



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Childhood Traumas versus Marital Dilemmas: A Feminine Psychological Analysis of Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train***

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**ABSTRACT**

The article delves into the intricate exploration of marital conflicts within Paula Hawkins' psychological thriller *The Girl on the Train* (2015) by utilizing Karen Horney's theory of Feminine Psychology as a guiding framework. The psychological trauma of Rachel Watson, the female protagonist, becomes pivotal in unraveling the complexities of her failed marriage. The qualitative research method of research is used to dissect the traumatic events leading to the dissolution of the marriage and the subsequent aftermath. Through the lens of Horney's theory which challenges traditional Freudian perspectives on female psychology, the research sheds light on the profound effects of societal gender biases and objectification. By exploring how Rachel Watson copes with the aftermath of her failed marriage, the study provides insight into the individual's journey of self-discovery and resilience, and contributes to a deeper understanding of the female psyche, marriage dynamics, and societal influences on woman's role in a relationship.

**Keywords:** Feminine Psychology, Murder Mystery, Psychological Thriller, Traumas

**Introduction**

Through ages, literature has provided valuable insights into the lives of diverse individuals within society, spanning various periods. It encompasses both those integrated into society and those who faced exclusion or marginalization. Marriage is a beautiful blessing, representing a sacred bond shared by two individuals. Marriage preparation centers around the couples' individual lives and their future life together. While it can be an enjoyable period of sharing and anticipation, it also requires sincere and open conversations about important matters. Over time, partners grow interdependent and begin relying on each other in all aspects of life. It is essentially a civil contract where men and women come together to support one another and create a family. However, there are instances when marriages lose the initial joy they once had, leading to their failure. Marriages have the potential to enrich spouses' lives and bring immense satisfaction, but they can also bring distress and strain, sometimes even causing harm. Indicators of a failed marriage include constant quarrels, accusations, and disrespectful comments between partners, leading to a breakdown in communication and the growth of dishonesty. Healthy marriages offer numerous benefits that unhealthy marriages miss out on, but stress can lead to their downfall. The main problems in marriages often stem from unresolved conflicts and stress, which can foster feelings of worry and hatred. When conflicts arise in a relationship, either one or both partners may respond negatively by engaging in behaviors such as nagging, complaining, creating emotional distance, or resorting to violence. These responses often continue until the other partner gives in or until a harmful pattern is established, known as a coercive cycle. In this cycle, both partners contribute to and sustain the negative dynamics of the conflict (Bradbury et al, 2001, p. 22). These negative emotions can build up over time, leading to resentment, frustration, and eventually, hopelessness. In the present society, marriages without a solid foundation struggle to survive due to the prevailing immorality

and pervasive selfishness. The postmodern era places significant emphasis on the idea of 'Me First' in marriages, which poses a challenge for their longevity. Furthermore, many issues in marital life arise from unidentified factors, making them difficult to resolve since their origin remains unknown to the partners.

Paula Hawkins (1972- )' *The Girl on the Train* (2015) presents a remarkable female protagonist whose psychological disorder caused a disturbance in her married life. Being well aware of the psychology of women, which is very complex and oftentimes very hard to understand, Hawkins creates distrust as well as passion in her narrative, pulling the curtain back to expose both dark truths and domestic pleasures and finding a way to justify her female character, her roles and her duties in society.

There was a time when women were considered flawed in reality and their sense of imperfection took birth from the so-called construct of their sexual inabilities. It was thought that women wished to do everything like men because of their assumed sexual incapacities. This could be more clearly explained as their being jealous of not having the penis. The reason behind this line of thought was the proposal presented by Sigmund Freud, the father of the psychoanalytical movement.

