her current reality through her relationship with Damien, but it also serves to intensify her internal conflict. Megan finds an escape from the day to day grind and finds herself feeling passionate and excited, yet she is unable to address the more significant issue of discontentment that lies beneath her relationship with Damien and as a result, continues to create emotional upheaval. Freud's theory regarding the unconscious mind explains how her past trauma impacts Megan's present decisions, with her subconscious experience of loss from her past influencing her desire for validation through her affair and masking those feelings of loss and dissatisfaction. (Mendez, 2022: 93)

Megan has a hard time with her psychiatric issues because she isn't able to directly face her trauma. Instead, she hides from how she feels about being inadequate as well as not having something she was supposed to have. By not accepting the way she feels, she continues to lie about what she feels in dependence, isolation and feeling worthless. (Hall, 2018: 115).

Anna's psychological state is characterized by her possessiveness and paranoid behavior; being that her reactions to Rachel and her continued presence in Anna's life are immediate to being controlled by Rachel. According to Freud posits that the mediation between the ego (which is the mediator between the id and superego) creates Anna's struggles; and the struggle continues to cause Anna to want to control her entire life and children while also trying to be fearful of the influence Rachel has on her. The combination of these dynamics have caused Anna to possess higher levels of anxiety and an obsessive compulsive mannerism in response to Rachel in her life. (Zafran, 2020: 22)

Anna feels possessive because she fears Tom (her husband) will leave her for Rachel, therefore, she is constantly preoccupied with what Rachel is doing and believes that Rachel is a threat to her family. The drive that causes Anna to act this way stems from her unconscious mind as she has repressed fears and insecurities related to Rachel and Tom's relationship, therefore she interprets any action made by Rachel as a sign that Rachel may take away from what she has with Tom. (Tal, 2019, p. 87)

Anna shows a great deal of interest in Rachel's social media, regularly looking for Rachel's updates on where she is. Anna is under the impression that if she is constantly vigilant, her family will be safe. However, this shows Anna's lack of faith in Tom, as well as her feelings of not being good enough as a partner or mother. Anna's fixation on controlling everything around her has created a situation where she cannot address the real insecurities that caused her behavior. As a result, she has become more paranoid. (Lopez, 2020, p. 118)

Anna is not able to cope with all the feelings she has about Rachel being in her life, which causes her to be defensive and use reason to explain her controlling behaviour toward her family. Freud's defence mechanism of rationalisation allows an

individual to mask feelings of insecurity. Therefore, rationalising allows a person to believe that they will be secure through using reason to explain their actions. Consequently, this doesn't solve the issues Anna has and ultimately only exacerbates the situation, creating tension and difficulty in her relationships.. (Ferguson, 2020: 68)

### **Social Behavior**

Due to her alcoholism and trauma, Rachel is socially isolated. As her feelings of inadequacy grow, Rachel becomes more and more unable to connect with others. Much of Rachel's preoccupation with her ex-husband, Tom and his new wife, Anna, takes away her ability to establish new relationships. Freud's theory explains how unresolved conflicts impact social interactions and in Rachel's case, her unresolved grief and anger are the basis for her inability to engage with those around her. (Reed, 2021:118)

One of the most noticeable features of Rachel's social conduct is her compulsion to observe Megan and Scott from the train, making Rachel feel less disconnected from the world due to her voyeuristic tendencies, as well as projecting her own desires and disappointments onto the couple's lives, creating a form of escape from her own reality and imagining the joy and satisfaction that used to be hers. Rachel's actions reflect a yearning for companionship and a desire for the life she used to have, but they also demonstrate her intense insecurity as well as her fear of being left behind. (Ferguson, 2020: 72)

Rachel's growing passion for Tom drives her to act in ways that are becoming increasingly erratic — taking action against both Tom and Anna, for example, but also getting involved in both of their lives and isolating herself from any positive relationships. Rachel's actions are a direct result of her struggle with the emotional fallout of her divorce, her inability to move on and let go of her past is indicative of her trauma; stuck between wanting the way things were, and not being able to see the way things are now. (Tal, 2019:90)

Furthermore, Rachel experiences a great deal of shame and guilt in her social interactions. She often tells her friends lies regarding where she is and what she is doing, which isolates her from possible support systems. This lying is also a way for Rachel to escape from what is happening internally by creating an illusion of normality while she copes with her emotional issues. Rachel's social isolation is a tragic picture of the way that trauma can alter an individual's perception of social reality, ultimately resulting in alienation and isolation. (Sullivan, 2018: 50)

