

**UNVEILING TRAUMA: ANALYZING *13 REASONS WHY*
THROUGH TRAUMA STUDIES**



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By

MEGHA PRADEEP

Register No. AB21ENG043

III B. A. English Literature

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Cochin - 682 011

Kerala

Supervisor

MS. ATHIRA BABU

Assistant Professor

Department of English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Kerala

March 2024

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Unveiling Trauma: Analyzing *13 Reasons Why* Through Trauma Studies” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Athira Babu, Department of English.

Megha Pradeep

Register No. AB21ENG043

III B.A. English Literature

Ernakulam

St. Teresa’s College (Autonomous)

March 2024

Ernakulam

CERTIFICATE

I hereby clarify that this project entitled "Unveiling Trauma: Analyzing *13 Reasons Why* Through Trauma Studies" by Megha Pradeep is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

Ms. Athira Babu

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Ernakulam

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

March 2024

Ernakulam

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By

Megha Pradeep

B.A. English Language and Literature

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Register No: AB21ENG043

2021 -2024

Supervising Teacher: Ms. Athira Babu

The study delves into the character of Hannah Baker in Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* utilizing the framework of trauma studies and drawing insights from prominent theorists in the field. By referencing the works of these theorists and their concepts, the analysis aims to explain the traumatic experiences portrayed in the novel regarding the character. The narrative explores a range of traumatic events in Hannah's life, including themes of betrayal from her friends and trusted people, manipulation, stalking, witnessing distressing situations, and enduring sexual assaults and how they contribute to Hannah's emotional state and overall course within the story. It seeks to expand our understanding of how trauma, as noted by the theorists, shows and influences Hannah Baker's situations. By analyzing the scenes and events in detail through the lens of trauma studies, we can gain insights into the complexities of Hannah's journey and the ways in which trauma shapes the narrative. The study reveals the mental wounds she sustains as a result of the actions by a list of 13 individuals involved in her life, depicting 13 reasons why she ended her life due to enduring continuous traumatical events.

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Introduction

Trauma is a complex psychological phenomenon characterized by an individual's intense emotional and psychological response to an event that is perceived as distressing or harmful. These events can range from accidents, physical or emotional abuse, natural disasters, to witnessing violence or experiencing life-threatening situations. What distinguishes trauma is its profound impact on an individual's ability to cope and regulate emotions. Trauma can be classified into various types, including acute trauma resulting from a single, highly distressing event, or chronic trauma arising from prolonged exposure to stressors, such as ongoing abuse or neglect. Moreover, there's complex trauma, often stemming from interpersonal relationships, particularly during critical developmental stages.

The aftermath of trauma extends beyond the immediate event, influencing one's mental, emotional, and even physical well-being. Individuals may grapple with difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships, trust issues, self-esteem challenges, and a heightened state of alertness. It's crucial to acknowledge that people respond to trauma differently, and what may be traumatic for one person may not have the same impact on another. Professional intervention such as therapy and counselling, plays a vital role in helping individual's process and cope with traumatic experiences, fostering strength and promoting a path towards healing and recovery.

Trauma studies are a field that delves into the intricate dynamics of how individuals and societies respond to and cope with traumatic experiences. Trauma studies in literature examine how stories convey and handle traumatic experiences. It uses concepts from psychology and sociology to analyze how literature represents the psychological impact of trauma on characters. Ideas like "traumatic realism" and recovery stages help understand how narratives capture the emotional struggles associated with trauma. In essence, it explores how literature reflects and

explores the effects of traumatic events on characters and their paths to healing, providing insights into the human experience of trauma through storytelling.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is closely related to trauma, as it is a specific mental health condition that can result from exposure to traumatic events. PTSD develops when the impact of such traumatic experiences persists and disrupts normal psychological functioning in a person. PTSD symptoms may interfere with relationships, work, and daily activities, leading to a significant harm in overall well being. The symptoms of PTSD reflect the psychological and emotional aftermath of trauma. These symptoms include intrusive memories or flashbacks, nightmares, intense emotional reactions, avoidance of reminders of the trauma, and heightened arousal or hypervigilance.

The novel *13 Reasons Why* (2008) written by Jay Asher deals with serious topics like bullying, sexual assault, and mental health, prompting discussions about how these issues are portrayed. Through Clay's perspective, the book explores the impact of trauma and the consequences of people's actions that affect Hannah Baker. It encourages understanding and empathy for the challenges individuals face, especially in a high school setting.

