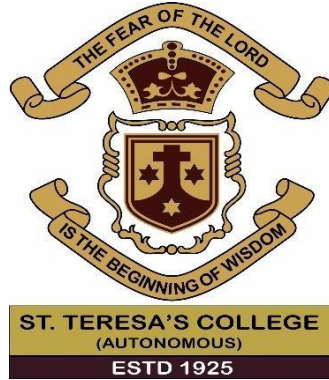


**The Wounded Observer: Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and
Perception in *The Girl on The Train***



*Project submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in
English Language and Literature*

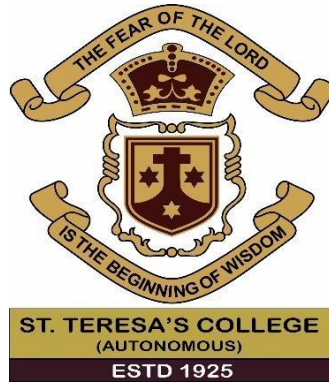
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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “The Wounded Observer: Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Perception in *The Girl on The Train*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr Jisha John, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Centre for Research, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar title of recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled “The Wounded Observer: Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Perception in *The Girl on The Train*” is a record of bona fide work carried out by Ashitha Vilbi under my supervision and guidance.

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March 2023

An Abstract of the Project Entitled

The Wound Observer: Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Perception in The Girl on the Train

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Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* is a psychological thriller which narrates the story of three women who are victimised. The project analyses the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) faced by the primary characters through the lens of Cathy Caruth's theoretical work *Unclaimed Experience*.

The project is divided into five chapters. The introductory chapter introduces Paula Hawkins and her novel *The Girl on the Train*. Chapter one titled "Construction of Trauma" explains the evolution of trauma and introduces Cathy Caruth's theory of Trauma in her work *Unclaimed Experience* and how trauma affects individuals and explains the effects caused by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) including its symptoms and causes. The second chapter titled "Impacts of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on Women" analyses the novel using Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma to explain the visible traumatic symptoms visible in the characters. Chapter three titled "Trauma and Resilience" explores the salvation attained by the three women characters who have overcome the traumatic situations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, Principal, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam for her help and support.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Supervisor Dr Jisha John, Department of English and Centre for Research, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), without whose guidance and encouragement this project would never have been completed.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr Preeti Kumar, Head of the Department of English and Centre for Research, and all the faculty members for their encouragement and support.

Ashitha Vilbi

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Introduction

The British author Paula Hawkins was born and brought up in Zimbabwe and moved to London when she was seventeen. Hawkins had worked as a journalist for almost fifteen years. Hawkins had been nominated and won awards for Goodreads Choice Awards for Best Mystery & Thriller and Audie Audiobook of the Year etc. The debut novel had been adapted into a movie. Her education was at Keble College, Collingham College, and Arundel School.

Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train* is her debut work which was published on 13 January 2015. It is a psychological thriller which was spotted as The New York Times Best Seller and a global best seller. The novel is also adapted as a movie starring Emily Blunt, Haley Bennett, Rebecca Ferguson, Justin Theroux etc which is directed by Tate Taylor, it hit the box office at 17.32 crores USD. Other psychological works of the author include *Into the Water*, *A Slow Fire Burning* and *Tummiin vesiin*.

The Girl on the Train centres around the life of three women who had been victimized by the male chauvinist, Tom Watson. This psychological thriller narrates the story of Rachel, Megan, and Anna. The author uses multiple narrators. These three women have their own perspectives regarding the same situation. One may be evil in another person's eyes, but in the end, these three women sail in the same boat. Novel sets in suburban London.

Rachel used to work in Public Relations, but due to her severe alcohol consumption, she had been kicked out of her job. Currently living in Cathy's apartment without any job. No one knows about the loss of her job. Tom Watson is the ex-husband of Rachel, currently the wife of Anna Boyd with whom they had a child. Now Rachel is a divorcee who is depressed in life. She takes the 8:04 am commuter in the name of a job in London. Rachel sees many people and their happy, sad, and miserable lives. The train stops at the old house in which Rachel and Tom lived now she can see Anna and her child. Megan Hipwell and Scott Hipwell is the neighbour of the Watsons. Rachel sees them on the train quite often, she named them Jess and

Jason. They were considered the “ideal couple” by Rachel. On one fine day, Rachel sees Jess hugging another guy. It made her irritated, she considered them to be perfect, but now everything happened just like what happened in her life. Her insanity and troubled mind are shown by the author.

Megan Hipwell and Scott Hipwell were a married couple who is living next door to the Watsons. Megan used to work at the gallery, and when the gallery is closed, she does multiple jobs including babysitting and some other courses like photography. Her brother’s death traumatised her when she was a kid and had a serious relationship with Mac in her teenage years. The death of her child, which happened when she was sleeping in the bathtub along with her baby in the running water, made her even more miserable. Mac left Megan. Megan is with Scott; she loves him but her past made her numb. Megan used to see Dr Kamal’s clinic; Dr Kamal is a therapist, and he is the one with whom Megan shared her innermost traumas. Megan does not have the guts to share her matters with Scott, he thinks that her trauma is based on the death of her brother, Ben. At one time when she shares about half of her matters, Scott was angry and abused her which made Megan run away from that house. Megan wants to fix things with Tom to live happily with Scott. She used to have a relationship with Tom and she had a doubt about conceiving his child, for clarification and closure, Megan meets Tom. He insists on abortion which made a fight between them. Tom murdered Megan. This was the twist and turn in Hawkins’s novel.

