

Tribhuvan University

Conflict between Imagination and Reality in Paula Hawkins's

The Girl on the Train

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by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled, "Conflict between Imagination and Reality in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*" is my own original work carried out as a master's student at the department of English at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus except to the extent that assistance from others in the thesis/research/term paper's design and conception or in presentation style, and linguistic expression are duly acknowledged.

All sources used for the thesis paper have been fully and properly cited. It contains no material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at Tribhuvan University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis/research/term paper.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Conflict between Imagination and Reality in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*" submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus by Jwala Rai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

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Abstract

This research has explained how the conflict between reality and imagination has occurred in Paula Hawkins's novel *The Girl on the Train*. Rachel, the main character of the novel is the victim of the conflict. Rachel reflects herself into Megan, another character of the novel and imagines herself as a perfect girl. Megan is the mirror form of Rachel, in psychoanalytical term. When Rachel knows the reality of Megan then faces the trauma of the Real. This research explores the reality from every twist and turn of *The Girl on the Train* by drawing concepts and ideas from psychoanalytical theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and others for the analysis.

This thesis has been divided into five headings. The first is introduction which introduces the hypothesis, text author, purpose of the study and key concept. The second is review on *The Girl on the Train* which brings reviews of various critics on Hawkins's work. Likewise, the third deals with psychoanalytical theory and its terms such as pleasure principle, imaginary order, mirror stage, symbolic order and the real. The fourth is about *The Girl on the Train* through the lens of psychoanalytical theory. At last, the fifth heading is conclusion of whole research work.

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Introduction: Imaginary, the Real and *The Girl on the Train*

The Girl on the Train is a story about the psychological experiences of Rachel, a divorced woman, by Paula Hawkins. Rachel, the center character repeats the same thing every day. She regularly passes the same places and watches the same scenery though train. It seems everything is perfect and peaceful as in her imagination. She sees everyday a perfect couple from the train while going to London. She develops her imagination about that couple. She gives her own name to them 'Jess' and 'Jason'. She imagines their romances and their perfectness of life. She enjoys her imagination and readers are also motivated to imagine as she does.

One day, she sees something shocking and everything changes. Now, she is not only the girl on the train. She becomes a part of their life and starts to reveal the reality. She comes out from the clash of consciousness and unconsciousness. To face the real is very tough and here the same thing happens to Rachel. Her imaginary Jess is Megan now and she is murdered mysteriously. Again Rachel loses in the conflict between imaginary world and the reality. She starts to imagine, who the murderer is and how the murderer killed her. She accuses different people and consults with the police. Readers have to move around with own imagination and guesses. Later she faces the reality that the real murderer is her own ex-husband. She finds it very hard to accept. Finally she kills him. The story of the novel moves around the process of Rachel's psychological state of facing the reality.

In *The Girl on the Train* Rachel's quest for the reality through her own imagination is problematic. Rachel always searches for her perfect life of unconscious (which is failed already) in an unknown couple. She has lost her husband and job. But she visits aimlessly to London, where she had job, and her own old house where her husband is living with another wife, Anna. She travels to London everyday to show

that she still has a job. In her husband's house, she enjoys with the baby of her ex-husband. Even, she takes out the baby with her. She presumes the couple of Megan and Scott is perfect. She wants to know about Megan, when she is reported missing. She calls her ex-husband without reason to tell the reality about Megan. These kinds of behavior of her are problematic. Why does she visit her ex-husband's house, even if he has left her? Why does she take away the baby of her ex-husband? Why does she get interested in Megan and Scott presuming they are perfect? Why does she search for missing Megan? Is it because Megan is a perfect woman for her? What happens when she finds the reality about her murder? After all, does she come out of the conflict between the reality and imagination? Is she able to come out from the trauma of the Real and Imaginary order at last? This research has focused on exploring the answer of these questions.

Rachel faces the conflict between the reality and the imagination. She is in trauma between whatever she wanted in her life as perfect as her dream and what actually she went through betrayal. She wanted a perfect couple like that of Megan and Scott in her life. She also wanted to have a baby of her own from Tom. These desires were unsuccessful. She had to repress them into her unconscious, which later get mirrored on Megan and Scott as perfect couple and their baby as her own baby.

The major work of this research is to examine how human unconscious leads humans towards mental disorder and how it creates the misunderstanding with the reality of world. Lacanian term 'The Real' is a perfect human imaginary world where everything is perfect. And Imaginary order is a stage of human psyche where they started to know the difference between self and other. Then gradually human unconscious mind gets structured. And there begins the conflict between the real and

imaginary order of human psyche. What actually happens when both exist in human psychology at the same time and how difficult to cope with it is focused in this study.