Jay Asher is a contemporary American author who writes books in the Young Adult genre. Born on September 30, 1975 in Arcadia, California, it took Asher around twelve years to sell his first book. His debut novel *13 Reasons Why* (2008) was globally popular. Asher's inspiration for the book came from the suicide attempt of a close relative. This young woman was close to the age of Hannah Baker, the protagonist of the novel. Asher used her state of mind and thoughts to help him craft the book.

The study focuses on the protagonist of the novel, Hannah Baker. It carefully examines the traumatic events in her life that finally ends up in a heart breaking decision. From emotional and mental abuse to physical pain, the story goes through to the multiple challenges she faces. Hannah's character becomes a canvas for the accumulation of distressing experiences, emphasizing the impact of cumulative trauma on an individual's psyche.

This paper aims to look into how individuals manage with traumatic experiences, specifically focusing on bullying, emotional abuse, sexual assault, and the effects of trauma and grief. By focusing on the theory of trauma studies and its theoreticians, including Cathy Caruth, Sigmund Freud, and Judith Lewis Herman, we can highlight their contributions to trauma studies and its psychological aspects. Cathy Caruth's "traumatic realism", Sigmund Freud's "repetition compulsion", Judith Lewis Herman's work on "complex trauma" "bystander guilt" offers more insights in this study.

Chapter 1 of this project delves into the theory on literary trauma studies. Chapter 2 explores the impact of trauma in various ways in *13 Reasons Why* (2008), ending in a conclusion. The final chapter provides an understanding and analysis of trauma within the narrative, particularly focusing on its effects on Hannah's character.

Chapter 1

Theory's Role in Literary Trauma Studies

In *Trauma and Literature* (2018), trauma is a wound. This, at least, is its Greek origin, where it indicates a physical injury from an external cause today. However, we more frequently use the term trauma to describe an emotional or a psycho-traumatized state.

In *Psychosis, Trauma and Dissociation Evolving Perspectives on Severe Psychopathology* (2019) it is shown that starting in 1980, the definitions of trauma in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-3 to DSM-4) highlighted exposure to an extreme event that triggers intense emotional reactions. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that may develop in individuals who have experienced or witnessed any type of traumatic events.

Trauma was described by the DSM-3 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) as a psychologically traumatic incident that is outside the normal range of human experience and is accompanied by extreme anxiety, fear, and helplessness. Still, once it became clear that PTSD symptoms might also result from commonplace events like rape or domestic abuse, this classification changed. The DSM-4 had changes that included defining qualifying traumatic experiences and exposure methods. A traumatic incident is defined by the DSM-5 as one that involves sexual violence, substantial harm, or real or threatening death. Trauma has been defined by the ICD-2 (International Classification of Diseases) standards as an exceptionally scary or horrific occurrence, despite emotional reactions. The term “trauma” was

originally used to describe any upsetting experience, but it has since evolved to describe particular occurrences that are not immediately linked to feelings.

By exploring trauma studies through the lens of influential theorists, this paper aims to understand their unique perspectives on trauma within literature, offering valuable insights into the theoretical foundations that shape our analysis.

Trauma studies began in the 1990s, using Freudian concepts. It saw trauma as a profoundly powerful experience that defies description and distorts meaning. The main issues that characterize the discipline of trauma studies are psychological trauma, how it is represented in language, and how memory shapes both individual and cultural identities. Trauma is an extremely unsettling event that has a profound impact on a person's feelings and perception of the world. The study of trauma looks at its psychological and cultural significance as well as how it affects literature and society. Researchers examine the complicated social and psychological factors that influence people's linguistic interpretations and expressions of traumatic experiences.

This project draws insights from critics like Cathy Caruth, Sigmund Freud, and Judith Herman to analyze and understand trauma and its concepts. Their perspectives contribute to examining the profound impact of traumatic experiences on individuals.

Cathy Caruth is a literary scholar and theorist known for her contributions to trauma studies. Her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) work explores the intersections of literature, psychoanalysis, and trauma, and she has written extensively on the ways in which trauma is represented and experienced. One of her key concepts is "traumatic realism," which examines how trauma disrupts traditional modes of representation. In the influential work *Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth examines the challenges of

representing and understanding traumatic experiences. She explores how trauma disrupts narrative and traditional forms of expression.

In its most general definition, trauma describes an 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 event. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century. (Caruth 11)

Due to the increasing number of these confusing war experiences and other catastrophic reactions over the past 20 years, doctors and psychiatrists have started to rethink physical and mental experiences, most recently the reactions to a wide range of other experiences, including rape, child abuse, industrial and vehicle accidents, which are now frequently understood in terms of the effects of PTSD. Caruth talks on how traumatic experiences can continuously resurface in a person's mind and cause the occurrence of unwanted thoughts. Due to the pain from the past constantly resurfacing in the present, this gives rise to a sense of repetition. It can be challenging to integrate these experiences into a narrative because traumatizing memories might be felt as though they are happening right now.