Anna Boyd is currently a homemaker, worked as an estate agent and is the second wife of Tom Watson. They are living in the same house, when Tom lived with Rachel. Anna hates Rachel not because he is the ex-wife of her husband. She has been stalking them, taking their child, messaging her husband etc. For Anna, Rachel is an insane woman, who keeps on drinking and makes trouble in their life. There are multiple times she sees Rachel after the death of Megan.

Megan used to babysit Evie, their child. Tom and Megan started seeing each other but after a certain time, Tom avoids Megan, and she started calling on his phone which she gave him. Tom hides the calls by blaming Rachel's name on Anna. She believes him. He successfully persuades Anna and does his usual lies. For Tom, Anna is merely a "nanny" figure. Rachel's investigation regarding Megan's death triggers Tom. On the day of Megan's missing, Rachel was drunk and saw Megan with Tom. Tom abuses, and manipulates Rachel the entire time. Rachel's insanity and substance abuse was made by Tom on the verge of their divorce, he made this up to marry Anna.

Rachel had a blackout during the day when Megan got missing. She was drunk at that time. Rachel identifies the guy whom Megan hugged. He was a therapist named Dr Kamal Abdic. To find the murderer Rachel started seeing a therapist Kamal, which made her trauma decrease. Rachel was on the edge of finding the truth. Her blackout on that day made her difficult to remember. When Rachel finally connects the dots. She went to rescue Anna and Evie. Anna also finds the truth about Tom's affair. In the encounter with Rachel, Anna understands the situation in a clear way. They murdered Tom for self-defence with a corkscrew.

Trauma is a Greek word that means "wound." The so-called term wound can have numerous interpretations, for example when a boy falls while running, he eventually gets hurt sometimes he oozes out a lot of blood, similarly a person who experienced trauma phases a similar kind of wound in a different way. Oozing out of the blood is an external pain inner wound that affects the blood oxygen level-dependent (BOLD), Thalamus on the brain, etc. According to American Psychiatric Association, Trauma can be defined as "actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence." It is an emotional or physical feeling of an individual, that arouses in their subconscious mind due to early pain in their life. Later it starts haunting through different occurrences in life. Trauma can be genetic as well as a first-person occurrence. It is observed that trauma can be a menacing threat to Humankind. Jean-

Martin Charcot was the first person to mention that trauma occurs through history or past events from one's personal life. Childhood abuse, sexual abuse, staggering partner, death of a loved one, complicated relationship, etc are some of the common problems seen among people.

The beginning of the Roman empire was in the eighth century B.C., so it was believed that Trauma is found in ancient times before the Roman empire. During the early times, people have phased traumatic events. Now people are more prone to trauma because of their current lifestyle and the use of social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter even dating apps like Tinder, bumble etc increases the rate of trauma among youngsters which can lead to "adult trauma." Most of the trauma occurred people tend to have low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, aggression etc. In the current generation, it is mostly seen that in the age group between 20 -39 where people search for their carrier, jobs, relationships, marriage etc phases traumatic events in their life which leads to other sorts of mental illness. These people are confused in their life about what to choose and what not to, through these experiences some will get a good mature mindset, others struggle to get through that painful process and the rest end up in a mental asylum or taking medication for depression. Indian society ponders that taking therapy and medication means you are "mad." A person affected by this sort of problem is often alienated from friendships and family. Taking medication for depression is not a taboo, when a child is ill parents often take him/her to the hospital and take prescribed medication for that cause. Trauma-related illness is not given prime importance to the affected person. Mainly because of the lack of awareness about mental illness in the Indian Education System. It is often found that the affected person is not aware that he/she is being traumatized by certain personal factors. Sometimes it is the second person who knows the person earlier and understands that he/she has been depressed. The affected person will not find any joy in early factors that he/she is indulged with. Some people eat a lot of food and others won't, some may lack sleep and others sleep a lot etc. It depends on the individual and the problems they phase.

An affected person tries to escape that loneliness by finding happiness in small things in life, but it cannot be fully recovered. In Preeti Shenoy's "Life is What You Make It" the author says about a young girl in her 20s who challenged her mental illness and succeed in life. It shows perseverance, determination can succeed a person who is affected by trauma. Another book called "The Silent Patient" authored by Alex Michaelides also deals with a traumatized person who has gone through mental illness till her last breath. Both novels portray trauma caused by relationships. The loss of a lover and a husband triggered the female characters like hell. Much of the trauma, especially among women, is because of a loss of a loved one. Females are more prone to care, nurture, motherly instincts, love etc so losing the person will trigger their mind. They forgive the person no matter how cruel that person behaves towards them. Cases state that PTSD can be seen in women 10% - 12% and in men 5% - 6%. Both sexes experience different types of traumas. Women have a high risk of re-experiencing the same trauma than men. Untreated trauma can lead to severe health problems.

Gender differences can be seen in many types of traumas. The violence against women which leads to acid attacks become a major issue in many countries. Even banning the acid makes turmoil issues, and the case went to Supreme Court. Human Beings are usually conscious of their beauty. Acid Survivors especially women show a high level of social anxiety, depression, avoidance, etc. They experience symptoms like gastrointestinal problems, headaches, and sexual dysfunction. Affected victims feel social isolation and withdrawal even surgeries like plastic surgery cannot regain old skin. Laxmi Agarwal who is an acid survivor is one such example. She faced trauma and overcome her obstacles. In Kochi, one actress had been sexually assaulted, and she had been mentally exhausted and taking therapy. She stopped working in the industry for so long, the rape had affected her life severely. The court process and other misleading online comments consumed her drastically. In these cases, most of the trauma is caused by men.