Freud first invented the term penis envy and defined it as the sexual inability of women, which is demonstrated in all their actions. It also suggests that women become emotional and anxious when their wish for becoming men cannot be satisfied. Women feel resentful for all the things that men gain. This jealousy starts sexually in childhood when a female observes that she is deprived of having a penis, which her brother has. For more than 150 years, this theory had been accepted without question, and women had tolerated much of the thought that had spread as a cultural norm. This belief was challenged by some brilliant female psychologists in the early twentieth century. They challenged Freud's theory by supporting the fact that Freud was the hostage of his civilization and his times and what he had put forward about his theory could be clarified as something that had its roots in the societal circumstance of his era. In the nineteenth century, women were surviving in a society where they were considered the 'other'; they were marginalized, living an oppressive life and under a lot of restrictions. In that type of setup, whenever women tried to free themselves and challenge the dominant culture, they were strongly refused and mocked for acting like men. This scenario was defined as 'penis envy,' and all sentiments and feelings linked to them were criticized as irrational conduct, which was supposed to be a natural thing linked with them.

Many psychologists have contributed to the field of feminist psychology; one of them is Karen Horney. Contemporary psychoanalytical theories seem to have a greater interest in the work of Karen Horney. In her time, Horney had left a huge footprint in two core fields: one is called feminine psychology, and the other is referred to as the field of introducing cultural factors to psychoanalytic theory. She was significant for raising her voice against patriarchal theories, especially against Freud's theory and his views about women. This challenge began to grow in many fields, which include the roots of the sexuality of women, penis envy in women, the Oedipus complex, and the absence of highlighting motherhood along with perceived degradation within Freud's theories. However, the questions Horney raised in contrast to Freud's points are significant to her legacy and apply to the literature's recent work on gender analysis; possibly, Karen's theory exposes hidden thoughts about introducing how women are observed through social and political factors and how they are regarded under them. Sociology and especially Georg Simmel's work influenced Horney in such a way that she attempted to present his work into her psychoanalytic lexicon study and succeeded; thus, this attempt in her psychoanalytical study allowed her to assimilate intrapsychic and traditional contributions. In essence, this study helped her criticize Freudian thoughts about women.

Radically, Horney uncovered the prejudices and phallogocentric interpretations of that time, which backed up the innumerable theoretical assumptions. She was able to express explicitly how it was in patriarchal society's interest to admit and reinforce specific opinions about women and their progression. Horney suggested that the psychoanalytic theory of that time only focused on the reality of men's lives and their experiences expressed from the male point of view rather than conveyed by females' experiences of their femininity. Hence, Horney not only challenged specific theoretical points of Freud's theory, like criticizing whether penis envy was primarily or secondarily biological, or whether it was relevant to real-life events. Rather, she put forward a new way of thinking in psychoanalysis that not only focused on intrapsychic dynamics but also on cultural and political views that play crucial roles.

Horney's metanarratives introduced different ways to think and talk about both genders within the sphere of psychoanalysis, ways in which the psyche of both men and women is understood to be influenced by numerous factors such as biology, childhood events, imagination, society, and politics. In the twenty-first century, Horney's novel idea is also applicable. Though Horney's thoughts were undoubtedly the creation of the time and society she was living in, without apparent conflict, many positivists and essentialists claim that her ideas correspond with present information related to contemporary postmodern theory and feminist thinking and that she got those ideas by deconstructing Freudian theory regarding women, culture, and society. Horney was deeply entrenched in Freudian views when she started working on feminine psychology. Eventually, her thoughts started to deviate from Freudian thoughts, although her essays' etymology and theoretical presumptions read like Freud's. By keeping the same kind of biological and anatomical constructs and metaphors in the discussion of masculine and feminine progression, Horney was simultaneously attacking them.

Karen Horney performed an outstanding work to show that situations like neurosis which occur in women are not necessarily because of the origin of sexuality but are generated by the environmental surroundings of a person. She thinks that neurosis is a mutual state that is present in all individuals, a condition of a human being who is trying to live his or her life. Particularly, all humans have a neurotic corner in them. It only comes forth as a medical condition when the external surroundings overcome humans and their coping mechanisms fail to get it into its place. Further, Karen Horney answered the theory of 'penis envy' by suggesting a counter theory known as 'womb envy'. This theory states that men feel incapable of themselves because they are lacking the natural creative abilities found in women who are blessed by the gift of creating life given by nature. This might be the reason behind the running of men around the world trying to be resourceful and reproductive. Feminine psychology relates to the psychology of the female; it contains the study of the female as a human species and the psychological explanations of the concerns that females meet in their lives. Gender studies help us comprehend and understand gender differences and differences assigned to genders by society over time. Furthermore, gender studies also help people acknowledge the gender bias that is present in culture. Feminine Psychology also elaborates on the gender bias that is represented in old psychological theories and proposes contemporary theories to argue over those biases and transmit new thinking. Hysteria and neurosis-related work are chiefly significant in this respect.