By highlighting how crucial it is to hear the stories of trauma survivors. She goes into the significance of bearing witness along with actively listening in the process of reconciling with traumatic situations. When victims explain their traumatic experiences, they frequently do so in shattered narratives. It can be difficult to incorporate the past into a linear story since they can

feel the tragedy as if it were happening right now. Caruth emphasizes how essential it is to be present and listen to the stories of trauma survivors. According to her, one of the most important steps in understanding trauma is the act of expressing these memories.

Psychoanalysis was founded by a highly influential Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. He made an important addition to our understanding of how people think and act. The concept of psychoanalytic theory, which Freud created, formed the basis for psychoanalysis. This theory places a significant value on the unconscious mind's function and the impact of early events on behaviour as an adult. The idea of repression, which involves forcing unpleasant memories or thoughts into a person's unconscious mind to shield themselves from psychological distress, is central to Freud's theories.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) presents one of Freud's main concepts about trauma. It has had a profound impact on trauma studies. In this work, Freud presents the concept of the repetition compulsion. Even amid traumatic situations, individuals often exhibit a propensity to repeat specific behaviours, ideas, or experiences, according to Freud. Repetition compulsion or trauma reenactment can be brought on by a variety of traumatic early experiences, involving emotional, sexual, or physical abuse. The person may find themselves reliving the events if they are unable to reconcile or integrate the prior trauma. It's a psychological response that allows people to deal with terrible occurrences by constantly repeating parts of the unpleasant incidents.

Freud termed this phenomenon the repetition compulsion. According to his theory, this compulsion arises from a seemingly unconscious urge to dominate or take control over terrible incidents by thinking or acting out the events constantly. He talks about how people may accidentally repeat uncomfortable events in an attempt to understand or come to terms with

them. This theory establishes the groundwork for understanding how trauma can affect psychological processes and behavior. According to Freud, individuals sometimes unknowingly revisit painful events in their thoughts, actions, or dreams. Although this repetition doesn't always result in enjoyment, it appears to be a need to master the unpleasant event by repetition. This idea has been fundamental to our understanding of how people try to understand and cope with difficult circumstances.

Although the work of Freud established the foundation modern trauma theory has evolved by collecting knowledge from a variety of disciplines, including literature, psychiatry, psychology, and cultural studies. Unconsciously repeating past events is a part of repetition compulsion. People may discover that they are drawn to situations, people, or actions that remind them of past, often terrible experiences. According to Freud, a person suffering from repetition compulsion may unintentionally repeat specific behaviours in the hopes of changing the course of events or regain control over the painful experience.

Judith Lewis Herman an american psychiatrist, researcher, educator, and author has specialized in understanding and management of traumatic stress. Through the empathetic perspective of her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), she brings on an understanding of the political and social dimensions of trauma, stressing the value of a social context that is supportive to those who suffer from trauma. Her three-stage model of recovery is presented in the book, offering an advanced structure that acknowledges the complicated nature of trauma experiences as well as the importance of narrative and strength in the healing process. Herman's contributions, which are based on an in-depth knowledge of the social setting as well as clinical results, have had an extended impact on the area of trauma studies. His holistic view takes into account both

individual and group reactions to trauma. Herman recognizes the complexity and diversity of trauma responses. She stresses that there is a continuum related to PTSD and that people may have a variety of symptoms that change over time. Herman suggests a three-stage healing approach for trauma survivors that comprises reconnection, remembering and grieving, and building safety.

When specific requirements are satisfied, PTSD is diagnosed. First and foremost, the victim should have directly suffered sexual assault, real or threatened death, severe injury, or seen it happen to a relative or close friend. Herman examines the various and complex symptoms connected to trauma, especially post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She explores the widespread issue of intrusive memories, in which people struggle with upsetting memories and nightmares connected to the traumatic experience. Herman highlights the natural avoidance reflex, in which survivors move away from situations that bring up unpleasant memories. Additionally, she also emphasizes the cognitive and affective adjustments that frequently accompany trauma's aftermath, including consistent negative attitudes, emotional detachment, and difficulties feeling hopeful. Dissociative experiences and raised awareness and reactivity are additional factors that add to the wide range of complex symptoms associated with trauma. Herman's method acknowledges that trauma impacts not just people but also infuses societal and cultural factors and situates these symptoms within a larger social and personal context.

