



THE MISERY OF AN ALCOHOLIC'S LIFE PORTRAYED IN PAULA HAWKINS' THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

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ABSTRACT

This research is entitled "The misery of an alcoholic's life portrayed in Paula Hawkins' the Girl on the Train.". The purpose of this study is to describe the background of the misery experienced by Rachel's character. A poor woman who has an unlucky fate and her life is full of sadness. The approach used in this research is a psychoanalytic approach. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The results of this study indicate that one of the causes of Rachel's misery is the effect of alcohol. Rachel is an alcoholic, so it's hard to control herself. Throughout the story in this novel, alcohol is one of the most dominating and has an impact on Rachel. She experienced conflict with herself, on the one hand she tried to stop being an alcoholic but her intentions always failed because she was an alcoholic who was classified as acute. From the results of the analysis, it was found that alcohol was behind Rachel's misery, including divorce, job loss and depression.

Keywords: *Misery, Paula Hawkins, The Effect of Alcohol*

INTRODUCTION

In the life of every human being, happiness and sadness are certain things. Happiness and sadness are personal things. So between individuals must have a different perspective on it. However, each individual certainly does not expect sadness in the life they live. Sadness in life is usually marked by the emergence of conflicts or problems. Everyone has their own problems, with other people, the environment or with themselves. However, some people can hide and keep problems to themselves. There are also people who show themselves to be in trouble through their actions, speech or facial expressions. To get out of the problems they are experiencing, some people usually sharing stories with family, friends or partners and some choose to get closer to their god. However, not a few also choose to vent their problems on negative things. Such as consuming drugs or illegal drugs, getting drunk, etc. These things are very common for people today,



especially young people. Although it has a pleasant effect and temporary relief of problems, in reality it is very dangerous especially if it is done for a long time.

Reporting from Info Sehat fk.ui.ac.id the abuse of alcohol or liquor in addition to having a negative impact on the physical condition of the drinker or addict, but also has a psychological impact on mental health. The impact of alcohol use was revealed by a doctor from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia. According to Dr. dr. Kristiana Siste, Sp.KJ(K), alcohol abuse can cause mental disorders as well as early brain damage and dementia. Dementia or dementia can occur at a young age due to degeneration of the brain nerves caused by alcohol. Teenage alcoholics have several parts of the brain that are not fully developed so that brain damage can cause adverse symptoms for adolescents. Such as, impaired attention (center of attention), and memory.

Neuropsychological studies have shown that the abuse of narcotics, alcohol, psychotropic substances, and addictive substances is associated with damage to brain circuits and neurotransmitters that cause a decrease in spatial function, inhibitory (self-control) function, learning, and memory. Brain damage can cause death. The impact if an alcoholic does not consume alcohol anymore then there are several symptoms caused. Such as feelings of anxiety, insomnia or difficulty sleeping, nausea, hypertension, increased body temperature, and can even cause hallucinations. Hallucinations are one of the symptoms of severe mental disorders, often accompanied by seizures and agitation (restlessness, irritation, anger).

Rachel also suffered from the symptoms of alcohol addiction. A poor woman who lost the joy of her life. Rachel Watson was once a woman who lived happily with her husband and had a brilliant career at work. However, all his happiness slowly disappeared and everyone started to stay away from her. Throughout the story in the novel, Rachel experiences many tribulations including domestic violence, being unable to have children, getting cheated by her ex-husband until she has to accept that she is divorced. One of the main causes of all Rachel's misery was alcohol. He is a heavy alcoholic, so his attitude often changes drastically and often conflicts with himself to get rid of the effect of alcohol.

Conflict in the novel is an important event. Conflict is a developer element in the plot. Conflict consists of a series of events at the stage of introduction or exposition. However, in some novels that have a mixed plot, conflict may occur at the beginning of the story. Conflicts occur because of interests, the struggle for something, betrayal and others. Conflicts are created to build suspense and increase the reader's curiosity. Forms of conflict can also be divided into two categories: physical conflict and inner conflict, external conflict and internal conflict. (Stanton, 1965:16)



External conflict is a conflict that occurs between a character and something outside himself, such as the environment or with other characters. Therefore, external conflict can be further categorized into two categories, namely physical conflict and social conflict. Physical conflict is a conflict that occurs because of a clash between characters and the natural environment. While social conflict is a conflict caused by social contact between humans. Examples of cases of social conflict are labor, squabbles, wars and oppression. Internal conflict (or psychological conflict, inner conflict) is a conflict that occurs in the heart and mind, in the soul of a story character. So, it is a conflict that humans experience with themselves. Conflict is more of an internal human problem. For example, it occurs due to a conflict between two desires, beliefs, different choices, expectations, or other problems. (Nurgiyantoro, 2013:168).