Jacques Lacan's notion of the imaginary order and the Real world constitute the critical framework of this research. Lacan postulates human psychology is hanging over the imaginary order (unconscious) a kind of symbolic order would classify as misinterpretation, or errors and the Real (conscious) which is the uninterruptable dimension of existence. M.H Abrams simplifies Lacanian terms as:

Especially important in Lacanian literary criticism is Lacan's reformulation of Freud's concepts of the early stages of psychosexual development and the formation of the Oedipus complex into the distinction between a pre-linguistic stage of development that he calls the imaginary and the stage after the acquisition of language that he calls the symbolic. In the imaginary stage, there is no clear distinction between the subject and an object, or between the individual self and other selves. Intervening between these two stages is what Lacan calls the mirror stage, the moment when the infant learns to identify with his or her image in a mirror and so begins to develop a sense of separate self, and an (illusory) understanding of oneself as an autonomous subject, that is later enhanced by what is reflected back to it from encounters with other people. (261)

It is a kind of clash between the unconscious and conscious state of human psychology and people always follow the unconscious believing that is the reality but the hidden reality which is beyond our capacity to know and control. The idea is put forward by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in his work *The Four Fundamental Concepts*.

Present study uses the concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis mainly two stages of human psyche: Imaginary order and the Real. Most of the popular theorists related with this theory will be cited. With this methodological conception, the text will be analyzed thoroughly. Library visit, consulting the websites, advice of experts, collecting of text reviews will be the supportive factors to develop ideas in this research.

Literary Reviews on *The Girl on the Train*

Paula Hawkins worked as a journalist before turning her hand to fiction. *The Girl on Train* is her first psycho-thriller novel which is full of twists. Her style of storytelling and suspense arrangement of characters are touching. Hawkins is successful to give shocking twists to the reader and creates the curiosity over the truth. Suzi Feay puts forward the following views regarding *The Girl on the Train*:

The narrative is skillfully split between three women whose lives interlink tragically: Rachel, Megan and Anna. We first encounter Rachel on the commute home from London, just another tired worker on her way back to the suburbs-expect that she had four cones of premixed gin and tonic in her bag, and that's only for starters, 'It's Friday, so I don't have to feel guilty about drinking on the train'. Hawkins juggles perspectives and timescales with great skill and considerable suspense build up along with empathy for an unusual central character who does not immediately grab the reader. (n.pag.)

From the Feay's commentary it's clear that Hawkins' writing and narrative style is excellent. Her characters are full of suspense and it's very difficult for the readers to understand the book. Feay stresses on Hawkins' unusual characters and thrilling story.

Likewise, Emily May also comments on the book how it creates the conflict between appearance or imagination and what the reality is. She writes, "This book is one unsettling little thriller and the best bit about it is that no one can be trusted. Unsure exactly what she knows but certain she cannot rest until she finds out. This book is just full of secrets. It's about all the little mysteries that exist just outside of what we see on the surface"(n.pag). According to May, there are lots of secrets and mysteries which are far different from the reality. And in the story reader cannot trust on any characters because what they seem is not they are.

Clare J Taylor talks about the looking into the lives of others from outside but not getting any idea of the truth. She says that this novel is somehow similar with another novel *The Gone Girl* and appreciates the exciting series of the story as "The book has been linked to a British version of *The Gone Girl*. The novel is certainly a fast-paced race through an exciting series of events keeping the reader totally gripped" (659).

Michel Schaub talks about Hawkins's writing and her characters. He says that the author has been able to understand the human knowledge and the conflict of memory and imagination. It is about the difficulty of a person about understanding herself. He gives his views in the following words:

But what really makes *The Girl on the Train* such a gripping novel is, Hawkins's remarkable understanding of the human knowledge and the degree to which memory and imagination can become confused. Reflecting on her fellow passengers on her daily train ride to and from London, Rachel thinks, 'I recognize them and they probably recognize me. I don't know whether they see me, though for what I really am'. They don't, of course, and they can't. It's hard enough-may be

impossible-for a person even to see herself for what she really is.

(n.pag.)

Thus, Schaub talks about Hawkins's remarkable understanding of knowledge in her writing. According to her selection of characters, their mental status and the situation of story proves that the degree of confusion between the memory and imagination within human mind.

Janet Maslin also wrote a long article on this novel giving a critical commentary on *The Girl on the Train*. She wrote mainly about the style of the author. As a conclusion she wrote that, "Scrambling a story is easy, but it's done here to tight, suspenseful effect. The book does have a lot of moving parts, and Ms. Hawkins takes longer than necessary to get them started. The second part of the story is much tighter and more suspenseful" (n.pag).

According to these reviews of book, it is clear that the book is very skillfully written and it has proved as a psychological thriller on itself. But there are so many gaps on the book which are unexplained by critics. There is the power of imagination and the real face of truth together. This will be the main issue of study.

The sentence "Life is not a paragraph and death is no parenthesis" (22), from the novel indicates that everything is already fixed and whatever should be happens and will be happened. Hawkins indicates that what actually going to happen.