Herman is particularly known for her contributions to understanding complex trauma. In her influential work, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) which delves into the concept of complex trauma. She explores how prolonged and repeated exposure to traumatic events can have enduring and profound effects on an individual's psychological well-being. Herman's focus is on understanding the complexities of trauma, including its impact on memory, identity, and

interpersonal relationships, the latter often associated with prolonged and repeated exposure to traumatic events, such as abuse or captivity.

By highlighting the significant and long-lasting impacts that complex trauma can have on a person's relationships, sense of self, and general psychological health. Her understanding of the dynamics of complex trauma considerably advances the area of trauma studies by offering a nuanced understanding of the various effects and difficulties connected to the lasting and repeated traumatic events happening in an individual's life. By using Herman's observations while analyzing *13 Reasons Why* (2008), provides the ways in which the story's protagonist Hannah Baker display these symptoms and gain a more complex picture of how trauma is portrayed and what consequences it has which leads her to take an unfortunate decision to end her life.

Chapter 2

The Impact of Trauma in *13 Reasons Why*

13 Reasons Why (2008) - a novel written by Jay Asher is about the journey of high school students, where a girl named Hannah Baker becomes the storyteller of her own life through a set of cassette tapes in a shoebox. Following her death, Hannah leaves behind a set of seven double-sided cassette tapes after her tragic death. These tapes underline the 13 reasons behind her tragic decision to take her own life and provide insight into the people she claims were responsible for her fate.

Hannah Baker provided the 13 people who received the cassette records with two key rules. The first rule stated that each listener had to listen to the tapes until the very end. The second rule stated that after an individual understood their own role in the events detailed on the cassette, they had to give the tapes to the following person on the list. Hannah highlighted how important it is to stick by these guidelines and made clear exactly what the consequences would be if they were neglected. She said she had given a copy of the cassettes to a reliable person so that everything would be published in case someone ignored the rules. These guidelines had an essential part in determining how the story was told and how each person who listened to the tapes about Hannah's life was impacted.

At the start of the narrative, Clay Jensen finds a parcel with cassette records in front of his doorsteps that his classmate Hannah Baker had recorded. Each tape reveals reasons behind Hannah's tragic decision, with Clay anxiously awaiting his turn. The tapes, passed from person to person, highlight the impact of actions on others. The shoebox symbolizes the unexpected

journey Clay embarks on, revealing life's struggles and interpersonal connections.

Hannah's tapes serve as her way of addressing her emotional suffering to those involved in her story.

Hannah Baker's suffering reflects emotional trauma, which arises from traumatizing experiences that leave people feeling unsafe or helpless. It is not necessary to suffer a physical injury to experience emotional trauma. Examples of such trauma include vehicle accidents and assaults. Because it can alter how your brain functions, especially if you've experienced repeated trauma or have been harmed since a young age, the emotional effects of trauma can sometimes be just as destructive and difficult to recover from as physical injuries.

There are two types of traumas addressed in Hannah Baker - complex trauma and secondary trauma. Complex trauma involves enduring continuous or repeated traumatic experiences often inflicted by others, leaving one feeling helpless and trapped. Seeking professional support is crucial for healing, with trauma-informed practices like yoga and meditation proving beneficial. Examples of complex trauma encompass domestic violence, child sexual abuse, living in disaster-prone areas, and facing racism. Additionally, secondary trauma, resulting from witnessing or hearing about traumatic events, can impact health. This may include witnessing abuse within the family, exposure to hate crimes or police violence through media, or working closely with trauma survivors. While secondary trauma is sometimes overlooked, it is equally valid, and support is essential for those affected.

Hannah Baker's trauma starts with Justin Foley who's first in the list of 13 people. He turns against her by making sexual jokes about her which leads to the starting point of Hannah's image to fall down in front of her peers. He was her first kiss, which she found sweet and

beautiful. His sudden change in attitude after being close fuelled her trust issues. As a new student that year, others quickly believed rumours about her, initiating a chain of challenges and mistreatment.

“Well, what did you want to hear? Because I've heard so many stories that I don't know which one is the most popular. But I do know which is the least popular. The truth. Now, the truth is the one you won't forget” (30.) In the context of Cathy Caruth's trauma studies, Hannah Baker's experience reflects the deep impact of trauma on memory, communication, and the construction of personal narratives. Justin Foley's betrayal and the constant rumours mark the initial disruption in Hannah's sense of self and trust. Caruth's concept of the “difficulty of knowing” in her book *Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) resonates as Hannah struggled with different narratives to share her own truth to other's who never listened to her. It's evident that she argues with a lack of understanding and validation from those around her. Her growing isolation and despair show how trauma can affect how someone sees the world and communicates their personal experiences.