Parenting is an important phase in an adult's life. Most workaholic parents nowadays are busy making money but lack interaction with their own children. This may affect the mental health of their children. Children of divorced parents tend to go through their own wrong sides. Children who face displacement from their own native land or even from their parents often go through severe other psychological problems. Mental Health affects what we muse, sense, and perform. It can be hereditary. Childhood is the phase of a child where that child can lead in a good or bad direction. It is the responsibility of the parents to make sure that child is moving towards a safer path. Some parents are aware of the fact and ensure to lead a good life for them. Most of the suicides among school and college students are mainly because of academic pressure as well as their own parents not understanding them. Trauma can be aroused from a small word of a person where the opposite person can suffer for the rest of their life. To avoid such issues, one must learn to be a good human. Lack of knowledge about parenting especially among illiterate parents is a question of debate, these parents do not know how to interact with or teach values, morals or even rituals to their children. There are certain stereotypical notions that are set forth from generation to generation according to the Indian context. Parents use their children for their own purpose example marriage, dreams, caste etc Children are restricted and they are born to fulfil their wishes. When they violated a certain set of notions put forth by the society they have been restricted, turmoiled etc. Signs of toxic parenting can lead to future traumas or mental health problems.

Trauma occurs one half of the population. The right treatment at the right time cannot lead to future traumas. But many people can absorb their trauma and some other experience during their life span. It is indicated that 8% of trauma survivors will have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research shows that women who experienced trauma are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) other than men. Sexual assault is one of them but some research shows that even the same trauma can affect females more than men.

This paper focuses on analysing the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms that the women characters experiences. Hawkins's female characters, Rachel, Megan, and Anna, are centred around traumatic conditions. Trauma has occurred mainly due to the male character named Tom. Female experiences of trauma are always associated with males, sexual assault, domestic abuse, and external violence against women are some of the factors that cause trauma. The author portrays a woman, who is independent in her job, manipulated by the male figure and overcomes her situations. Trauma can make a person ill and numb unless the affected trauma must be figured out by the survivor. Here the characters figure things out in the last moment.

Trauma can be a menacing threat to the world unless or until the affected trauma should be treated without any further delay. Many theorists have been explaining trauma mainly using Freud's theory. According to Freud trauma is recurring and these recurring images can be seen in the dream of the trauma-experienced person. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be seen mainly in people experiencing intrusive thoughts, avoiding the trauma and hyperarousal. Hyperarousal is a severe form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Most of the population who is experiencing hyperarousal symptoms have childhood trauma or any other history of trauma.

Using the methodology of qualitative analysis, this thesis focuses on Rachel, Megan and Anna having post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms by using Cathy Caruth's Trauma theory.

This project is divided into three chapters. The first chapter titled, "Construction of Trauma" explains the evolution of trauma and introduces Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma in her work *Unclaimed Experience* and how trauma affects an individual and the effects caused by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and their symptoms, causes and treatments.

The second chapter titled, “Impacts of Post-traumatic stress disorder on Women” analyses *The Girl on the Train* using Cathy Caruth’s theory of trauma to explain post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), its symptoms causes and treatments.

Chapter three titled, “Trauma and Resilience” explains the salvation of Rachel, Megan, and Anna who overcome their traumatic situation.

Chapter 1

Construction of Trauma

The term trauma is a “repeated suffering of the event” (Bataille, 10). In the 1990s Trauma studies were developed with the influence of Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory. Study of trauma studies other than Freud is Joseph Breuer, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, Hermann Oppenheim, Abram Kardiner, Cathy Caruth, Morton Prince etc. Michelle Baleev says in her *A Companion to Literary Theory*;

An extreme experience which challenges the limits of language and even ruptures meaning altogether. This model of trauma indicates that suffering is unrepresentable. Quickly following the traditional model was a more pluralistic model of trauma that suggests the assumed unspeakability of trauma is one among many responses to an extreme event rather than its defining feature (Baleev,2018).

Trauma has occurred from an unhappy or regretful event, later it keeps on triggering the individual which causes stress and depression. In 1980 medication for trauma was published in various journals and pamphlets by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which is the prime professional organization of psychiatrists and the largest psychiatric organization in the world. Before that trauma was considered a “wound” which happens in the body.

Trauma was first introduced in the works of Sigmund Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*. These works are written during World War I and World War II respectively. War influenced him to write these works. During the war, soldiers have been traumatized by the bloodshed that happened in the war, these deaths not only affected the fellow colleagues but also their families, these massive deaths triggered the mind of close ones. Women have been working in hospitalises in the camp near the war fields. These camps were

filled with soldiers' corpses. In early times, trauma is considered a "wound" that occurs in the human body rather than a "hysteria."

Cathy Caruth is a professor of English at Cornell University, earlier she had been at Yale and Emory Universities. *Unclaimed Experience* is the work of Caruth which was published in 1996. In her work, she explores "the theory of trauma" regarding Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*, "the figure of the falling body" in de Man, Kleist and Kant mentions that "the story of trauma is inescapably bound to a referential trauma." (Caruth, 7) and "personal catastrophe" in Duras and Resnais's. Caruth explains traumatic experiences by means of "psychoanalysis of literature" and "literary theory."

In Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, she mentions that Freud analysed the catastrophic event as "shocking and unexpected." Traumatic events such as accidents, the death of a loved one, natural disasters etc trigger the affected individual after a few weeks or months of the traumatic experience, the event comes as a "recurring image" to the survivor. This image shows the depth of the violence which the survivor is facing. When it continuously triggers the person, it can lead to other "trauma narratives." Caruth also says that this "violence has not yet been fully known." (Caruth, 6). Trauma theory was first introduced in Cathy Caruth's work called *Unclaimed Experience*. The definition of trauma theory is numerous one such definition is

It includes both work around the experience of survivors of the Holocaust and other catastrophic personal and collective experiences and the theoretical and methodological innovations that might be derived from this work and applied more generally to film and literary studies. (Radstone, 10).

According to Caruth Trauma means;

Much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the

attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearances and its belated addresses, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (Caruth, 4).

Caruth states that trauma is more than wounds or other signs of diseases. It cannot be seen in the external appearances of an individual but it is wounded internally. The affected person might not understand, why he or she is being hurt. It happens because the “wound” happens on the inside, this wound occurs because of the traumatic experience that the affected individual is facing. The cause of the wound is because of external factors such as accidents, death, disease, war, and numerous other factors that can affect a person to be traumatized. Trauma can be categorized into two scenes “the earlier (in childhood)” and “the later (after puberty).” According to Freud, trauma occurs only after a “latency period,” It occurs not based on one single event instead it disturbs the mind due to multiple catastrophic instances, “it is the traumatic repetition, rather than the meaningful distortions of neurosis, that defines the shape of individual lives.” (Caruth, 59) Repetitive trauma affects an individual instead of a single event, “repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing” (Caruth, 63). “Double wound” can affect a person who has been trying to survive the catastrophic experience, which may lead to suicide. Consciousness regarding trauma is the only way to survive trauma.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder which occurs when an exact image of the traumatic event is aroused in the unconscious mind of an individual. It comprises the actual picture of the event, place, smell, conversations, etc. It gets triggered while seeing that place, traumatised person, or entity. The exact definition according to Caruth for PTSD is:

A response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to stimuli recalling the event. (Bataille, 4)

PTSD can occur through re-experiencing the affected trauma. Most of the affected individuals have a history of trauma. This deeply wounded trauma resulted in future PTSDs. PTSD makes people insane but with proper self-care and adjustment, one can overcome this PTSD. Clinical treatment can prevent it from arousing in future. PTSD is known by different names in distinct situations. During World War I it was called “shell shock” and in World War II “combat fatigue.” PTSD can happen to anyone at any time. In the U.S. almost 3.5% of adults are affected by PTSD every year. Immense sadness, restlessness, fear, and anger are other sides of PTSD their emotions are exaggerated compared to normal human behaviour. Some of the symptoms of PTSD are “intrusive symptoms”, “avoidance symptoms”, and “hyperarousal symptoms.”

Intrusive thoughts are uncomfortable thoughts. This type of thought becomes frequent, leading to stress and anxiety. When it becomes a common occurrence, it may give on to disrupt an individual’s personal life. Basically, it is an unwanted thought that triggers the mind. An affected individual can sense that people keeping secrets from them. Sources from Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADDA) state that these thoughts are not in reality. The affected person acts upon these thoughts, one, may not accept these types of people. The more the affected individual tried to get rid of these types of thoughts the more it will be affected. Anyone can affect by these types of traumas. Causes related to Intrusive symptoms are anxiety disorder and eating disorders.

Anxiety disorders are temporary anxiety before the medical procedure can happen to the affected individual, from this point, the affected person can experience numerous intrusive thoughts at a single time, which may include feelings of death, accident etc. Generalized anxiety disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) are two different types of anxiety disorders. Those people who have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) use compulsions or ritualistic behaviours. Eating disorders are another cause of Intrusive thoughts which is about their own body, and food preferences, mainly dealing with perfection. Intrusive thoughts can be cured. Clinical treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) help the affected individual to react and think about the symptom. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) occurred patients who can include selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or other antidepressants like clomipramine, which can take up to 8 to 12 weeks. ADDA finds how to cooperate with intrusive thoughts such as finding that the occurring symptom is intrusive in nature, the irrelevance of the symptom, accepting the symptom instead of avoiding them, practising meditation etc.

Avoidance Symptoms are another sign of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Individuals who experienced this type of trauma try to avoid the instant trauma that occurred in their past. In the second stage of trauma, the earlier trauma comes like a person, place, phone calls etc. The affected individual may think that they are unwelcome in social gatherings, and these people tried to avoid work, school, or college. Fear of criticism, and inferiority among others etc are the reasons. These people have low self-esteem and self-isolation. A person occurred with the symptoms faces stammering, saying the wrong word, blushing, embarrassment etc. They are uncomfortable in social gatherings. This symptom often feels fear of rejection which makes them unable to connect with people. American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) states that avoidant symptoms need to show at least some of the symptoms such as avoiding job-oriented

activities because of criticisms and rejection, they confirm that they are being liked by people, restraints in relationships, rejected in social situations, they fear new activities because they fear criticisms and embarrassments. Talk therapy is a suitable way. When it is a co-existing condition like depression or anxiety disorder proper diagnosis and medication should be provided. Several other disorders will also occur. Treatments are accordingly designed for symptoms. Some of the frequent symptoms that occur with the avoidant disorder are “social phobia,” “dependent personality disorder” and “borderline personality disorder.”