The theme of Megan navigating through the concept of social roles and duties is a dominating theme in her story. As a female trying to meet societal obligations as a mother/wife, Megan struggles to conform to these societal obligations. The principles of the superego defined by Freud provide insight into the inner turmoil Megan feels due to not connecting to her traditional roles as defined by society and the resulting lack of confidence and frustration that ensues from this lack of a connection. (Green, 2019: 70)

Megan and her husband's marriage is a powerful illustration of their challenge. Megan initially attempts to fulfill the role of a faithful spouse; however, as time passes, their marriage begins to falter due to a lack of contentment with living together. Additionally, her mental wellness issues impede her ability to fulfill the "ideal" of being a mother, creating an enormous gap between herself and her husband Scott due to the inability to adequately relate to his wife and properly perceive her emotional state of affairs. (Bennett, 2021: 130)

Megan's social interactions are impacted by her secretive and deceptive behavior, which results in creating barriers to her ability to have real relationships. She is dishonest with both her husband and her family concerning the places she travels and what she does, which results in increasing her sense of being alone. Freud's defense mechanism of rationalization is evident as Megan tries to find justification for her ongoing affairs, convincing herself that they are innocent expressions of her take back her identity. However, rationalizations take her further away from her family and close friends, contributing to her continued cycle of family separation and isolation through secrecy and disconnection with others. (Waters, 2020: 95).

Megan's difficulty in meeting the expectations placed upon her from society causes her to make decisions that negatively impact her wellbeing and relationships. She feels stuck in a life that does not provide her with what she truly wants. As a result of this feeling of entrapment, she struggles daily between the things she needs internally with the pressures they encounter externally. The conflict of these components of her identity become too overwhelming, which results in tragic consequences for Megan as she is unable to find ways to resolve them (Roberts, 2021: 82).

Anna's social behavior is greatly influenced by her desire to gain control over the dynamics of her family, especially between herself and Rachel. The superego of Freud, which refers to the rules and values of society as a whole, also greatly influences how Anna behaves towards others. Anna feels as though she is held accountable to society for how she acts as a mother and wife, thereby increasing her desire to protect her family at any cost. Baker (2021) states that Anna will do everything possible to fulfill the expectations that society places on her as a mother and wife.

Anna is controlling towards Tom and shows it by trying to keep Rachel apart from Anna and Tom's lives. She tries to convince Tom to cut his ties with Rachel and view Rachel as an intruder instead of seeing Rachel as a person that has their own problems. Anna's actions to try and remove Rachel from the family dynamic show that she believes that by eliminating the threat of Rachel, she will have her life fixed. (Parker, 2019: 210)

Anna's concept of loyalty creates difficulties for her husband Tom who is already torn between two different wives and trying to figure out how best to navigate these competing relationships. This has created a great deal of stress within their marriage, and Tom has become a very unhappy man due to the tension produced by Anna's possessiveness and interference in his relationships with Rachel. Moreover, according to Freud's theory of transference, Anna's bad feelings about her own

inadequacies and lack of self-confidence are projected onto Rachel, which has resulted in further aggravating their already poor relationship. (Clark, 2021: 155)

Anna cannot connect with anyone, and as a result, she becomes increasingly obsessed with Rachel. As a result, she has isolated herself from friends and family, believing that her only responsibility is to keep her family safe. Because of her withdrawal from those around her, she lacks any sort of support or understanding, resulting in her having to deal with her insecurities by herself. Because of this, her relationships also suffer, and Anna becomes increasingly isolated by her obsession with controlling the situation.. (Johnson, 2020: 65)

### **Behavioral Response**

Rachel's impulsive actions throughout the narrative serve as a manifestation of her trauma and coping strategies. Freud's idea of the id, which represents instinctual drives and desires, is particularly relevant in analyzing Rachel's behavior. Her actions are often driven by her emotional pain and desperation rather than rational thought, leading to significant consequences. (Baker, 2021: 25)

One pivotal incident occurs when Rachel confronts Megan and Scott during a night out, driven by her drunken state and obsessive thoughts. This confrontation not only highlights her impulsivity but also sets off a chain of tragic events. In her intoxicated haze, Rachel becomes embroiled in a situation that spirals out of control, ultimately leading to violence and heartbreak. This incident serves as a climax in Rachel's journey, illustrating how her inability to manage her trauma culminates in destructive behavior. (Lopez, 2020: 115)