As Lacan notes "Unconscious is structured like a language" (12), that the key ingredient is loss or lack. Inside human unconscious, something lost is always being pursued but never found as language makes people feel entering into the different world of loss and lack. In case of language metaphor is easy example where one word stands for another dissimilar object which involves an absence; a kind of loss and lack with lots of rules and regulations. The same case happens in the novel too, story

moves around lack and loss of something. Hawkins creates the loss and lack within the central character Rachel. Rachel behaves like a mad girl and repeatedly calls her ex-husband while she gets drunk. That marks the split into the conscious and unconscious mind. By using the theory of Lacan's fundamental stages of human mind, this research would be new fresh and unique and the inner traumatic conflict of Rachel and underlying anxiety of her mind would be the major elements of this research.

Theory of Psychoanalysis

The concept of psychoanalytic principle was established by Sigmund Freud. He is the first person who did the surgery of human psyche and gave a different dimension to human thought. Now Freudian psychoanalysis is called classical psychoanalytic theory and Jacques Lacan reworked on that. Actually psychoanalytic theory is based on human psychology which is untold hidden and stored in unconscious mind of human beings.

According to Freud's book *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, human mind is divided into three parts; unconscious (id), subconscious (ego) and conscious (super-ego) as following:

The id has the quality of being unconscious and contains everything that is inherited everything that is present at birth and the instincts. The ego has the quality of being conscious and is responsible for controlling the demands of the id and of the instinct, becoming aware of stimuli and serving as a link between the id and the external world. In addition, the ego responds to stimulation by either adaption or flight, regulates activity and strives to achieve pleasure and avoid displeasure. Finally, the superego, whose demands are managed by the id is

responsible for the limitation of satisfactions and represents the influence of others, such as parents, teachers and role models as well as the impact of racial, societal and cultural tradition. (14-15)

As Freud's theory, the unconscious is related to our own experiences and inner feeling towards something which is stored in our mind and suppressed. And super ego belongs to the society and its norms values and rules and restrictions. Because of super ego we never can reveal our unconscious /suppressed desires and we expose it within limit which is said ego/sub-conscious. Freud named our unconscious is a storehouse of our experiences, guilt, unfulfilled desires, fears emotional wounds and conflicts. Unconscious is near to the imagination which cannot be real ever overwhelmed by reality or the super-ego.

Freud mainly talks about two principles of human psychology which is undeniable from our entire life. First one is the pleasure principle and the second is the reality principle. Pleasure principle directly conducts the unconscious of human beings which always searches for the perfect but reality principle dominates it, It is the blocked of pleasure. Anthony Bateman and Jeremy Holmes explain these principles as below:

Modification of instinctual wishes is effected through the use of the mechanisms of defense which are mobilized as a result of internal conflict. Conflict occurs between the instinctual wishes under the sway of the 'Pleasure Principle' and the demands of reality in simple terms between past and present, or between the inner child and the functioning adult. In the structural model, conflict is seen as occurring between the three structures themselves and between each one of them and the external world. Through the impingement of reality,

gratification of the instinctual wishes is delayed or modified if they threaten the self-preservation of the individual or contravene his moral and ethical beliefs or oppose the demands of his social and cultural environment. (36-37)

Pleasure principle is a driving force of unconscious mind that seeks immediate gratification of all needs, wants and urges. In other words, the pleasure principle labors hard to fulfill our most basic needs including hunger, thirst anger and sex. When these needs are not met anxiety starts. Freud put forwards the reality principle as a counterpart of pleasure principle. Reality principle always deferred the gratification of pleasure. Pleasure principle seeks an instant satisfaction but reality postpones and dismisses it. So, human unconscious is always after the pleasure seeking and instant satisfaction but the reality doesn't give fulfillment to it.

Like Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan also talks about the contrast between human psychology and reality of experience. Lacan mainly focuses on the four stages of human psychological development: Imaginary order, Mirror stage, symbolic order and the Real. Lois Tyson explains Lacanian concept:

Whether the child sees itself in an actual mirror or sees itself 'mirrored' back to itself in the reactions of its mother the point is that the infant now develops. In these four major dimensions of study, a child sturing this stage a sense of itself as a sense of itself as a whole rather than a formless and fragmented mass. In other words, the child develops a sense of itself as a whole as if it had identified with whole image of itself that can be seen reflected in a mirror. (27)

First of all images are seen and structured on their mind and then they just mirror their imagination on the other characters when they differentiate between self and other and

the actual unconscious starts in their mind when symbolic order comes as a restriction or a conscious mind of them which is very far from the world of their perception.