Hyperarousal is a prime symptom of those who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The body triggers when they think about their trauma. The real danger may not occur. Stress occurs after the body triggers by the traumatic event. Common symptoms like lack of sleep, lack of concentration, aggression, panic, constant anxiety etc are the chief components of hyperarousal. Sleeping troubles are seen among children. “Flashbacks,” “numbness,” “avoiding triggers’ etc are some of the symptoms. Physical abuse in childhood, sexual assault, natural disaster, fire. Plane crashes, terrorist attacks etc. People of all ages experience this type of trauma. Yet some factors trigger trauma faster. Intense trauma, childhood trauma, diagnosed by medical ailments, history of mental health disorders. A physical exam will conduct by the doctor to identify the underlying medical disorders. “Cognitive behaviour therapy,” “exposure therapy,” and “Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).”

Chapter 2

Impacts of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder on Women

“Wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind.” (Caruth,3) A traumatic event occurs in the mind of a person, the mind helps the individual to know what surrounds them. This event is invisible, sometimes it takes more time to understand it as traumatic. So, this includes that trauma occurs in the mind of a person. Rejection is always bitter since our ancestors lived in small groups, and rejecting a person is considered a death sentence. C Nathan DeWall and Brad J. Bushman are psychologists, in their article “Social Acceptance and Rejection: The Sweet and the Bitter,” mentions the bitterness of rejection that affect a person’s life. In Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow*, the protagonist went through twelve years of political exile. Exile is a punishment, back in ancient times. Rejection hurts, human beings are born with the capability to socialise. Like rejection, death is another form of trauma which can lead to serious other enigmas. If the death of a loved one is sudden and unexpected, they may go through grief as well as experienced trauma. More than men it is the women who experience trauma, and sexual abuse is more likely to be faced by women than men.

Paula Hawkins’s novel *The Girl on the Train* centres around the trauma faced by the women characters in the novel. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their Theory of Literature say about Freud’s ideology that “an artist is originally a man who turns from reality.” Through reading the novel readers can see the psyche of Hawkins. All these three women are centred around one man who is the antagonist and persuades women through his charms and snow jobs. These three women can symbolize the author itself, who had traumatic relationships. Characters experience frequent trauma which further leads to a distorted mind. According to Caruth in her work *Unclaimed Experience*, trauma is timeless, the traumatized person is still in the affected time. An individual can stick to both times past and present. Freud mentions the

time between the traumatic event and the triggering impacts of trauma to be the “latency period.”

The problem with trauma is that the affected person may not recognise it as trauma. Hawkins’s female characters realise it a little bit late, trauma can further lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can destroy a person’s lifestyle. After the event, trauma occurs to the affected individuals on different levels some may have the ability to overcome the situation others may stick to the same old time.

Out of the three women, Megan has the highest symptoms related to PTSD followed by Rachel and Anna. These three women’s mind is disillusioned with thoughts, “the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.” (Caruth 4). The death of Megan’s child and Mac’s disappearance affected her psyche. Her soul is still in her teenage times, and Megan cannot fully overcome that situation. But she does not know how to overcome her past. Similarly, the divorcee Rachel feels guilty and stuck in the past with her ex-husband. Comparatively, Anna is not likely to get PTSD, but still, like other suburban women she too faces trauma.

Victims’ thoughts about past traumatic experiences and misconceptions about the traumatic event are circled in their minds which can be called intrusive thoughts. It is a sign of PTSD, the “return of the traumatizing event appears in many respects like a waking memory, it can nonetheless only occur in the mode of a symptom or a dream.” (Caruth 60) These experiences are not known by the affected victims, and this can lead to continuous imagination for a prolonged period of time. Regression is another form of trauma, in adults untreated trauma can result in regression. Megan’s regression can be seen in the death of her child and the loneliness she felt when Mac left her alone. Rachel’s regression is about her ex-husband and Anna’s regression and fear is about Tom’s sudden lies and behaviours.

In Caruth's *Explorations in Memory*, she mentions that PTSD is a "symptom of history." (Caruth 5). A traumatic event that happened during childhood or teenage times can affect a person in the 20s or even 30s. Later traumas are the result of the previous trauma. In Megan's case, the death of her brother, Ben resulted in "double trauma," A traumatized person may feel "hollowness" which is like numbness and frailness. Loneliness can kill a person; the victimized individual needs a person to comfort her. Megan's violence towards the therapist, her stressed behaviour after the death of her child, and her depressed marriage life were all because of her previous "wound." This wound is not realised to Megan, she is unaware of her trauma, and her mind is fully disillusioned. Rachel too had a similar kind of history with the death of her father, like Megan, she too faces "double trauma." When death repeats itself, it is difficult to control oneself. Death may not need to have happened when a person has lost contact or has not been in touch, but for the traumatized victim it can consider a death. The grief and trauma are almost like the death of the person. One may not think about the previous trauma but deep inside that wound may not heal. This resulted in sudden hallucinations, unconsciously avoiding the trauma, aggressive behaviour etc.

Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristics of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonishes people far too little.... Anyone who accepts it as something self-evident that their dreams should put them back at night into the nature of dreams.(Caruth 59)

Here, Caruth mentions Freud's concept of dream. Rachel, Megan, and Anna's hallucinations can interpret as dreams, which happened during their "traumatic neurosis" (catastrophic event). These recurring images trigger them which leads to insomnia, substance abuse, anxiety etc. "shaking with fury, digging my nails into my palms." (Hawkins 304) These symptoms can be seen in the three characters. Rachel and Megan are on the dark edge of the room for quite a long

time. Their turmoiled past made them insane and lonely. This made them think about their trauma quite often, in one instance Megan hallucinates that “I used to see him all the time. Like in the street.” (Hawkins 277). Her teenage trauma is still haunting her. Mostly it is the women who re-experience trauma more than men. Even if, Megan sees her ex-husband in her 20s, she may experience serious other problems. For example, whenever Rachel sees Tom her alcohol consumption increases more than usual. Seeing the assailant, the victim may feel overwhelmed emotions which can make the person even more turmoil. Freud says that trauma can repeat.