Second on her list was Alex Standall. Hannah considered Alex Standall a close friend until he and Jessica Davis started dating, caused them to drift apart. Alex's contribution to Hannah's trauma was creating a list that ranked female students based on their looks, fostering a toxic environment at their high school. This "Hot or Not" list circulated among students had a negative impact on the campus. Hannah felt objectified and humiliated because of her placement on the list questioning herself about the way she looks. The brewing up problems from the release of the list affected her social image to fall even more and it added to the emotional

distress she experienced. She also adds her point after she gets mistreated by one of her classmates after the list being published: “Alex, am I saying your list gave him permission to grab my ass? No, I’m saying it gave him an excuse, and an excuse was this guy needed” (52). This explains how her reputation went down further than it already did. And others never tried to consider her feelings by shaming her in public.

The third person in the list Jessica Davis used to be Hannah's another close friend along with Alex. Due to the break down on Alex's actions, which led to Jessica feeling humiliated caused their relationship to end. Hannah tried to explain Alex's intentions at Monet's café, but Jessica didn't listen and physically assaulted Hannah in public, leaving a scar on her forehead. This betrayal by someone she considered a close friend pushed Hannah into isolation, questioning the authenticity of her trust and friendships.

The fourth person on the list Tyler Down her high school's student-life yearbook photographer. He violated Hannah Baker's privacy by taking pictures of her through her bedroom window without her knowledge or consent for a while when her parents were away from town for a vacation. "I feel sorry for you, Tyler. I do. Everyone else on these tapes so far must feel a little relieved. They came off as liars or jerks or insecure people lashing out at others. But your story, Tyler....it's kind of creepy" (75). This invasive act further contributed to the violation of Hannah's personal boundaries and added to the traumatic experiences she endured.

Eventually, she attempts to discover that Tyler is the stalker with the help of a girl in her class Courtney after she gets a warning that someone is watching her from her room. Tyler Down boosted his inappropriate behaviour by disseminating a compromised photo of Hannah Baker in addition to violating her privacy. Hannah was subjected to more shame and distress as a

result of this wicked conduct, showing the negative effects of private photos being distributed without consent over campus.

Tyler was engaging in stalker tactics with Hannah. When someone is getting stalked that makes them feel threatened, distressed, or uneasy. It encompasses privacy invasion, intimidation, and following or observing the victim. Targets frequently experience tension, worry, shame, embarrassment, and even PTSD or trauma symptoms. This makes Hannah question if she has the right to get privacy in her room and across her house. “After your escapades, Tyler, my home was no longer secure” (92). Tyler also shares compromising pictures around the internet by invading Hannah’s privacy which harmed her reputation. This shows how cyberbully, with false information and private images, hurts people like Hannah.

Courtney Crimsen, the fifth person on the list, was related to the part where Hannah finds Tyler Down to be her stalker. Courtney comes up with an idea to catch the stalker but she manipulates Hannah and spreads false rumours about a romantic encounter to deflect attention from her own secrets after compromising pictures surface. This betrayal adds another layer of trauma to Hannah’s experiences, involving the violation of trust, the distortion of her reputation, and the exploitation of personal matters for someone else gain.

As Hannah adds “But did I feel used? Absolutely.” (110) When Courtney used Hannah for her own gains by pretending to be friendly and sweet, making her trust her, it eventually led to Hannah getting hurt. Later, she realized she had been manipulated by someone she had hoped was a genuine friend. Manipulation, it can be a contributing factor to trauma. When people are tricked or betrayed, especially in personal parts of their lives, it can cause emotional distress.

Manipulation can break trust, cross limits, and make someone feel powerless all things that can lead to trauma.

The sixth person in the list was Marcus Cole who engages in inappropriate behaviour during a date with her after an event in school. While at a diner, Marcus makes advances on Hannah, attempting to force her into a more intimate situation. When she resists, Marcus becomes disrespectful and verbally aggressive publicly. After he leaves in the diner, Hannah sits and thinks about the entire events that took place.

For the longest time, from almost day one at this school, it seemed that I was the only one who cared about me... Put all your heart into getting that first kiss, only to have it thrown back in your face. Have the only two people you truly trust turn against you. Have one of them use you to get back at the other, and then be accused of betrayal. Let someone take away any sense of privacy or security you might still possess, then have someone use that insecurity to satisfy their own twisted curiosity. Then come to realize that you're making mountains and out of molehills. Realize how petty you have become. Sure, it may feel like you can't get a grip in this town. It may seem that every time someone offers you a hand up, they just let go and slip further down. But you must stop being so pessimistic, Hannah, and learn to trust those around you. So, I do, one more time (Asher 145).

