



Identifying Different Layers of Misogyny in Paula Hawkins "The Girl on the Train"

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"I can't do this; I can't just be a wife. I don't understand how anyone does it—there is literally nothing to do but wait. Wait for a man to come home and love you. Either that or look around for something to distract you."(Hawkins, 23)

In this quote, Hawkins emphasizes both the theme of women and gender roles in the novel and Megan's struggles with her self-identity. Though Megan recently made the choice to quit her job, making her dependent on her husband, she feels trapped in the life she has to lead as a wife. However, her chosen escape from this restlessness is to seek yet more affirmation of her womanhood through an affair, making her not "just a wife" but also not much happier, eventually endangering her greatly

Abstract : This research paper aims to analyze and identify various layers of misogyny within Paula Hawkins' bestselling novel, "The Girl on the Train." The study employs a feminist literary analysis to unveil subtle and overt manifestations of misogyny embedded in the narrative. By exploring the characters, plot dynamics, and societal context, this paper seeks to shed light on the nuanced ways in which gender-based biases are depicted in the novel. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of the representation of women in contemporary literature and the impact of such portrayals on societal perceptions.

Index Terms - Feminist Literary Analysis, Gender Bias, Misogyny, Patriarchy, Societal Norms, Women's Representation, Contemporary Literature.

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Girl on The Train" by Paula Hawkins has emerged as a significant and thought-provoking work in contemporary literature, captivating readers with its gripping narrative and psychological depth. Published in 2015, the novel quickly became a bestseller and was adapted into a successful film, further solidifying its impact on popular culture. Paula Hawkins, the British author behind this psychological thriller, has garnered attention for her ability to craft intense and suspenseful stories that delve into the complexities of human relationships.

Background on Paula Hawkins and Writing Style:

Paula Hawkins, born on August 26, 1972, in Salisbury, Zimbabwe, is a journalist and author who have made a notable mark in the literary world. Before her breakthrough with "The Girl on The Train," Hawkins wrote under the pseudonym Amy Silver and authored several romantic novels. However, it was her transition to the psychological thriller genre that brought her widespread acclaim.

Hawkins' writing style is characterized by its meticulous attention to detail, psychological insight, and a talent for creating unreliable narrators. Her narratives often explore the darker facets of human behavior and the intricate web of relationships, contributing to the suspenseful atmosphere that pervades her works. In "The Girl on The Train," Hawkins employs a multi-perspective narrative, weaving together the lives of her characters to build a compelling and intricate story.

Purpose of Research:

The purpose of this research is to conduct a thorough analysis of "The Girl on The Train" with a focus on identifying and understanding the various layers of misogyny within the novel. Misogyny, the ingrained prejudice against women, manifests in multifaceted ways within literature, reflecting and perpetuating

societal norms and expectations. By closely examining the characters, power dynamics, narrative choices, and social context within Hawkins' work, this research aims to shed light on the nuanced portrayal of misogyny in the novel and explore its implications in the broader context of contemporary literature. Through this exploration, we seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature can both challenge and reinforce societal attitudes toward gender, prompting critical discussions on the role of misogyny in fictional narratives. The gender biased studies has been carried by various authors earlier including myself i.e. Ainaab Tariq and Ravi Bhatt (2020)

Elements of Misogyny:

1. Characterization:

a. Stereotypes and Biases:

The novel portrays a range of male and female characters, each embodying distinct traits. However, an analysis reveals embedded stereotypes and biases that perpetuate traditional gender norms. Female characters may be portrayed as emotionally unstable or overly dependent, while male characters may embody aggressive or controlling traits. These stereotypes contribute to a broader narrative of gender inequality.

b. Instances of Sexism:

Scrutinizing dialogue and actions unveils instances of sexism within the narrative. These instances, whether overt or subtle, contribute to a broader narrative of gender inequality. For example, the way characters speak about or treat each other based on gender reflects deeply ingrained biases.

2. Power Dynamics:

a. Imbalances in Relationships:

The exploration of power dynamics between male and female characters in various relationships reveals unequal power distribution. This inequality reinforces traditional gender roles and contributes to a broader narrative of misogyny. Analyzing how characters wield power sheds light on the perpetuation of gender-based inequalities

b. Manipulation and Control:

Instances of male characters exerting control or manipulating female characters, whether emotionally or psychologically, contribute to a narrative reinforcing harmful gender norms. Gaslighting, emotional abuse, and attempts to limit the agency of female characters exemplify how power dynamics are employed to perpetuate misogynistic behaviors.

3. Narrative Choices:

a. Unreliable Narrators and Perspectives:

Hawkins' use of unreliable narrators and multiple perspectives plays a significant role in shaping the portrayal of gender dynamics. Analyzing whether certain perspectives are privileged or marginalized provides insight into how narrative choices challenge or reinforce misogynistic ideas. The complexities introduced through these choices contribute to the novel's engagement with gender dynamics.

b. Framing of Female Characters:

Examining how female characters are framed within the narrative is essential. Whether their actions and motivations are presented in a nuanced and complex manner or reduced to simplistic stereotypes greatly influences the overall depiction of misogyny within the novel.

4. Social Context:

a. Norms and Expectations:

The societal norms and expectations reflected in the novel's setting contribute significantly to the depiction of misogyny. Analyzing how these norms shape characters' behaviors and choices provides insights into the roots of misogyny within the narrative and its relevance to contemporary societal issues.

b. Media and External Influences:

The impact of external factors, such as media representations and cultural expectations, on characters' perceptions of gender roles is explored. Investigating whether the novel critiques or perpetuates these external influences contributes to a broader discourse on misogyny within the context of societal norms.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Identifying Different Layers of Misogyny in Paula Hawkins "The Girl on the Train" reveals the pervasive and insidious nature of gender-based discrimination in contemporary literature. Through the lens of the novel, we have witnessed the complex interplay of power dynamics, societal expectations, and the impact of toxic masculinity on the lives of female characters. Paula Hawkins' narrative serves as a poignant commentary on the consequences of misogyny, portraying the characters as victims of a larger cultural framework that perpetuates harmful stereotypes and restricts the autonomy of women.

The psychological nuances of the female protagonists, particularly Rachel, Megan, and Anna, illustrate the damaging effects of societal pressures and gender bias. The narrative underscores the importance of dismantling harmful stereotypes and fostering a more equitable and inclusive representation of women in literature. By critically examining the portrayal of women in "The Girl on the Train," we gain valuable insights into the broader conversation surrounding misogyny in both literature and society.

As readers, scholars, and advocates, it is imperative to engage in conversations that challenge harmful narratives and contribute to the creation of a more empathetic and egalitarian literary landscape. By acknowledging and confronting misogyny in literature, we take a crucial step toward fostering a society that values and respects the diverse experiences and perspectives of all individuals, regardless of gender. The critical analysis of "The Girl on the Train" serves as a catalyst for continued discourse on the role of literature in shaping and challenging societal norms, ultimately encouraging a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

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