“Trauma is not a simple or single experience of events but that events, insofar as they are traumatic, assume their force precisely in their temporal delay.” (Bataille 9). “Double trauma” or “repeated trauma” is the reason for ‘intrusive thoughts’, it can be seen in Hawkins’s three characters Rachel, Megan, and Anna. “I was insane to agree to move into Tom’s house. But then everyone thought I was insane to get involved with a married man.” (Hawkins 150). These were Anna’s thoughts about how society is viewing her after marrying Tom. Anna is degrading herself; her intrusive thoughts view her as a “cheap object.” Betrayal can make a person traumatized, Tom’s betrayal affects Megan, she was on the verge of resilience after the frequent encounters with him, “Every time I look at it, it feels like I’ve been slapped, and I get angrier and angrier.” (Hawkins 178). Megan’s “double trauma” has wounded her several times, and it inflicts her mind several times. Betrayed can be like forgetting someone, a “moment of death” (Caruth 39). A person betrayed someone when they forget the memories with them, for the victimized person, it is like a death of a person. These deaths, and betrayals all resulted in the character’s intrusive thoughts.

Avoidance symptom is vital in Rachel and Megan, “My days feel empty now I don’t have the gallery to go to any longer.” (Hawkins,36). Megan escapes her trauma by doing several other jobs and Rachel escapes it by travelling in a commuter. “Displacement” is a form of escaping from the affected trauma, for the traumatized victim it is merely a loop. Both the

traumatized individual's different modes of displacement are needed for escaping the trauma. The word "emptiness" is seen in the mind of both characters. Avoiding the traumatized situation is a sign of terror, it can further lead to stress and anxiety. Caruth describes Freud's term "latency." "An affected person is not apparent about their situation," (Caruth 17) which means that a person experiencing avoidance symptoms is unsure about their affected trauma. These characters do not even want to share their traumatized situation. They make believe in themselves by finding happiness in small situations, which they will not get full. Avoiding the catastrophic situation can be a sign of an unconscious act, the affected individual is in fear of future problems. For example, it is reported that the first trauma occurred during the war, and it traumatized both men and women. Fellow soldiers have been affected by the bloodshed done by their colleagues. This instance resulted in many people not joining the war, The overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (Caruth 11)

Even though the "victim" or "survivor" tries to avoid the war or any other catastrophic events it haunts the person multiple times. Megan avoids "babies" similarly Rachel avoids her ex-husband's "colleague." In a way, they are the reason for their trauma. The affected person cannot face their trauma aroused person, for instance,

He thinks spending time around babies will make me broody. In fact, it is doing exactly the opposite; when I leave their house I run home, cannot wait to strip my clothes off and get into the shower and wash the baby smell off me. (Hawkins 38)

Megan avoids babies due to her history with a child. The traumatized person cannot withstand their trauma-aroused individual and contacting them leads to an even more

depressive state. In their mind feeling of guilt and disgust control their psychic behaviour. Going back to the past trauma is like “the return of the repressed.” (Caruth 13) “My first home.” (Hawkins 22) Rachel was surrounded by past events when she saw her old house, this instance makes it clear that the catastrophic place, memories, people, pets etc can trigger a person affecting PTSD. “Traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time.” (Bataille 8). Place and time matter a lot in connection with trauma. For the characters, suburban London itself is a traumatic place. “Tom’s house,” “streets,” and “the rumbling of the train” or “trains screeching brakes” can mark it as a symbol of trauma for Rachel, Megan, and Anna.

I wanted a drink at lunchtime; I was desperate for one after what happened in Witney this morning. I did not have one though, because I had to keep a clear head. It is been a long time since I have had anything worth keeping a clear head for. (Hawkins 94)

In Rachel’s instance, she wants to forget about her trauma, and for that, she drank alcohol to avoid her traumatic event. Forgetting a particular event is also a sign of avoiding the catastrophic experience she had gone through. According to Freud, “the nature of leaving and returning constituted trauma.” (Caruth 15). Both “escaping” and “returning” to the traumatized event (place) can trigger the person. “Father of Communism” Karl Marx has mentioned that “History repeats itself.” It can be applied to any source whether it is war, politics, trauma, disease etc. A traumatic event can reappear when the trauma-aroused person starts to move towards the wrong path. Once PTSD has been experienced through various symptoms it is difficult to move back to the old self, there is a fifty per cent chance of getting back to the traumatic situation once that person experienced the trauma.

Hyperarousal is a severe form of PTSD. It affects the daily activities of an individual. Insomnia, violence, and lack of concentration can be seen in the behaviour of the characters. Continuous traumatic events made Rachel and Megan fall for hyperarousal. Frequent intrusive thoughts and avoidance can lead to hyperarousal. Rachel's "alcohol consumption" and Megan's "sexual desire" is one fine example of this PTSD symptoms. Panic attacks can arouse a person for instance,

Someone gets away apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance, a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave physical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a traumatic neurosis. (Caruth 16)