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, particularly the concept of repression, can be applied to Hannah Baker's thoughts. Repression occurs when a thought, memory, or feeling is too painful for an individual, so the individual unconsciously pushes the information out of consciousness and becomes unaware of its existence. The repressed thought may still affect their behaviour, but the person who repressed the thought is completely unaware of its existence or

effect. In Freudian terms, Hannah's experiences of betrayal, loss of trust, and the invasion of privacy might lead to the repression of painful memories and emotions. These repressed thoughts may resurface in various ways, impacting Hannah's mental state and interpersonal relationships. Reflecting on Hannah's struggles finding difficulties to trust others after getting hurt through out particularly after this scene indicates that previous events are starting to unknowingly influence her actions now. Repression emphasis on the unconscious mind and the impact of past experiences on Hannah's present behaviour.

The seventh person in the list was Zach Dempsey a fellow classmate of her Peer Communications class. "After feeling more and more like an outcast, Peer Communications was my safe haven at school" (155). Zach was initially portrayed as someone who showed kindness to Hannah during these class times. However, he later betrayed her trust by stealing the "positive notes" where students anonymously leave comforting and positive notes on each other's bags. During this time, she was feeling low and started considering about being tired of her life and the town she lived in.

"Maybe it didn't seem like a big deal to you Zack, but now I hope you understand. My world was collapsing. I needed those notes. I needed any hope those notes might have offered. And you... You took that hope away. You decided I didn't deserve to have it." (165). She shouted at him in the hallway in front of everyone, expressing her building frustration and annoyance -

"I screamed that word over and over again. Tears, finally spilling over, ran down on my face. Why? Why, Zach?" (169) when others said and thought she was yelling at Zach for no apparent reasons. *Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) by Cathy Caruth highlights the

recurrent and delayed character of trauma, where the mind finds it difficult to completely understand the upsetting experiences. Hannah may have been unconsciously reliving the agony brought on by Zach's acts, as evidenced by her uncontrollably crying and yelling out of control. Caruth would contend that the prolonged silence and the incessant "Why?" questions show the difficulties in putting the experience behind them and in finding closure. The range of feelings that Hannah experienced shows how deeply rooted the events which are in her mind, highlighting the complex and long-lasting nature of her emotional pain.

Hannah tried to bring up her struggles for topic suggestions in an anonymous note to her teacher for the section. "Suicide. It's something I've been thinking about. Not too seriously, but I have been thinking about it." But students dismissed the thoughts expressed in an annoyed tone, with one of them suggesting that if the person were serious, they would have revealed their identity. She wanted someone to stop her from taking her own life, leaving everything behind in this world including her sufferings.

In the context of Judith Herman's studies in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) with complex trauma on this situation, illustrates the significant influence that social reactions have on a person's trauma experience. The above quote shows how Hannah encounters a disrespectful and unsupportive environment when she reaches out for assistance through an anonymous note about her troubles. Herman expresses the significance of the community's concerned and understanding response, particularly when people are sharing thoughts about mental health and suicidal thoughts. She also highlights the desperation and isolation that can ensue when people's pleas for assistance are ignored or minimized in a social setting.

The eighth person in the list was Ryan Shaver, another fellow classmate of her. He

betrayed Hannah's trust by publishing her personal and heartfelt poem in the school's literary magazine without her consent. It made her embarrassed after other students recited it by mocking her poem. This breach of privacy and the exposure of her innermost deep thoughts make her question her trust over others.

The ninth person in the list is the other main protagonist Clay Jensen. She acknowledges that Clay was different because he genuinely cared about her. They shared a kiss at a party but without any apparent reason she suddenly screamed at Clay to leave her alone which made him walk out the room. During the kiss they shared, Hannah found herself in a situation that triggered flashbacks to her first kiss with Justin Foley. She had anticipated that moment to be sweet and beautiful, but it backfired, leading to a decline in her reputation and a negative impact on her image which made her push away and let go of Clay.