### Literature Review

Researchers have explored the feministic and psychological aspects of *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins. They have analyzed the complex female characters and their challenges to traditional gender roles, as well as the novel's portrayal of trauma and addiction.

In Muthuselvam's view *The Girl on the Train* portrays that women are used mainly to quench the male thirst. The protagonist and the antagonist in the text, Tom, betrays the

three main female characters, Rachel, Megan and Anna. Tom leaves his wife, Rachel, after she loses her sexual arousal. The novel provides many events which show Tom as a dominant character. He is clever and smart in all his acts to make women fall in love with him. The character of Rachel shows how female characters are suppressed. Trains are influential symbols for motion. Since the Industrial Revolution started, trains have been under use to move people and cargo from corner to corner. On the opposite side, in the novel *The Girl on the Train*, Rachel attempts to improve her life on a dissimilar track in all of her tricky circumstances. However, she turned into a killer only because of Tom, his brutal attitude and dominant nature (Muthuselvam, 2017, p. 130).

According to Nadiyah Khaleda, Rachel Watson has a conspicuous personality like imaginative because she keeps herself busy imagining other people lives; she becomes alcoholic because she drinks way too much, and she speaks nothing but lies so she can be called a liar. Her personality shapes the ways she overcomes her needs. Rachel tries to fulfil her two different needs at the same time. It is possible because an individual's behaviour is affected not only by one pair of needs but also by some or all the basic needs that emerge simultaneously. Rachel, as one of the main characters of the novel, is already being fulfilled by the first step of the hierarchy of needs or physiological needs. One of the physiological needs is the accessibility of food and drinks at her place. After losing her love and belonging needs, Rachel also lost her safety needs. After separating from Tom, Rachel thinks no one will look after her. That happens because Rachel feels safe around Tom and considers him her protector. In Rachel's view, Tom saved her from grief after her dad died (Hawkins, 2015, p. 75). Rachel's safety seems to be fulfilled by watching Scott Hipwell from the train window. She thinks of him as built, strong and protective; these adjectives show the person Rachel craves. To deal with her loneliness, Rachel drinks a lot but manages to fulfil her needs. Hence, Rachel can fulfil Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs up until the third phase of love and belonging needs (Khaleda, 2017, p. 28).

Janis et al in their article "Marriage Conflict in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*" record that marriage is a ceremony of binding two people and it is observed to be a crucial period in the human life cycle. Marriage comes with conflicts that occur because of misunderstanding and should not be allowed to go on; there must be an effort to resolve conflicts that harm married lives and should be avoided. Conflicts that are not resolved appropriately will have disastrous and long-term effects on the lives of married couples and other family members. The authors created research linked to marriage conflicts in Paula Hawkins's narrative. *The Girl on the Train* tells the significance of negative thinking shown in the character of Tom, who became very selfish and a man who was never satisfied with his wives; he destroyed his own marriages by hurting himself and others (Janis, et al., 2019, p. 75).

Aditi Gupta said that women were assigned only two chief roles in the field of crime fiction- either the victim or femme fatale. *The Girl on the Train* portrays the victimization of the female characters in existing society. The text's protagonist, Rachel Watson, is shown as a target of emotional and psychological violence from her husband, Tom, who further tries to hurt her physically. On the other side, Anna and Megan are primarily presented as femme fatales who tempted Tom and were both having an illicit relationship with him, hence refusing the Other, traditionally given role by the masculine society. Later in the text, they both are shown to be the victims of Tom's emotional and mental violence, and Megan turns out to be the ultimate victim when he kills her. Victimization becomes a means of restating patriarchal orders. Likewise, in the novel, all three female characters, Rachel, Megan, and Anna blame themselves for the abuse they encountered by Tom in common and by other men as well as separately. They thus accepted the role of the victimization allocated to them by patriarchal society (Gupta, 2020, p. 353).