Rachel, Megan, and Anna's trauma is a sign of "traumatic neurosis" mainly because of the antagonist Tom and other external factors also trigger them. Panic attacks, frequent bursting tears, fear, insomnia etc can be the symptoms. For example, in one instance, "It's easier to understand her behaviour when you feel like I feel right now. There is nothing painful, so corrosive, as suspicion." (Hawkins 340) Anna's pain is evident. She has gone through neurosis, in another instance, "my heart hammering" (Hawkins 341). The period between the occurred trauma and the signs of triggers affecting the person is the "incubation period." During "the latency period" (the period between the traumatic event and the first symptom experienced by the individual) through intrusive, avoidance and other neuroses the trauma-affected individual have the chance of getting the trauma, which can be seen through signs of Anna. Hyperarousal is the highest form of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Once hyperarousal has occurred it is difficult for a person to move back, The historical power of the trauma is not just that the

experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. (Caruth 17)

When a catastrophic event has been experienced, it is difficult for a turning back. The affected person will re-experience the event when certain symbols (sounds, images, person who occurs trauma) have been seen. In Megan's instance, "but I had this thing about hospitals at the time because the last time I'd been in one was when Ben was killed." (Hawkins 223). Here for Megan "hospitals" make her numb. An individual who had experienced severe symptoms of PTSD might have the possibility of fearing a particular place, thing, person or even pet etc. "I tell him about the panic attacks, insomnia, the fact that I lie awake at night too frightened to fall asleep." (Hawkins 43) Insomnia is experienced not only by Megan but by Rachel, frequent "blackout" is the symptom of insomnia. People experiencing insomnia did not get proper sleep it can be seen in Megan and Rachel. Around the world, ten per cent of the population is facing insomnia, which is the starting sign of PTSD.

Trauma and Resilience

“Trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering” (Levine 3). Trauma can occur to any person whether he or she is a child, an adult, or even old age. Mostly trauma is seen among children and adolescents. Prolonged exposure to childhood trauma can be triggered in adults. Places, events, films, people, anything can trigger a person. “There are wounds that never show on the body that are deeper and more hurtful than anything that bleeds” (Hamilton 133). Trauma is like a wound that hurts, but it never shows outward deep inside the pain gets cultivated, and it turns acute stress disorder after months developed into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In Hawkins’s *The Girl on the Train*, all the women characters have been traumatized yet they have tried for their resilience. McFerran and Teggelove, both professors at the University of Melbourne used music to heal people from “Black Saturday” fires in Victoria, which happened in Australia in 2009. Sounds can heal people from certain traumas. “The rumbling of the train” Megan finds these sounds as a soothing and sudden escape from her inner turmoil. Anna feels disturbed by the “staggering sounds” of the train. Surviving trauma is not an easy task. A child survivor of the Holocaust who had been at Theresienstadt continually had flashbacks of trains and did not know where they came from. (Bataille 6).

Flashbacks have been common for those who suffer from a traumatic event. Freud mentions that the memory of the trauma occurs to a person frequently and unconsciously, “insistently and against their will.” (Bataille 6). When the victim finds that he/she has been affected by mental illness, half of the problems are solved. Finding the illness is difficult for many people. In one instance Megan says;

Hollowness: that I understand. I am starting to believe that there is not anything you can do to fix it. That is what I have taken from the therapy sessions: the holes in your life are permanent. You must grow around them, like tree roots around concrete; you mould yourself through the gaps. All these things I know, but I do not say them out loud, not now.”(Hawkins 131).

How to tackle the problem is more important than anything, through Megan’s therapeutic experiences she finds the answer to her solution, like Megan, Rachel, and Anna also tackle their own traumas. “The barrier of consciousness is a barrier of sensation and knowledge.” (Caruth 61). The victim must analyse and be conscious of one’s own trauma. Therapy helps to identify one’s trauma. Sometimes people need a good listener to talk about their innermost problems, this gives relief to most of the affected individuals. Trauma is genetic or it can be from the victim’s history. It is not incurable. Trauma can be “one’s survival as one’s own.” (Caruth 64). It is the fight between mind and body. Sometimes the affected person cannot control his /her mind and body, in this kind of situation, external help is validatory, For example, therapy, counselling, and other sorts of medication can be taken after diagnosis.

Rachel has been manipulated by her ex-husband, the feeling of guilty all made her feel insane, and the realisation made her stand against him. Trauma is like a “hollowness” or “holes” in the life of people. Megan said, in order to overcome the traumatized event, “one must grow mentally.” The problem with the survivors is that they lack awareness about their own trauma.

I might have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. I might be barren, divorced, soon to be homeless alcoholic.... I wonder where it started, my decline; I wonder at what point I could have halted it. Where did I take the wrong turn? (Hawkins 77)

Rachel tries to understand her trauma, self-understanding is the best medicine for trauma. “The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site.” (Bataille 10) The feeling of not being worth it might arouse after the traumatic event, but to overcome that catastrophic event one needs the courage to pull oneself up.

It is only by recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of the catastrophic experience.(Caruth 58)

According to Caruth PTSD is the most “destructive psychic disorder” It gives a direct link to “the psyche” and “external violence” “Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristics of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident” (Caruth 59). Dreams do have the consciousness of bringing the traumatized person to the affected event, frequent dreams are the signs of a disturbed mind which can be seen in Megan, Anna, and Rachel. When one experiences trauma, it is difficult to remove completely, still, in modern society, PTSD can be cured in a limited way. Therapy worked for Megan in some way. A “Good listener” is what a PTSD-affected person needed, one who genuinely understands his/her feelings. Trauma mainly occurs in people who have a previous history of catastrophic events. Which can be seen in Megan and Rachel. According to Freud traumatic event may arouse as “a waking memory or a dream” (Caruth 60) I’ve always thought that it might be fun to be a Catholic, to be able to go to the confessional and unburden yourself and have someone tell you that they forgive you, to take all the sin away, wipe the slate clean. (Hawkins, 41).