Rachel's impulsive decision to take a different route leads to devastating consequences that affect both Rachel and other characters in the story. Many of the tragic events that occur after that lead to important insights about the impact of trauma on all of the characters, how trauma connected them, and the consequences of what one character does affects all of the characters in the story. Rachel's experience serves as an example of why one should not use escapism but rather confront the pain they experience. (Parker, 2019: 205)

Ultimately, through Rachel Watson's character in *The Girl on the Train*, we are able to explore how trauma can lead to an individual's desire to escape their situation. Her psychological difficulties, including feelings of emotional pain, social isolation, and impulsive behaviour, demonstrate how complicated it can be for someone to cope with their trauma. By applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory, we learn more about why Rachel acts the way she does and which psychological processes impact her behaviour. Through her experiences and the actions of those around her, Rachel also demonstrates why trauma needs to be addressed and the dangers that can arise as a result of an individual attempting to escape their trauma. In short, Rachel demonstrates the need for individuals to connect with one another, to heal, and to embrace their true selves, free from the burdens of their trauma (Clark, 2021: 152).

Megan uses escapism to address these hardships; nevertheless, they ultimately result in tragedy and expose the consequences of her resolution path culminating in that tragedy. Her impulsive actions reflect Freud's concept of id; that is, Megan is attempting to gratify her needs through her sexual affairs without considering the repercussions of what she is doing. (Khan, 2019, p.125)

Megan reaches the pinnacle of her storyline at a pivotal moment in that she has so many mistakes from the first part of her life that she doesn't realize that a bunch of choices she made earlier are leading her to destruction at the end of her story. Her choice to engage in an affair with Damien because of her desire for excitement and intimacy plays a part in her choices and traps her into a series of deceitful and treacherous acts. When the repercussions of her actions lead to her demise, the reader quickly understands how her actions subsequently affect the lives of others. (Davis, 2019: 32)

The outcome of Megan's story allows for a sobering reminder of the dangers of ignoring one's trauma through escapism. The tragedy of her death illustrates the fallout from living a narrative built upon untruths and avoidance of reality, ultimately resulting in a tragic loss of life. Freud's theories can be utilized to provide a means to understand how unresolved trauma and defence mechanisms manifested in her demise, and illustrate the connections between psychological issues and the behaviour that was produced by them.. (Reed, 2021, p.120)

Also, the sadness of Megan's experience shows us how crucial it is to look at trauma and reach out for assistance, as well as the dangers of escaping those same feelings through behaviour.eg, the eventual isolation and/or despondency resulting from the inability to face one's emotional pain emphasizes the importance of connection and assistance for recovery. (Van der Kolk, 2009: 15)

To summarize, Megan Hipwell's role within "The Girl on the Train" represents how difficult it can be to cope with trauma, whether it is through doing things to avoid coping with it at all (e.g. using alcohol). The way she behaves in private (her secrecy), how disconnected she is from others (her inability to connect with people around her) and her impulsive nature (acting without thinking first) all indicate the significant impact of Megan's past on her current choices. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis offers a way to fully appreciate Megan's motivation and some of the psychological mechanisms behind those motivations. Megan's story demonstrates that, for those people who suffer from trauma, the need to deal with their trauma through a non-escapist manner and form a connection with others is extremely important, because previously escaping a traumatic experience may have serious and long-term consequences. (Source: Miller, 2018:48)

Throughout the story, the effects of Anna's choices develop dramatically, highlighting the complexities of human relationships as well as the long-lasting impact of unresolved trauma. Freud's concept of the id, which refers to our primal

instincts and urges, can be seen in Anna's impulsive behaviour and how she feels the need to assert herself as being in control of her environment. (Grayson, 2020: 30).

As Anna's obsession with Rachel deepens, it causes her to become more impulsive and take actions that will affect the future of both her and others. For instance, as Anna becomes angrier when confronted by Rachel and becomes more violent towards Rachel, it leads to a moment of impulsiveness which pushes the story to move forward. The impulsive behavior on Anna's part is due to an extreme fear of losing control and is representative of the chaotic emotional state she is experiencing. (Mendez, 2022: 95)

In the end, Anna's decisions reveal previously unknown aspects of Rachel's traumatic past. The revelations Anna comes when forced through a lens of their shared past. As the story progresses, Anna begins to see how much her own fears and insecurities have coloured her view of Rachel. This realisation is a key moment in Anna's character arc and causes her to drastically change how she views her relationships. (Hall, 2018: 118)

The Cathartic Experience described by Freud, in terms of emotional purging and comprehension, is exemplified when Anna learns about the truth behind Rachel's problems. Not only does this revelation give Anna a sense of who Rachel is as a person; it causes Anna to revisit her own insecurities and see how her actions have affected others. Reconciling how she feels about Rachel acts as a starting point for Anna's growth as a person, enabling her to reevaluate what it means to her to be a mother and a wife. (Green, 2019: 60).