Imaginary order is the preverbal stage of infant, where images are the main medium to experience the world than the words. In this stage a child enjoys them as wholeness, completeness and delight of fulfillment. Child sees the images and creates the world of imagination with the perfect and mutual union satisfaction with mother. Child makes a perception towards the world with the complete union, fullness and just perfect what they think and imagine. But it is an illusion but gives a more satisfaction and delight. Abrams simplifies Lacan's concept as: "Lacanian literary criticism is Lacan's reformulation of Freud's concepts of the early stages of psychosexual development and the formation of the Oedipus complex the imaginary and the stage after the acquisition of language that he calls the symbolic. In the imaginary stage, there is no clear distinction between the subject and an object" (261). Lacan links the Imaginary order with the mirror stage in the development of the child. He states that the mirror stage is far from a mere phenomenon which occurs in the development of the child. It illustrates the conflicting nature of the dual relationship. In this stage, children start to do formation of ego, selfness of their own image. The children see their image in the mirror produces a sense of contrast between their own body as a whole and the virtual image of their in the mirror separate from them.

Richard J. Lane interprets the Mirror stage is the experience of their separate among the environment as below:

Indeed, this act far from exhausting itself, as in the case of monkey, in eventually acquired control over the uselessness of the image, immediately gives rise in to a series of gestures in which he playfully experiences the relationship between the movements made in the

image and the reflected environment and between this virtual complex and the reality it- duplicates- namely, the child's own body and the persons and even things around him. (269)

Mirror stage is monkey like stage where children experience their own images and body movements and they face confusion between self and others at the same time. The child sees their gestures into the mirrored image where they find their own body and another virtual reality too. The child experiences this contrast as a rivalry with their own mirrored image. Their wholeness of the image makes them confused with fragmentation of their own existence. Thus the mirror stage gives the rise of tension between subject and the image, and the child identifies their ego (selfness).

Lane explains that the mirror stage is a stage of duplicates and relationship between self and virtual image of self. Lois Tyson explains what actually the mirror stage is as following:

Whether, the child sees itself in an actual mirror or sees itself 'mirrored' back to itself in the reactions of its mother, the point that the infant now develops during this stage a sense of itself as a whole rather than a formless and fragmented mass. In other words the child develops a sense of itself as a whole as if it had identified with the whole image of itself that can be seen reflected in a mirror. (27)

From Tyson's line the mirror stage is the process of the formation of an integrated sense of self. Whenever child starts to know about their 'self' existence and differentiates the mirrored image as 'other' which creates the sense of fragmentation or alienation. So, the mirror stage is a misunderstanding that constitutes the ego—the 'me' becomes alienated from itself through the introduction of an imaginary dimension to the subject.

Lacan's another major part of the study is the symbolic order. In symbolic order, child finds the language as a wall between 'self' and 'others'. Children start to make the 'meaning' which restricts their Imaginary or a world of Images. Their images become only the imagination beyond the meaning and the Reality. Child knows the actual separation of themselves and identity or a social identity. Symbolic is a linguistic dimension where language comes in between the imaginary and the Real. When the child is in imaginary order they have the feeling of a complete union with their mother and in Mirror stage they mirror themselves to the mother but symbolic makes their mother means the object of father. Tyson explains Lacan's concept as following:

Lacan's famous statement that the unconscious is structured like a language, implies, among other things, the way in which unconscious desire is always seeking our lost object of desire, the fantasy mother of our preverbal experience just as language is always seeking ways to put into words the world of objects we inhabit as adults, objects that didn't need words when we felt as preverbal infants, one with them.

(29)

Symbolic order gives the realization of self and other to the child whereas, they also lose their mother figure from their Imaginary world. Language makes them know that mother belongs to the father and not them as their preverbal experiences. Then they start to feel the sense of loss and lack of object in their life. And their desire to fulfill their lack is repressed by language or the reality, so their unfulfilled desires, guilt of desiring to fulfill their lack and anger of loss all bad experiences, emotions are stored in their unconscious mind. Symbolic order splits the human mind into conscious and unconscious. This series of lack- desire to fulfill- failure- hide in unconscious is

ongoing process for the lifetime. Our unconscious follows us till death and conscious mind never gives permission to be fulfilled. Sometimes, our unconscious leads our life by overwhelming the conscious world, when our unconscious is too much repressed and it comes in its dynamic nature. Because of that people starts to do abnormal behavior, neurotic acts and violence or it can lead them to the death instinct (drive) as Freudian principle.

Lacanian concept of the Real is also the major part of his theory, which is not synonymous with reality. The Real is oppositional to the Imaginary and symbolic too. It is beyond the word and the experience, it's only the feeling of perfectness. Lacan defines that 'the Real' as 'the impossible' because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic and impossible to attain. It is this resistance to symbolization that lends the Real its traumatic quality. Finally, the Real is the object of anxiety. Therefore, the Real is very difficult and tensional existence which is not exists and we cannot experience it. It makes fail all our meaning making systems or symbolic. The Real is the peak of pleasure and perfect. We never meet it nor see it but know it. This kind of experience, Lacan named the 'trauma of the Real'. For more Tyson explains that:

It terrifies us because it tells us that the meanings society has created for us are just that- the creations of society but it gives nothing in place of those meanings. The trauma of the Real gives us only the realization that the reality hidden beneath the ideologies society has created is a reality beyond our capacity to know and explain and therefore certainly beyond our capacity to control. (32)

Here, the trauma of the Real is only the realization which is hidden under the manmade ideologies of the society. And the Real is totally opposite to the reality of

society. At last, it is beyond our capacity to understand, explain and control. The trauma of the Real is totally out of our access of Imaginary and symbolic.