This situation reflects on Sigmund Freud's repetition compulsion. Repetition compulsion or trauma re-enactment involves unconsciously recreating early trauma. Someone experiencing this compulsion repeats emotionally or physically painful situations. Hannah unconsciously repeats negative patterns from past traumas, which were linked to her past experience with Justin Foley in the first tape, where she mentioned her beautiful moment with him. This ended up getting her into trouble and humiliation when he embarrassed her in front of other students. The anticipation of a positive moment, which was tied to betrayal or disappointment in the past, led Hannah to push Clay away to prevent herself from getting hurt after experiencing a good moment together. Freud's idea suggests that people may recreate situations to unconsciously address unresolved emotions from the past with Justin Foley which she experienced the exact same scene that was currently happening with Clay. But the aftermath with Justin Foley which caused his betrayal and humiliation in front of others, suddenly pulled through her instinct which

made her push clay away without thinking telling him to go away by unconsciously addressing her unresolved emotions with Justin Foley in the past.

Hannah starts talking about the next event that had a major impact on her the same night. She witnesses Justin Foley bringing his unconscious girlfriend, Jessica Davis, into the room, followed by Bryce Walker. Despite Justin's initial resistance, he allows Bryce to enter.

In that brief moment, the moment you said nothing, I fell on my knees, sick, covering my mouth with both hands. I stumbled towards the closet, tears blurring the light from the hall. And when I collapsed into the closet, a pile of jackets into the closet. When the bedroom opened, I pulled the closet doors shut and I shut my eyes tight. Blood pounded in my ears. I rocked back and forth, beating my forehead into the pile of jackets. But with the bass pumping throughout the house, no one heard me (Asher 226)

Hannah's emotional distress in this can be analyzed using Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. By suggesting that traumatic experiences can resurface in unexpected ways, where the mind struggles to fully process and understand distressing events. In this instance, Hannah's delayed reaction and intense emotional response parallels with Caruth's idea that trauma resurfaces, disrupting one understanding of reality. "I wish I didn't ruin that girl's life. But I did. At the very least, I helped. And so did you. No, you're right. You didn't rape her. And I didn't rape her. He did. But you....and.... I...we let it happen. It's our fault." (231)

In *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman discusses how bystanders, even if they are not directly involved in committing harm, by witnessing a ruthless situation happening to Jessica who used to be her close friend, can experience guilt and responsibility for not preventing or intervening to happen after the traumatic event. In the context of what Hannah expressed, there's

a shared sense of responsibility and guilt for not taking action to prevent the rape. This guilt can be part of the general trauma response, affecting the person's mental and emotional well-being, making her mentally more miserable.

At the party, Jenny Kurtz the tenth person in the list, a cheerleader, offers Hannah a ride home. They end up in a car accident where Jenny knocks down a stop sign. Despite Hannah's attempts to confront her, Jenny laughs it off and tells Hannah to get out of the car to avoid getting caught by the police, leading to a fatal accident involving a senior from their school to die. "And once again, I could have stopped it.... Somehow" (246). "And what did I do? For the first time, I thought about my own funeral" (248). Hannah's ideas could be interpreted as a kind of subconscious expression from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic views, exposing her internal struggles and unsolved psychological tensions. She may be metaphorically represent her inner battles with identity, belonging, and the effects of trauma on her sense of self by thinking about her own burial.

Hannah became emotional and her regret grew when she realized Jenny had never reported the broken stop sign. Mood, behaviour, and thought processes can all be impacted by emotional distress, which is defined by strong feelings like grief or anxiety. As a coping mechanism, people may turn to friends, family, or professional assistance. Both instances where Hannah regretted failing to prevent these events are examples of secondary trauma a condition in which she felt distressed after indirectly experiencing or seeing painful events and regretted not being able to stop them.

One evening when Hannah Baker takes a walk around the streets, she comes onto a get-together by the pool for some of her high school peers, such as Courtney Crimsen. Hannah

presents Bryce Walker, the eleventh person on her list, who was once perceived as a rapist of Jessica Davis. Hannah accepts the offer to accompany them even though she is mindful of Bryce's acts and the trauma the two have caused. However, when Courtney leaves, it provides an opportunity for Bryce Walker to sexually assault Hannah Baker where he mentions "Remember when you were a freshman. Weren't you on that list? Best ass in that list" (264). Judith Herman's concept of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) emphasizes the profound and multifaceted effects of sexual assault on an individual's well-being and psychological state. The concept referred here is an impact of traumatic events on an individual's sense of safety and integrity, particularly focusing on the sexual assault. In this context, the assault made by Bryce Walker adds another layer of trauma to Hannah's experiences, as it involves a violation of her bodily autonomy and personal boundaries. The aftermath of sexual violence often involves complex emotions and struggles with self-blame, shame, and a range of psychological distress, all of which are aspects Herman has explored in her work on *Trauma and Recovery* (1992). Hannah constantly blamed herself for getting involved in the bad deeds.