To summarise, Anna Watson's character in the novel *The Girl on the Train* demonstrates how insecurities, the need to control others, and trauma affect relationships in complex ways. Her possessiveness and paranoia are indicative of her own psychological issues and show that unresolved emotions can lead to controlling behaviours. By examining Anna using Freudian psychoanalysis, we see what motivates her. This shows us how complex the dynamics are between humans, and how important it is to reflect on ourselves in order to improve these dynamics. Anna's growth provides an important lesson about facing our fears and learning through difficult situations.. (Bennett, 2021: 128)

### **Discussion**

Rachel Watson, Megan Hipwell, and Anna Watson use various forms of escapism in "*The Girl on The Train*" to cope with trauma, showing us how different that way can look for every person depending on what type of trauma they experienced. The characters cope with trauma through escapism in ways that can be similar and different..

### **Comparison of Escapism Strategies**

Rachel Watson relies heavily on alcohol because it provides a means for her to avoid the reality of the situation that is causing her a great deal of emotional pain. She is currently going through a divorce and has not yet achieved her desire to become a mother; thus, Rachel uses alcohol to help her escape from her struggles and emotional pain associated with these events. Her alcohol use has caused her to act out in ways that are harmful to her, including isolating herself from her friends and family, acting impulsively (such as when spying on people) and not confronting reality. Rachel has created a cycle of destruction by using alcohol to escape and is now experiencing profound feelings of loss and an inability to confront reality..

Through his extramarital affairs, Megan Hipwell portrays a different type of escapism — an escape from the pain of loneliness by finding closure through connection and Validation with those he has been involved in sexual relationships with. In the same way that Rachel utilized various substances as a means of escaping from the emotional pain she felt, Megan attempted to escape through providing pleasure and validation through her sexual liaisons with men (even though they were kept secret) ultimately experienced the negative results of those actions. Thus, the tragic outcome of Megan's decisions illustrates the extent to which escape behaviours can have negative long-term impacts upon an individual.

Types of Escapism Anna Watson is a perfect example of how escapism can be a way for someone to escape what they fear through their willingness to control those around them and by being possessive of the relationships that are developed within the family unit. Like Rachel, Anna's desire for control over the family dynamics is rooted in several of the same fears and insecurities that motivate Rachel. One of Anna's greatest fears and insecurities has to do with her perception of Rachel and how Rachel fits within the family dynamic. Rachel and Megan both use drugs/alcohol and/or social interactions with others as a form of escapism, however, Anna's version of escapism is to try and create a sense of "normalcy" by controlling and manipulating those around her. The excessive nature of Anna's controlling and manipulative behaviours indicates the presence of significant underlying fears and insecurities that have created an unhealthy environment that will ultimately lead to a breakdown of her relationships.

In conclusion, Rachel and Megan are using social escape mechanisms (Rachel uses alcohol, and Megan uses cheating) to find escape from their issues, while Anna uses control as an escape mechanism via the environment (or another form of escape). Each character uses different coping strategies to cope with their individual problems and traumas differently through Rachel and Megan; Anna shows that she instead uses a mechanism that allows her to control herself; this contrasts to Rachel and Megan who have both previously shown an inability to control themselves...

### **Freud's Theory and Character Behaviors**

Psychoanalytic Theory by Freud can help you understand the behaviors of each character and how they fit into a larger context (society). Freud's concept of the unconscious, defense mechanisms, and the interaction between the id, ego, and superego all provide insight into what motivates each character to act like they do.

Rachel's drinking problem is a way to defend her against the pain of losing her marriage and having trouble getting pregnant. According to Freud, Rachel uses repression as a way not to deal with the pain she feels, which causes her to need alcohol to help her deal with how she feels. This need for alcohol leads to escape from reality, making her feel alone, making more impulsive decisions, and ultimately destroying her relationships.