Conflict of Imagination and Reality in *The Girl on the Train*

The novel, *The Girl on the Train* is the story of suspense and twists with the major character Rachel Watson. Rachel Watson is a divorced woman who has a high power of imagination. She is drunkard and a psycho. She has a bad experience of her own married life, losing husband and broken dreams. She is cheated by her husband Tom Watson and replaced from home by Anna (second wife of Tom). As a normal married girl she had a dream of a perfect married life with their baby and a happy family. Her all dreams had gone through tragedy and it went totally flop because of her barrenness. Her dreams became failed and that became the unfulfilled desire and stored in her unconscious mind. Slowly, unconscious leads her towards the *Thanatos*. It got the outcome from her mental disorder, drunkenness, amnesia and all. Her life became a mess, broken marital life but still she is longing for the perfect family with a cute baby.

According to Freudian Psychoanalysis unconscious is the storehouse of unfulfilled desires and unpleasant experiences which are repressed under the societal norms and values. Sometime it overcomes through the dreams and other unusual behaviors. Tyson explains the Freud's term as below:

Unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them. The unconscious comes into being when we are very young through the repression, the expunging from unconscious of these unhappy psychological events. (12)

In the novel also Rachel has an unconscious full of unfulfilled desires, psychological wounds, guilty desires and longing for the lost. Every time she goes to London just to see her old house and her ex-husband. It hurts her lot to see the happy and new life of her ex-husband though she can't stop seeing them and can't stop caring them. She still desires for the love and compassion from the side of her ex-husband .And one key thing shows she still loves her ex-husband that she doesn't change her surname and she never says Ex-husband, just says my husband. She does some neurotic acts, morning to evening she drinks and sometime she goes to terrify Anna and takes out their baby (Evie).

Narration of the novel is full off the flashbacks and suspense. Rachel can't stay a single day without thinking her past. At first they (Rachel and Tom) were very happy as newly married couple. They were enjoying their life, there was a perfect home, loving husband beautiful wife and mentally, emotionally, sexually, economically satisfied life. She recalls the past:

Tangy and cold the test of my first holyday, with Tom, a fishing village on the Basque coast in 2015. In the mornings we'd swim the half- mile to the little island in the bay, make love on the secret hidden beaches; in the afternoons we'd sit at a bar drinking strong, bitter gin and tonics, watching swarms of beach footballers playing chaotic 25-a-side games on the low-tide sands. (17)

They were having a very satisfied married life but slowly their life turned towards the wrong direction. Rachel started to want a baby of her own. She started to dreaming their baby with her and Tom playing and enjoying. But as her dream reality was not there, they were unable to make it. Her desire to be a mother was postponing and her desire was being sharp. Society also started to blame her and she started to over think

of it: "It didn't happen. No we doctor has been able to explain to me why I can't get pregnant. I'm young enough, fit enough, I was not drinking heavily when we were trying. My husband's sperm was active and plentiful. It just didn't happen. I didn't suffer the agony of marriage, I just didn't get pregnant" (110-111). That was leading her to the hopelessness: "I was asked about it, all the time. My mother, our friends, colleagues at work, When was it going to be my turn? At some points our childlessness became an acceptable topic of Sunday lunch conversation, not just between Tom and me but more generally . . . it overwhelmed me, dragged me under and I gave up hope" (111). She became hopeless.

According to Sigmund Freud's theory of pleasure principle and reality principle; Rachel becomes a victim of reality principle. She wanted to be a mother, her pleasure is to be a mother and she wants to grab it anyway but there is the bitter reality of her sterile. She failed to achieve the pleasure of being mother, being a perfect life partner. That guilt of desire dominated her psyche and it started to suffer her. She started to think herself as a worthless woman. Then she started to drink more and preferred to be rude with others. It makes clear that how her unconscious made her mentally ill through these lines:

I felt isolated in my misery. I became a lonely, so I drank a bit more and then I became lonelier, because no one likes being around a drunk. I lost and I drank and I drank and lost . . . Let's be honest: women are still only really valued for two things – their looks and their role as mother. I'm not beautiful and I can't have kids, so what does that make me? Worthless.(110)

After all these she became a psycho girl, started to do so many abnormal deeds and finally got another shocking secret of her husband's cheating. She found his mail with

another girl Anna, which is the proof that her husband had lost the interest from her, "I fell asleep last night thinking of you, I was dreaming about kissing your mouth your breasts, the inside of your thighs. I woke this morning with my head full of you, desperate to touch you. Don't expect me to be sane, I can't be, not with you" (51).