Vijay P and Vijayakumar M record that *The Girl on the Train* deals with domestic abuse, Rachel as the forsaken infertile woman, the sexual abuse of Megan, and finally, Rachel

as a supernova character. The text ascribes identity loss and Rachel's struggle to regain it. At the end of the novel, she is able to acknowledge that all the problems that happen in her life are caused by her ex-husband, Tom. This is a way to teach the society to offer some support to women. Since this unchanging world overlooks and zones out feelings of women and appoints women in their houses as house cleaners, the dominant men shamelessly take them under control and treat them as paramours to accomplish their sexual desires (Jay and Kumar, 2022, p. 275).

### **Material and Methods**

This study utilizes the methods of qualitative research in addressing the research questions. The methodology involved uses a descriptive approach to achieve its goal. Besides that, the study also makes use of feminist psychological theories and writers to support its claims. Feminine psychology is an eminent and prominent methodology suitable to acknowledge and realize the discrimination and objectification of women throughout the centuries. Furthermore, the study employs existing criticism to express the arguments presented in the thesis. The original text of the novel is the primary source for the study. The views of several critics, published books, journals, and reviews on the topic are the secondary sources through which the focus of this research is underscored.

### **Results and Discussion**

In the seventh chapter of her book *Feminine Psychology* (1967), Karen Horney delves into the rarity of good marriages. She examines the contemporary arguments against selecting partners based on psychological factors and highlights how generalized notions hinder the growth potential of partners. Horney asserts that the idealized notion of marriage has become an illusion, fading away as modern generations struggle to provide it with the necessary substance. Rachel's story highlights the contemporary arguments against choosing partners based solely on external factors and underscores the importance of delving deeper into psychological compatibility to establish a more meaningful and enduring connection. Her experiences serve as a reminder that lasting and fulfilling relationships often require a thoughtful consideration of psychological factors beyond surface appearances. Horney's exploration of reasons behind failed marriages is reflected in her words: "The routine of prolonged living with the same person makes for tiresome and boring relations in general, and especially in sex" (Horney, 1967, p. 119). This sentiment is evident in the novel's portrayal of Rachel Watson during therapy, where she attributes the failure of her marriage to her husband's infidelity. He fell in love with another woman, highlighting the wearisome nature of prolonged relationships. Karen Horney further connects low self-esteem to trauma, suggesting that women often perceive themselves as more coherent in their aspirations than they truly are. This self-perception arises from an unconscious awareness that internal contradictions serve as a warning to their personalities or lives. Horney indicates that individuals grappling with emotional instability are more susceptible to these inner conflicts.

Emotional instability in Rachel's life resulted in her low self-esteem when she placed the blame for her failed marriage on herself. She believed that everything that went wrong in her life was due to her own mistakes. This belief led her to turn her life into a living hell, making it unbearable for anyone to endure, and consequently, her husband left her. She confided in her therapist, revealing that she had turned to alcohol after her miscarriage, which drove her husband away and caused him to stop loving her. She attributed her drinking habit as the sole reason behind the failure of her marriage.

Seeing one's own marriage lose its spirit and liveliness due to the repetitive and unexciting routine of everyday life is just a primary start of underlying issue (Horney, 1967, p. 119). Rachel felt bad about crying in front of her husband and did not understand why she could not hide her feelings. She realized that talking about real things was tough, so she

ended up making up fake problems and pretending to be someone else during those talks. She started thinking that her husband might get bored and see their routine as dull if she showed her weaknesses. She felt bad for looking at her husband and briefly believing that he understood her pain. Her husband, Tom, looked at her like he really understood her pain, not just felt sorry for her. She thought he wanted to support her, as marriage means understanding and being there for each other. But she did not expect that when she needed him most, he might be thinking of leaving her. This all shows that there was more going on beneath the surface in her relationship.