“The realisation of the traumatic event” is the first step to overcome in the shadow of darkness. Megan and Rachel had succeeded, a conscious mind is needed for knowing the traumatic events rightfully. Trauma is experienced by a person regarded as a death threat,

Megan wants to “unburden” herself, the “consciousness” about the traumatic event made her overcome half of the problems. As Freud states that “It is the experience of waking into consciousness that, peculiarly, is identified with the reliving of trauma.” (Caruth 64)

Anna is the least traumatized character. Rachel and Megan already have a “history” of trauma. Anna’s trauma arouses because of the betrayal she faced. The trauma faced by Anna and Rachel in terms of love is almost similar. Generally, “death” is the symbol of trauma, particularly for those people who have been overwhelmed by emotions (history of trauma) but according to Freud, “death drive is a response to awakening not unlike the awakening from a nightmare.” (Caruth 64) Anna and Rachel’s salvation can be depicted using Freud’s “death drive”. Both have been married to Tom and gone through the same emotional-traumatic experience.

Trauma can be a “repetition compulsion.” It arouses a person like “hysteria.” “The trauma is repeated suffering of the event but it is also a continual leaving of its site.” (Caruth 10). Megan also suffered through “recurring images.” Megan suffered a lot when she was a child, her past traumatic experiences, give her intrusive thoughts, hyperarousal, and avoidance.

She is buried beneath a silver birch tree, down towards the old train tracks, her grave marked with a cairn. Not more than a little pile of stones, really. I did not want my attention on her resting place, but I could not leave her without remembrance. She will sleep peacefully there, with no one to disturb her, no sounds but birdsongs and the rumbling of passing trains. (Hawkins 406)

Megan had been punished enough in the past, for her “death” was her salvation, “collapse of witnessing” the trauma of her “dead child.” The guilty of murdering the child

haunted by Megan made her hate “babies.” All insomnia, anxiety, and depression are because of murdering one’s own child.

Conclusion

In the psychological thriller, *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins, women characters have been traumatized by the past impacts on their life, mainly Rachel, Megan, and Anna. These three women had been deeply “wounded” by Tom. These women had faced frequent traumas put on by the antagonist. Re-experiencing the past traumas made Rachel, Megan, and Anna numb, insane and frail. Rachel is a divorcee and formerly worked in public relations and is the ex-wife of Tom. Megan, who is the main victim of the trauma, and frequently worked in multiple jobs is married to Scott and her boyfriend is Tom. Anna his current wife, currently works as a homemaker, and a mother.

As the novel opens catastrophic events of Rachel, Megan, and Anna can be portrayed using multiple narratives. By using Cathy Caruth’s trauma theory, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in Rachel, Megan, and Anna can be depicted. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms are classified as intrusive symptoms, avoidance symptoms and hyperarousal symptoms. Out of the three symptoms, hyperarousal is “destructive” and can lead to severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Trauma theory mentions the “catastrophic events,” “holocaust,” and the “collective experience” of the affected individual which can be shown in films and other literary works.

Trauma is a life-threatening, menacing event, when it is experienced by an individual, hallucinations, panic attacks, and insomnia may haunt the person throughout their life. Diagnosis can be taken. It has certain limitations, once an anti-depressant tablet is taken by an individual, he/she cannot stop the medications. It corrects the hormonal imbalance of an individual. Trauma is found at the beginning of the Roman Empire, in our ancestral time humans had been facing trauma. According to recent surveys, trauma is experienced more by females’ sexual abuse against women is the major reason for trauma in females. Re-

experiencing the trauma increases the chance of suicides, panic attacks post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms etc. It was introduced by Freud in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* on the impacts and experiences faced by soldiers during World War I and World War II. Due to the war major part of the world had been traumatized it was a “great destruction.” Soldiers experienced a catastrophic event which was followed by their family members, most of the death happened among the youths. Women’s duty was to hospitalize the aided soldiers, these camps were filled with dead bodies which was another trauma for the survivors.

This thesis’s first chapter, “Construction of Trauma” examines Cathy Caruth’s theory of trauma by using her work *Unclaimed Experience*. Classification of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) its effects, causes and symptoms are mentioned.

The second chapter titled, “Impact of Post-traumatic stress disorder on Women” mentions the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms like intrusive symptoms, avoidance symptoms and hyperarousal symptoms in Hawkins’s female characters Rachel, Megan, and Anna. These three women have been traumatized by the male antagonist Tom. Megan has a high impact on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and has been turmoiled by her past boyfriend Mac as well as Tom. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms like insomnia, panic attack, and fear of recurring trauma are higher in Megan in contrast with other characters. Rachel too had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms like blackouts, substance abuse etc. Anna experiences trauma towards the end of the novel, she does not have a history like Megan and Rachel. Like other women, Anna wants a happy married life but she does not deserve it, towards the end of the novel. Anna’s frequent intrusive thoughts and avoidance symptoms lead her to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Thus, it is proved that Hawkins’s three female characters, Rachel, Megan, and Anna have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

The third chapter titled, “Trauma and Resilience” depicts Rachel’s, Megan’s, and Anna’s overcome of the trauma. Rachel has been overcome by knowing the truth about Tom, which made her realise she is not been guilty regarding the divorce. Megan had been on the verge of overcoming her post-traumatic stress disorder(PTSD) but she has been murdered by Tom. Her past mistakes have been forgiven by killing “one’s own child.” Anna understands the true colours of Tom and realises Rachel is protective of being all time. Thus Rachel, Megan, and Anna got salvation for their own collisions.

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