Now, Rachel is alone in her friend's flat. She is jobless, aimless and hopeless. Every day she goes to visit London aimlessly. In the middle of the way, where train stops for a while, there is her past home which belonged to her once upon a time. But now there are the things and the people that hurts her. Rachel says that: "That was my first home. Not my parents' place, not flat share with another student, my first home. I can't bear to look at it. Well, I can, I do, I want to, I don't want to, I try not to. Every day I tell myself not to look and every day I look. I can't help myself, even though there is nothing I want to see, even though anything I do see will hurt me" (22). So, Rachel is suffering from conflict between the pleasure principle and reality principle again. When she searches for pleasure, and wants to be closer to it but reality rejects that and ends with the heartache. It leads her towards the tragedy, sorrow and psychological death but still she is trying to get the pleasure.

Rachel's psychological disorder is seen in her behavior. Sometimes, it outlets from her dreams, imaginations, sometimes she gets insane and drunk and she is the victim of amnesia. She dreams very bad at night like struggling lives, angry husband, bloody face of own and trapped every time. And after getting drunk she forgets some incidents and some her own embarrassing acts. That shows how pathetic psyche she has and how much she suffers. In the imagination of Rachel, there is the hope or something the Real. Something perfectness she lost, she wants and she is hoping for it. Examining her imagination power thoroughly; in the middle of the way where train stops for a while and she sees her old home and near it there is another house and

there is a sweet couple (Megan and Scott). They are unknown for Rachel though she notices them every day and their every activity. She gives her own name to them, 'Jess' for Megan and 'Jason' for Scott. She presumes them as perfect couple as she wanted for her and losses herself in her imagination as:

I know that on warm evening, the occupants of this house, Jason and Jess, sometimes climb out of the large sash window to sit on the makeshift terrace on top of the kitchen-extension roof. They are a perfect, golden couple. He is dark-haired and well built, strong, protective, kind. He has a great laugh. She is one of those tiny bird-women, a beauty, pale-skinned with blonde hair cropped short. She has the bone structure to carry that kind of thing off, sharp cheekbones dappled with a sprinkling of freckles, a fine jaw. (19)

Rachel knows all about them: their enjoying, their romance and their everyday talking, she imagines their life morning time to bed time. She feels them as herself and her ex-husband, Tom and recalls her past spending with him. She measures their depth of love from the stopped train, from far from them. She can feel the touch of Jess from there as:

The train is rattling along, we whip past Jason and Jess place, they past in the blur of evening sunshine. Sometimes, not often, I can see them from this side of the track. If there's no train going in the opposite direction, and if we're travelling slowly enough, I can sometimes catch a glimpse of them out on their terrace. If not – like today- I can imagine them. Jess will be sitting with her feet up on the table out on the terrace, a glass of wine in her hand, Jason standing behind her, his hands on her shoulders. I can imagine the feel of his hands, the weight

of them, reassuring and protective. Sometimes, I catch myself trying to remember the last time I had meaningful physical contact with another person, just a hug or a heartfelt squeeze of my hand, and my heart twitches. (20-21)

In the novel, Rachel is in the imaginary stage and she finds her own mirror there as Megan. Sometimes, she feels that she is Megan and Megan is herself and Megan's life is her life with the handful of happiness. She compares her own romance with Tom with their romance. When she sees Scott hugging and kissing Megan, she feels his touch, hug and kiss. She imagines whatever she wants to do with her ex-husband about them as a perfect couple and a perfect life together. She thinks that whatever she sees and imagines about them is the Real, her own Real, a peak of perfectness. She wants to have that kind of life, family, love, romance and a baby. She enjoys on watching them and assuming them in the way whatever she wants. According to Lacan, the Real is out of our experience and impossible to grab it, it is the impossible existence just like in the novel.

Suddenly, one day Rachel sees Megan, kissing with another guy, Abdic passionately. And again story gives a twist, adds another new suspense. Rachel gets a shock and she remembers the dark day of her life, a betrayal as:

I can't believe it. I snatch air into my lungs, I realize that I've been holding my breath. Why would she do that? Jason loves her, I can see it. They're happy. I can't believe she would do that to him, he doesn't deserve that. I feel a real sense of disappointment, I feel as though *I* have been cheated. A familiar ache fills my chest. I have felt this way before. On a larger scale, to a more intense degree, of course, but I remember the quality of pain. You don't forget it. (49)

She feels sorry for Scott and furious to Megan and she gets hurt of doing wrong assumption about them. She gets another psychological wound by missing her Real, her feelings of perfect.