***Illusion of independence.*** If, perhaps, a husband clings to the illusion that he is not dependent on anyone and he has the freedom to do anything he wants, he will start to react with secret bitterness to his feeling needed and tied down by his wife. On the other hand, when the wife senses her husband's suppressed rebellion, she will react with hidden anxiety unless she loses him, and then out of this anxiety her demands from him will instinctively increase. The husband reacts to this with heightened sensitivity and defensiveness until finally the explosion that had been underlying for so much time will burst on an insignificant occasion (Horney, 1967, p. 120). In the text, Rachel's efforts to avoid invading her husband's privacy and her desire to trust him were in line with the notion of a husband's discomfort with feeling tied down. Her intention not to snoop or catch her husband doing anything wrong reflected her respect for his freedom. The incident where she answered his phone call, despite her innocent intentions, triggered his defensiveness and accusation of mistrust. This interaction illustrates the growing tension between them, a tension that eventually culminated in the revelation of her husband's affair, emphasizing the hidden turmoil within their relationship.

***Trauma.*** Rachel's deep sadness and ongoing struggle with depression can be connected with her difficulty in having a child. Depression is like a prolonged feeling of sadness that can last for a long time, much like Rachel's struggle with infertility that went on for weeks, months, and more. Just as depression comes and goes, Rachel's emotions also fluctuate as she tried to conceive. Her visits to doctors and attempts at treatments to have a child reflect her determination to overcome both her infertility and her depression. The constant questions from others about having a child added to her distress, just as depression can be worsened by outside factors. Rachel's feeling of being trapped by depression mirrors how she felt trapped by her infertility situation. Both situations had a big impact on her life, causing physical and emotional pain:

Over time, their inability to have children became a topic deemed suitable for Sunday lunch conversations, not just between Tom and them, but for others as well. They discussed their efforts, the guidance they received, and even casual comments like doubting that second glass of wine. Despite Rachel's young age and the promising future ahead, a feeling of inadequacy enveloped her like a burdensome shroud, submerging her in hopelessness until she ultimately let go of hope. (Hawkins, 2015, p. 111)

The passage above illustrates how those around Rachel would question her about becoming pregnant, even though she believed she had plenty of time ahead to start a family and still felt youthful. She noticed that others of her age were already parents, and this constant reminder of her failure to conceive began to weigh heavily upon her, leading her into a state of depression. Adding to her distress was the fact that her husband seemed unenthusiastic about becoming a father, which further contributed to her emotional turmoil. Depressed Rachel started to feel lonely and initiated drinking alcohol to bear with her melancholy.

Following her divorce from a deeply cherished relationship, Rachel's once orderly existence rapidly deteriorated into disarray. Engaging in purposeless activities, like aimlessly riding trains without a designated destination, became her norm. Her once-cohesive personality became a jumbled puzzle. An alarming incident at her workplace,

where she was noticed arriving intoxicated, led to her prompt dismissal by her boss. Whenever confronted with overwhelming and uncontrollable misfortunes, Rachel sought solace in alcohol to alleviate the weight of her burdened existence. This coping mechanism drained her financial resources, leaving her destitute. Tragically, her reliance on alcohol led to the erosion of her close friendships and cherished familial bonds, as her consistent drunkenness and propensity for deceit drove loved ones away.

**Self-contradictory desires.** The desires commonly inherent in man often reveal an inherent contradiction. A carefree, playful, and assertive woman captivates his interest, embodying all that the first woman could not offer him. This internal conflict within his desires ultimately dismantles the sanctity of a relationship (Horney, 1967, p. 123). Rachel's husband openly disclosed his involvement with another woman who was initially drawn to him but eventually lost his appeal, exemplifying the tendency, as mentioned earlier, for men to engage with successive partners. This scenario is vividly portrayed in Tom's relationship with Megan which started as just a fun thing for him. But the moment that woman starts making demands, she becomes a burden and boredom for the man (Hawkins, 2015, p. 284).

As the spark diminishes in a marriage or an external influence enters, the primary cause behind a marriage's breakdown is the culmination of a gradual process. These outcomes stem from actions that partners often overlook, but these actions gradually cultivate a growing aversion towards one another. Surprisingly, the foundation of this aversion is less related to the frustrating attributes of a partner and more tied to unresolved conflicts carried into the marriage from previous experiences (Horney, 1967, p. 131). Rachel's husband, Tom, mirrors this concept when he introduces unresolved conflicts and negativity into their relationship. This gradually diminishes his interest and prompts him to consider ending his connection with Rachel, seeking a fresh start with someone else.