Finally, the thirteenth person of the list Mr. Porter, Hannah's Guidance Counsellor. Hannah goes to talk about her problems and seek help from him. In the encounter with Mr. Porter, there is a notable lack of empathy and understanding from him, contributing to Hannah's sense of isolation and despair. But he tried to confront her by giving her two options "One, you can confront him. We can call him in here to discuss what happened at this party. I can call you both off.... Or two, and I am not trying to be blunt here Hannah, but you can move on" (278). That's when Hannah makes her final decision to leave the room when Mr. Porter tries to confront her further.

Mr. Porter's failure to intervene when Hannah leaves the room highlights the shortcomings of the school's support system, as he presents her with limited options and fails to provide the necessary support. His response aligns with Judith Herman's emphasis on the significance of a supportive environment for trauma survivors. Using Herman's framework, the encounter with Mr. Porter reflects the failure of the system to respond effectively to Hannah's needs, further deepening her emotional distress which eventually leads to her final decision to she commit suicide.

In the end of the story, it becomes apparent that Hannah Baker's experience aligns with complex trauma. Complex trauma refers to a series of traumatic events that take place over a long period of time, like months or years. Hannah endured numerous painful experiences that persisted over time, causing significant emotional distress. These experiences, including betrayal and harassment, left her feeling sad and anxious, profoundly affecting her mental health. She struggled to form and maintain relationships as a result of this ongoing pain. The lack of help or understanding from authority figures, such as Mr. Porter, intensified her feelings of isolation and hopelessness. The complex trauma she faced, resulting from these distressing events, had a profound impact on her mental well-being. This accumulation of difficult experiences, combined with a lack of support, played a crucial role in her decision to take her own life, highlighting how enduring prolonged and repetitive distress can deeply affect someone's ability to cope and their mental health.

Conclusion

This paper explored trauma studies and its impact on the character of Hannah Baker in the novel *13 Reasons Why* (2008) through the concepts of three prominent theorists Cathy Caruth, Judith Lewis Herman, and Sigmund Freud. Chapter one explored their numerous concepts - Caruth's notion of the unclaimed experience, Herman's complex trauma, and Freud's theories on repetitive compulsion and repression. These theoretical concepts laid a strong groundwork for grasping trauma and its effects from the field of trauma studies.

Building upon this theoretical groundwork, the second chapter examined Hannah's character through the concepts of trauma studies and its concepts from Chapter one. With a detailed analysis of Hannah's experiences and reactions in each situation, it was shown how trauma can manifest in a person and impact their lives in various ways. By applying the theories of Caruth, Herman, and Freud to Hannah's story, valuable insights were gained into the complex nature of trauma and its lasting effects on individuals.

From the first person among the thirteen people on the list, Justin Foley, to the last person, Mr. Porter, it was discussed how the involvement of these individuals in her life negatively affected her well-being, especially her mental health. The continuous distress and the effects of trauma from the events that took place over a span of time led her to take her own life.

The various incidents of betrayal, harassment, and assault contributed to the cumulative impact of complex trauma on her mental well-being. Through the exploration of different aspects of trauma, it becomes apparent that these experiences, when piled up over time, overwhelmed Hannah's ability to cope. Hannah Baker tried to make sense of and internalize the pain, emotional turmoil, mental and physical assaults, and the difficulties associated with betrayal and

trust issues in her life. She tried to cope with these overwhelming experiences by seeking understanding and, at times, attempting to suppress the intense emotions they brought about.

The lack of understanding and support from authority figures and peers alike such as her teacher further intensified her sense of isolation and despair. The people whom she trusted and loved turning against her for trivial reasons continuously were damaging her mental well-being over time. This also led her to unknowingly avoid others from getting more hurt by staying quiet about her problems, not wanting to burden them. She either didn't simply trust anyone enough to open up about her problems, or she waited until she confided in the one person she thought would help her, Mr. Porter her guidance counsellor, also disappointed her by asking her to move on without providing any other solutions. He failed to acknowledge her concerns and reassure her that everything would be alright by not speaking out against the people who abused her.

Hannah's story serves as a sad reminder of the intense effects of increasing trauma on an individual's mental health, ultimately leading to her tragic decision to take her own life. Understanding someone who has experienced trauma and isolation involves listening without judgment, acknowledging their pain, and offering empathetic support. It's important to create a safe and trusting environment, be patient, and provide assistance through professional help and resources. This analysis underscores the importance of empathy, support, and intervention in addressing the complexities of trauma and fostering a more compassionate understanding of those who may be silently struggling.

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