Immediately, she gets the news of Megan's missing and there is no idea about the reason: "And there was a picture of her, Jess, *my Jess*, the perfect blonde, next to a headline which read *Concern for Missing Witney Women*" (80). Rachel tries to meet Scott and wants to help him by telling him whatever she saw from the train. Now, she enters into the life of Megan and Scott in real, she is not *The Girl on the Train* anymore, she becomes a part of their life. She explains all the things whatever she had seen and claims that Abdic is the murderer. Megan's dead body found in the forest all damaged and pregnant but still there is no clue of murderer. Police is blaming Scott for her wife and Rachel's evidence also becomes unreliable. She starts to guess the possible murderer; Abdic, Scott, or herself because the day of Megan's missing she returns home with bloody face, drunk and empty mind. But all her guesses went wrong and she becomes confused, the Real murderer is still not in reach. For a while, she confirms the murderer is Scott because he attacks her badly and his house is so mess up and it also becomes a false presumption. Then she starts to remember that night what happened that Saturday night, what actually she saw that night?

By trying hard Rachel remembers the horrible call from her ex-husband Tom, with so many bad words and furious voice. That she was there, she terrified Anna and she took out their baby from home. But she thinks that she went there that night to see their baby but she never wanted to harm her, she just wanted to love her. And she forgot everything what was happened there and in the morning, she found her on her bed, bloody face, hurting head, muddy body and hangover of wine. In the voice message of her ex-husband, she found his husband words to bitter like she did a big

wrong there, may be a crime. Rachel is not sure that she can murder anyone and there is no reason to kill Megan for her. She calls Tom to ask if he has any idea about that night what actually happened, but Tom gets angry and gives her so many bad words as in past days when they were together. Again she remembers the past days Tom used to blame her being abusive, drunk and mad and she used to say sorry accepting that everything was her fault, "After a while, I learned that when you wake up like that, you don't ask what happened, you just say that you're sorry: you're sorry for what you did and who you are and you're never, ever going to behave like that again" (336).

Same situation repeats that night also, still she doesn't have any idea of what happened that night and Tom is blaming for her very bad deed, but for what? Rachel is comparing the past and present in half sleep. And she remembers that she was not like that she was beaten every night by her husband same like that day, the day of Megan's missing. She remembers: "I was in the underpass and he was coming towards me, one slap across the mouth and then his fist raised, keys in his hand, searching pain as the serrated metal smashed down against my skull" (337). For the first time she suspects her ex-husband for the murder of Megan. That night Rachel met Tom, Anna and Evie together, they were ready to go out together, she remembers clearly. But Anna returned home upset after meeting Rachel. After a while, Tom went out by his car with a girl. She remembers all what actually happened that night, everything is clear as:

Everything is a lie. I didn't imagine him hitting me. I didn't imagine him walking away from me quickly, his fists clenched. I saw him turn, shout. I saw him walking down the road with a woman, I saw him getting into the car with her. I didn't imagine it. And I realize then that it's all very simple, so very simple. I do remember, it's just that I had confused two memories. I'd inserted the image of Anna, walking away

from me in her blue dress, into another scenario: Tom and a woman getting into a car. Because of course that woman wasn't wearing a blue dress, she was wearing jeans and a red T-shirt. She was Megan. (348)

Finally, Rachel finds the Megan's murderer who is no one than her own love, perfect and ideal ex-husband. Rachel faces another reality and she gets her perfect husband as a liar, murderer and abusive, again her imagination and the Real becomes an illusion. The Real of this leads her towards another Real, she reaches another twist of her life with that truth.

After knowing this Rachel goes to visit Anna and tries to make her alert. She tells all the lies about Tom's life and his manipulative nature. Anna doesn't believe on her words. And Tom comes and convinces Anna and traps Rachel there together. Rachel asks him all the truths and Tom replies how he used to beat Rachel and how he killed Megan and why, with evil smile without a single sense of guilt as:

You lied to me,' I say and he turns to face me, surprised. 'You told me everything was my fault. You made me believe that I was worthless. You watched me suffer, you—' He shrugs. 'Do you have any idea how boring you become, Rachel? How ugly? Too sad to get out of bed in the morning, too tired to take shower or wash your fucking hair? Jesus. It's no wonder I lost patience, is it? It's no wonder I had to look for ways to assume myself. You've no one to blame but yourself. (380)

Then Rachel comes to know the real reason of her madness and amnesia. He tells her how cruelly he used to hit her on her head after she got drunk, and how cleverly he used to manipulate her all happening was her fault. She is a Tom-made psycho.