**Humiliation.** If a husband fails to meet his wife's sexual needs, it can significantly damage his sense of masculine self-assurance. This reaction, in turn, triggers an instinctive desire in him to belittle his wife and undermine her confidence (Horney, 1967, p. 127). During a period when Rachel was dealing with the emotional aftermath of a failed IVF session, Tom decided to embark on a four-night trip to Las Vegas to attend a major fight and relieve some pent-up stress. This choice clashed with Rachel's feelings, given the considerable expense and their emotional strain due to her infertility. A heated argument ensued between Rachel and her husband, although she had no recollection of the events the next morning due to her intoxicated state. Tom took advantage of her drinking habit, knowing it led to memory lapses. While the specifics of their intense disagreement remain unclear to Rachel, Tom informed her that during the altercation, she shattered their wedding frame and berated him, branding him a worthless spouse and accusing him of selfishness. This degradation inflicted upon Rachel led her to develop a strong self-loathing (Hawkins, 2015, p. 179).

Following each quarrel between Rachel and her husband, when her memories were clouded by alcohol and she struggled to discern the passage of time, Tom consistently held Rachel accountable. He manipulated her into believing she was at fault every single time. "I grew weary of waking up and apologizing without even comprehending what I was apologizing for. I believe he desired me to recognize the harm I was causing, the potential extent of my actions," Rachel reflected" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 62). Rachel had always thought that her infertility was the sole reason behind the separation between her and Tom. She had never given a single thought towards the dull monotony of their marriage. Boredom that his husband was facing because of her drinking habit and unfulfilment of his sexual desires made him leave Rachel. He was only searching for perfect timing to apply these inappropriate excuses onto Rachel and divorce her. "Everyone warned us about the in Vitro Fertilization that it would be unpleasant and unsuccessful. However, nobody told us that it would break us. Moreover, it did break us. Or rather, it broke me and I broke us" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 72). Tom shifted the blame for all of his own mistakes onto Rachel.

Hiding the truth and humiliating Rachel's self-confidence every time she tried to think about growing her family made her weak and unable to understand her actions. Rachel felt that she had no one to whom she could talk about her problems without being judged; the loneliness made her consume alcohol in order to forget her miseries. She started drinking alcohol from smaller to larger quantities whenever her mind started fighting with her heart. People left Rachel because she drank day and night. She found herself isolated within her own suffering. Paradoxically, her increasing solitude was exacerbated by her intoxicated state, since no one tended to enjoy the company of someone inebriated. She experienced loss and turned to alcohol, creating a cycle of defeat. The realization that since women were socially valued on the basis of their appearance and their roles as mothers, and she possessed neither conventional beauty nor the ability to bear children, left her grappling with a sense of insignificance (Hawkins, 2015, p. 40).

**Disappointment.** As per Karen Horney's perspective, the initial contentment experienced within marriage often gives way to subsequent disillusionment. While not necessarily evolving into outright aversion, this disillusionment can serve as a breeding ground for dislike, unless partners possess the exceptionally rare ability to embrace circumstances and take actions to salvage their marriage. Rachel frequently encounters profound disappointment in others whenever she witnesses instances of infidelity within relationships. On the morning of July 12, 2023, Rachel was taken aback when she discovered Jess engaging in an affair with another man, betraying her husband Jason. This unexpected revelation left Rachel grappling with disbelief, as she had never expected Jess to partake in such behavior, fueled by her belief that Jason did not deserve such treatment. "A genuine sense of disappointment washes over me. It is as though I have been cheated on. A recognizable ache envelops my chest. I have experienced this sensation before – on a larger scale, with more intensity, of course – but the essence of the pain remains vivid in my memory. It is not something you easily forget" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 26). Rachel's journey since her divorce with Tom has been extensive, which heightened her sensitivity to the pain of betrayal. In this instance, she perceived a strong resemblance between herself and Jason, as if she was reenduring the very agony she had sought to escape. On a separate occasion, while grappling with the reasons behind her husband's departure, Rachel encountered a profound sense of dismay and self-reproach, largely stemming from her incapability to conceive.

