

**RACHEL, THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR IN PAULA HAWKINS' *THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN* AS FACILITATING THE NARRATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER**

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Paula Hawkins is a British writer best known for her novel *The Girl on the Train*. (2015) The narrative emphasises on alcoholism, domestic violence, and drug abuse. The work has autobiographical elements and is set in London where Hawkins used to travel in train to her work place. “There are familiar faces on these trains, people I see every week, to and fro. I recognize them and they probably recognize me. I don’t know whether they see me, though for what I really am”. (Hawkins 15)

Rachel, who travelled through the same way every day, is the thrust of the narrative. During her commutation, she rattles down the same railway track and watched a series of suburban homes. Her train always stopped at the signal, which allowed Rachel to witness the same couple having breakfast on their table. The commute has become so much repetitive that Rachel has begun to think that she knew them very closely. “I have never understood how people can blithely disregard the damage they do by following their hearts”. (31)

One day when she had only a minute left for the train to resume its journey from the signal, she witnessed something unusual with the couple Jeff and Jason. She found it difficult to keep it to her what she had seen and decided to take the help of police. She told them everything and also asked them to take immediate action. She had a great struggle to deal with the disappearance of the young lady. With her involvement in the case, she became a part of it and also got entwined in the happenings that are about to take place as well as in the lives of all those are already involved in the case, Rachel began to doubt her actions and wondered whether she had done good or bad by informing the police about the case.

Plot devices like unreliable narrator and first person narration are apt in the delineation of a psychological thriller where stream of consciousness technique also facilitate. Rachel Watson the central protagonist narrator among the three, here often has a conflict with her own mind while attempting to determine the reality. Hawkins here highlights how society is structured in such a way as to abandon women whenever they face need. How Rachel who had a drinking problem and overweighed was abandoned by her husband for another woman. Thus she was not a lady who conformed to the traditional role of femininity and was not able to take care of herself. Rachel became a drunkard when she was unable to meet the societal demand of becoming a mother. Society is not ready to accept a lady who struggles with unemployment, infertility, abuse and addiction because of not conforming to societal expectations.

Besides the primary narrator Rachel: Megan and Anna are women who survived Tom’s abuse and developed pattern of addiction and faced struggle to cope up with the abuse. In the end, Hawkins suggests that many women turn to harmful, isolating patterns of addiction and dependency as a reaction to emotional, psychological, and physical abuse by weaving the stories of three women who are battling various emotional and physiological dependencies.

Although Rachel's drinking is the book's most evident addiction, Hawkins also demonstrates how Megan and Anna's unusual dependencies—though they are not chemical addictions—come to define their lives as a result of repeated mistreatment. Megan initially tries to get away from memories of being abused and mistreated by a former lover, Mac, when she starts an affair with Tom.

The narrative does not discuss how alcoholism affects people's memory or reliability. Instead, drunkenness serves as a metaphor for the universal truth that memories are famously fallible. Most people may encounter a circumstance where they recall an event differently than another person at some point, which frequently results in a dispute over who is speaking the truth. However, just

because two people have differing recollections of the same event does not imply that one is speaking the truth and the other is lying. Memory is a subjective experience that is influenced by a person's emotional and psychological state.

Rachel's self-image is just as shattered as her memory since she either can't remember her behaviours or can't remember them accurately. She is erratic and doubtful of herself to the point where she distrusts herself, which leads her to believe she might have been involved in Megan's disappearance.

Although the novel shows how memories are distorted and broken, this does not mean that all memories are equally true. In actuality, Tom's fake memories that he implanted in Rachel's gaps during her blackouts are what caused her mistrust of her own memory. This is an example of gas lighting, a type of emotional abuse when the abuser seeks to make the victim doubt their perception of reality and their memories of it, denies any wrongdoing, and instead places the responsibility on the victim, leading to the victim's total reliance on the abuser.

When she regained her recollection of both what happened in the subway and throughout her marriage, she discovered that she did not have an ideal marriage but rather that she wed an abusive man. Her past and future came back under her control.

Rachel searched her shattered memories for clues. She overcame her emotional dependence, eventually rejected victimisation, and regained control of her life after realising the truth about her abusive marriage to Tom. She then emerged as the strongest female character in the book. Despite her weaknesses, she is morally upright and compassionate.

Rachel has the mental state of a despondent woman experiencing a psychological setback. She had a nuanced personality and is untrustworthy. Second, from her own perspective, she was a divorcee who was extremely depressed over her infertility and a failed marriage. She also had a terrible life because she lost her lover figure after the death of her father. She yearned for what she perceived as a fulfilling suburban family life and was yearning to matter and be useful. Others, though, view her as a dangerous stalker who may resort to violence.

Rachel tried to recall the events of Megan's disappearance night. Her drinking issues cause her to have blackouts, which kept her from realising the lies Tom told her throughout their marriage and from discovering who killed Megan. In contrast, Rachel and Megan both suffered from the reluctance to let go of memories from prior relationships.

Tom proved to be a greedy and cunning spouse. He was a master of deception and a great liar. He gave Rachel the impression that their divorce was entirely her fault, he portrayed Rachel to the police as a deranged stalker, and he pushed both Anna and Rachel to extremes. Later, Anna discovered his liaison with Megan. The two women then started to distrust him on the appropriate basis and discovered that he killed Megan while she was carrying his unborn child.

He had this look on his face of shock, of hurt. I wanted to say to her, It's no good, you won't be able to help him now, but then I realized she wasn't trying to stop the bleeding. She was making sure. Twisting the corkscrew in further and further, rippling into his throat, and all the time she was talking to him, softly, softly. I couldn't hear what she was saying. (316)

Readers' unexplored sides are revealed through psychological suspense books, a strength that is especially well-suited to dissecting stereotypical behaviour and repressive social norms. The tale explores the psychological struggles and pitfalls that modern women must overcome. A thriller can utilise the norms of this genre by utilising our presumptions about how women should and should behave to conjure up shocking story twists or by taking these presumptions to their logical conclusion.

Hawkins mostly employed the time jumps to build suspense, frequently allowing the reader to understand events from Rachel's perspective before they occurred to Megan or Anna. While the inquiry was ongoing in Rachel and Anna's present time, Megan's narration began a year before her

disappearance and eventually educated readers about her murderer. The main tension in this mystery book is brought up by the effects of drinking.

Although Rachel saw important details concerning Megan's murder, she was unable to recall them because of her blackout. Beyond Rachel's drinking, Anna and Megan also choose to drink when they were feeling unhappy. In general, alcohol is depicted as both the source and the outcome of unfavourable circumstances. Hawkins' extraordinary comprehension of the boundaries of human knowledge and the extent to which memory and imagination can diverge is what truly makes the narrative wonderful. The effective storytelling is aided by Rachel, the unreliable narrator.

### **Works Cited**

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