Tom reveals all in details, he used Megan as a puppet just for sex. She was his babysitter in his home and Tom manipulated her and then she fall in love with him

and got pregnant. She also had a bad past and not happy with her married life with Scott. She started to threaten Tom to accept her and her baby but Tom was not serious. Finally, on Saturday they met and started to argue at this moment he killed her and buried under the ground:

So I picked up a rock . . .' he stares down at his right hand, as though he can see it now— 'and just . . .' He closes his eyes and sighs deeply. 'It was just one hit.' He puffs out his cheeks, exhales slowly. 'I didn't mean for this. I just wanted her to stop. She was bleeding a lot. She was crying, making a horrible noise. She tried to crawl away from me. There was nothing I could do. I had to finish it.' (393)

After listening to all the truth, Rachel tries to inform the police and begs the help with Anna but Tom beats Rachel and tries to kill her. Whole one day Rachel is in Tom's trap. He blames Rachel for all the happening. Rachel feels impossible to escape. Then she tells Tom that she will not tell anyone because she still loves him. Then he comes closer to Rachel and says something very bad and starts to kiss her:

He steps closer to me again. 'You're like one of those dogs. The unwanted ones that have been mistreated all their lives. You can kick them. But they'll still come to you, cringing and wagging their tails. Begging. Hoping that this it'll be different that this time they'll do something right and you'll love them. You're just like that, aren't you, Rach? You're a dog.' He slips his hand around my waist and puts his mouth on mine I let his tongue slip between my lips and press my hips against his. I can feel him getting hard. (400)

Then she whispers into his ear:" Am I responsible for all?" Before he answers she pins corkscrew into his neck. Anna comes and twists the corkscrew further into his

throat until he dies. Anna calls the police and helps her to release from police by making a reliable statement.

Rachel is like a numb, crying, stammering, trembling with the fear and shocked. She finds herself in another betrayal, another truth and Real. She comes out from the imaginary illusion of perfect world to the hell like reality. Her all perfectness and concept of perfectness gets fail respectively; Megan, Scott, Anna, Tom and herself. Through the theory of Lacan, Rachel just comes out from the imaginary and mirror stage. She knew the truth and knew the reality of self. She entered into the world of reason and meaning, we can say that it is the Symbolic stage. But still the Real is there, just postponed, she becomes unable to grab it and it slips over another Real. After releasing from the police station she is ready to take another journey with another hope of perfect life; "I get into bed and turn the lights out. I won't be able to sleep but I have to try. Eventually, I suppose, the nightmares will stop and I'll stop replaying it over and over and over and over in my head, but right now I know that there's a long night ahead. And I have to get up early tomorrow morning, to catch the train" (409).

Rachel seems little bit happier, hopeful and free but it can be said that her Real stuck on her new hope. We cannot go far from the concept of the Real and we cannot find it, just we can feel it, same case is found in the novel.

Conclusion: Rachel's Experience from Imagination to Reality

This research has centered on the analysis of the behaviors of Rachel which are problematic as she moves round the worlds of imagination and reality. She visits her ex-husband's house every day. She is interested in Megan's life. She takes Anna's baby. She forgets some past things. She gets drunk always and she imagines perfectness in Megan but in reality it is different. Her suppressed desire of making a

perfect family gets reflected in the family of Megan. This suppressed desire in the unconscious leads her towards mental disorder and hence gets lost in the world of imagination. Rachel is a mentally disturbed, psychologically ill and socially neglected woman. She does different kinds of unusual activities and sometimes she encounters with very bad dreams. She has a very bad experiences of past and she still doesn't come out from it. She assumes a couple as perfect as she wants and imagines their day to day life. She finds herself and her ex-husband as this unknown couple. She assumes them a perfect couple and then her unconscious mind creates misunderstanding. This misunderstanding of Rachel's unconscious creates the conflict between Imaginary world and the real when reality reveals.

In the novel, Rachel's extraordinary behavior is the influence of the Real, in Lacanian term. The unconscious mind of human beings leads them towards the madness and unconscious is guided by the Real. In case of Rachel, she becomes mad because of her search for the perfect existence i.e. the Real. After her madness she starts to see her ex-husband's house and family with cute daughter though it is painful to her. She wants her life also like her ex-husbands and during the search of perfect family she finds an unknown couple. She thinks that she finds her perfect existence and reflection of herself.

But it does not remain long. Rachel finds the reality and she enters into the world of symbol/meanings away from the imaginary world. She gets conflict on the reality and the Real. Rachel's concept of perfect existence breaks down one by one. She finds that everything she used to think perfect is not Real. These all are Rachel's self created imaginary world, just an illusion. As Lacan's theory explains, a newborn baby starts to know the human world, meaning of mother means himself/herself. But when she/he enters into the symbolic order gets conflict in their mind. In the novel,

when Rachel knows all the reality, she faces the conflict between the reality and the imagination. But Lacan's concept of the Real is concerned to the feeling of perfectness. We cannot grab perfectness, nor see it but only can feel it. It is a kind of realization that is hidden beneath the reality of society and beyond our capacity to know. In the novel, Rachel is the victim of trauma of the Real.

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