Maybe it was then. Maybe that was the moment when things started to go wrong, the moment when I imagined us no longer a couple, but a family; and after that, once I had that picture in my head, just the two of us could never be enough. Was it then that Tom started to look at me differently, his disappointment mirroring my own? After all he gave up for me, for the two of us to be together, I let him think he was not enough. (Hawkins, 2015, p. 46)

Breaking free from haunting past experiences is an arduous task, as these memories tend to linger relentlessly, casting a detrimental influence on both the mind and soul. However, there comes a point in Rachel's journey when she resolves to leave her past behind and embark on a fresh chapter without Tom. She shares, "I have made progress, particularly regarding the matter of having children. My perspective has evolved during my time on my own. Necessity compelled me to seek improvement. I have delved into literature and articles, coming to terms with the situation. There exist strategies, and there is hope. If I straighten myself out and regain sobriety, adopting becomes a plausible option" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 73). In her thirties, Rachel contemplated the essence of motherhood, considering that if the central essence lay in nurturing a child, then adoption could serve as a viable avenue if birthing a child was not feasible. She aspired to lead a life marked by simplicity and elegance, harboring a strong desire to be an exemplary wife and mother.



## Conclusion

Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* is a gripping psychological thriller that follows the story of Rachel, a woman struggling with alcoholism and the aftermath of a failed marriage. To cope with her problems, Rachel takes the train to London every day, observing the lives of the people living in the houses she passes on her journey. As the novel emerges, Rachel's own psychological demons begin to emerge. She is unable to remember parts of the night that Megan went missing and begins to question her own sanity. Her struggles with alcoholism also begin to affect her ability to be a reliable witness and her motives are called into question.

Hawkins is known for her ability to create unreliable narrators and explore the darker side of human nature, as seen in *The Girl on the Train*. Her characters are often complex, with deep-seated emotional issues that drive their actions. Hawkins is adept at crafting characters with relatable flaws and believable motivations, drawing the reader in and keeping them engaged until the very end. Both novelists also excel at crafting intricate plots with unexpected twists and turns. They create stories that keep the reader guessing, with a constant sense of suspense and tension. They are able to seamlessly weave together complex storylines and create intricate character arcs that are both engaging and thought-provoking.

Karen Horney's theory of feminine psychology focused on the impact of cultural and social factors on women's development and psychological health. According to Horney, women are often socialized to be submissive, dependent, and self-sacrificing, which can lead to a range of psychological issues, including low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Rachel's character exhibits a lack of agency and self-esteem, which may be related to societal expectations placed on women to conform to certain gender roles. She is portrayed as a woman who has failed to meet the cultural and social expectations of femininity, including being a successful wife and mother. Her inability to have children and her subsequent divorce may have contributed to her feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Furthermore, Rachel's dependence on men for validation and self-worth can also be linked to Horney's theory of feminine psychology. Horney believed that women are often socialized to seek love and approval from others, leading to a sense of dependence and insecurity in relationships. Rachel's attachment to her ex-husband Tom, and her subsequent obsession with his new wife, Anna, can be seen as a form of seeking validation and attention from men.

## Recommendations

By making a feminine psychological analysis of Rachel Watson's character, personality and the journey of her life, the study crystallizes how societal and cultural expectations can impact the way women approach their relationships and marriages. Women may feel pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, which can lead to a lack of agency and autonomy within the relationship. Additionally, women may prioritize the needs and desires of their partner and family over their own, leading to a sense of dissatisfaction and resentment. The failure of marriages can also be linked to a lack of emotional intimacy and communication within the relationship. Women may feel pressure to suppress their emotions and needs in order to conform to traditional gender roles, leading to a lack of emotional connection with their partner. Additionally, a lack of communication and a failure to address individual needs and desires within the relationship can lead to feelings of frustration and disconnection. Once a woman is able to transcend the boundaries set for her by the traditional gender roles, the mist can clear before her eyes enabling her to move forward on a journey of autonomy, resilience and freedom.

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