Megan's hidden relationships demonstrate the conflict that exists for her between the part of her mind that wants instant gratification (the id) and the part of her mind that makes her feel guilty for going against social norms (the superego). The decisions that she makes show how she is fighting to come to terms with what she wants to do and what she thinks is expected of her by others as a mother and a wife. Freud's ideas around this issue demonstrate to us how Megan has turned to her relationships to avoid the problems resulting from her lack of satisfaction, causing many negative repercussions.

Anna's possessive and paranoid behaviors illustrate the connection between her ego & superego. Anna's need to control her surroundings is due in part to her own insecurities & fear of losing her family. According to Freud's theories, Anna projects her fear onto Rachel, creating a toxic relationship that negatively affects her family and leads to unexpected realizations about Anna's vulnerabilities.

Freud's framework provides an intricate look at the functioning of each character's use of escapism to cope with trauma. Each character's behavior is framed in terms of both individual psychological development as well as what happens to them socially, due to their traumatic experiences when viewed through the lens of the psychoanalytic understanding of human behavior..

### **Broader Implications of Escapism in Contemporary Society**

The escapist methods presented in *The Girl on the Train* relate closely to the modern-day issues affecting society today, particularly in terms of the methods individuals' use to deal with trauma in such a fast-paced, often overwhelming world. The character's experiences, as seen through the lens of various escape mechanisms and the reality of increasing rates of people experiencing mental health issues, illustrate how they are often used as forms of escape from reality.

Various types of escapism exist in today's society. Substance abuse, social media usage, and unhealthy relationships are all examples of this. Rachel and Megan's choices show how using escapism as a form of coping strategy can cause emotional suffering and isolation. Escapism through Anna's inability to connect with her vulnerable side/drawn to control reinforces that attempting to avoid vulnerability can negatively impact relationships.

The depiction of trauma and escapism in this book highlights the need for mental health education, as well as the need for tangible support systems. By providing knowledge on the psychological mechanisms behind escapism, individuals will have the tools necessary to understand their escapism habits and pursue healthier ways of coping with trauma. When people are equipped with this knowledge, they will develop more empathy and compassion toward each other and develop an awareness of how to communicate openly about obsession, mental health, and the multitude of ways people behave..

### **The key conclusions**

#### **1. Escapism as a Psychological Coping Mechanism**

The research highlights that escapism is used by characters to cope with their unique traumas. Rachel relies on alcohol to numb her pain, Megan engages in secretive affairs to find meaning and validation, and Anna exhibits obsessive control to combat her insecurities. These behaviors reflect different facets of escapism shaped by the characters' personal experiences.

#### **2. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory**

Freud's concepts, including the unconscious mind, defense mechanisms, and the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego, are effectively used to analyze the psychological responses of the characters. The framework explains how unresolved trauma leads to self-destructive or avoidance behaviors that exacerbate their struggles.

#### **3. Broader Social Implications**

The research connects the characters' experiences to contemporary issues, emphasizing the importance of mental health awareness. By illustrating the dangers of relying solely on escapism, the study underscores the need for supportive systems and healthier coping strategies in addressing trauma.

#### **4. Complex Dynamics of Relationships**

The acts of escapism performed by the various characters affect their relationships with one another. For example, Rachel isolates herself by compulsively spying on others, Megan has disconnected from family and friends, and Anna's controlling demeanor exemplifies how trauma and coping strategies impact interpersonal relationships. The established patterns of behavior highlight the important nature of addressing underlying causes of emotional pain..

### **Conclusion**

In summarizing, we can see through the examples of the escapism strategies from *The Girl on the Train* that they are indicative of the ways in which personal trauma affects both individuals and society as a whole. Rachel Watson's dependence on alcohol; Megan Hipwell's need to fulfill herself by cheating on her partner; and Anna Watson's desire to control everything around her all serve to highlight different aspects of escapism based on their particular traumas. By having Freud's psychoanalytic theory as our lens to view the characters, we have gained a more thorough understanding of the motivational factors of their behaviours and ultimately, the consequences.

Understanding escapism via psychoanalysis is key to understanding how and why people behave the way they do, as well as what people do when they experience trauma. In addition, this analysis outlines how crucial mental health is and that we need more positive and supportive surroundings in which to develop quality coping skills.

Future studies on trauma and escape in literature could expand to cover other literary pieces that cover similar topics, as well as exploring the large-scale social impacts of these forms of escapism. Examining how contemporary literature illustrates the complexities within trauma can help us better understand the human condition and the relevance of these themes in the larger societal context..

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