Several previous studies that raised the same issue as this research include: Yatimah (2021) "*Psychological Trauma in Paula Hawkins' The Girl on The Train(2015)*". The main purpose of this study is to discuss the symptoms and ways to resolve the stress suffered by the three main characters in the novel, namely Rachel Watson, Anna Boyd and Megan Hipwell. The method used in this research is psychological analysis. The results found that there are three main categories of post-traumatic stress symptoms, namely avoidance symptoms, excitatory symptoms, and re-experiencing symptoms.

Further research from Fitra (2020) "*Depression Portrait of Rachel Reflected in The Girl on the Train(2015) by Paula Hawkins: A Psychoanalytic Perspective*". The results of this study indicate that Rachel has a very dominant psychoanalytic character Id. Rachel just follows her own desires without considering the morals and norms that exist in society. For example Rachel always wanted to get drunk. Furthermore, the symptoms of depression experienced by Rachel are seen with low self-confidence, fatigue or lack of energy and always hopeless.

And the last research from Ragasatiwi (2018) "*The Portrait of Patriarchy in the Novel The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins*". In her research, Ragasatiwi uses a radical feminist perspective approach. This study aims to determine the patriarchy described in the novel *The Girl on the Train*. There are three aspects of patriarchy found at the end of the study, namely patriarchy at work, state relations and violence by men.

Based on the theory and references from previous research, the researcher chose a psychoanalytic approach to study this novel. The psychoanalytic approach is an approach that starts from the concept of psychology. At first this theory was related to psychotherapy methods for healing mental and nervous diseases, but later became a personality theory. Psychoanalysis is a psychological theory that



talks a lot about issues of consciousness, dreams, anxiety, neurotics, emotions, motivation and personality. (Nurgiyantoro, 2013:100).

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative method. (Moelong, 2017:4) define qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. According to them, this approach is directed at the background and the individual holistically (whole). Descriptive qualitative research is a research step that must describe an object, phenomenon or social setting that will be written in narrative writing. In writing, the data and facts collected are in the form of words and pictures rather than numbers. In a qualitative writing report, it contains quotations, data (facts) revealed in the field to provide support for what is presented in the report.

The main data source of this research is the novel *“The Girl on the Train”* by Paula Hawkins. This novel was first published in 2015 and has a psychological thriller genre. This novel has 410 pages was published by Penguin Random House UK in London. Secondary data was obtained from several articles and thesis such as those in previous studies. This research begins with reading the novel carefully and repeatedly. Then the researcher marked the data contained in the novel related to the inner conflict experienced by Rachel's character. Then the researchers sorted by the order of the pages in the novel and made a classification. Furthermore, in analyzing the data, the researcher first understands the concept of internal conflict from Nurgiyantoro (2013: 168). The second step, the researcher connects the data, theory and psychoanalytic approach that the researcher uses in order to obtain valid data. The last stage the researcher makes a classification of the data that has been collected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describe that one of the backgrounds of Rachel's misery comes from herself, who is an alcoholic. And also there are efforts from within Rachel to try to stop being an alcoholic

but instead arise opposition from within herself or in other words this character experiences internal conflicts. Rachel had to experience unpleasant events because of her alcohol problems such as being fired from work and making her hopeless and depressed.

Rachel is a Heavy Alcoholic



Data 1

“I take another sip, and another; the can’s already half empty but it’s OK, I have three more in the plastic bag at my feet. It’s Friday, so I don’t have to feel guilty about drinking on the train. TGIF. The fun starts here”. (page 17)

The data above clearly shows that Rachel is a heavy alcoholic. She even dared to drink alcohol in public, even if one of them was on the train. Even though Rachel lives in a country where alcohol is legal, this is still considered disrespectful by some people.

Data 2

“He looks up suddenly and meet my eye; his glance travel over me, over the little bottle of wine on the table in front of me. He looks away. There’s something about the set of his mouth which suggest distaste. He find me distasteful. I’m not the girl I used to be. I am no longer desirable, I’m of putting in some way. It’s not just that I’ve put on weight, or that my face is puffy from the drinking and the lack of sleep; it’s as if people can see the damage written all over me, they can see it in my face, the way I hold my self, the way I move”. (page 27)

From this data, it can be concluded that people around or who have only met Rachel once already know that she is an alcoholic. And many of them find it disgusting. Even she herself has realized that other people will think negatively about her. The impact of alcohol addiction is obvious, both physically and behaviorally. It was clear from Rachel's face.

Rachel is Feeling Tired of Herself

Data 3

“I feel exhausted this evening. I am sober, stone cold. Some days I feel so bad that I have to drink; some days I feel so bad that I can’t. Today, the thought of alcohol turns my stomach. But soberity on the evening train is a challenge, particularly now, in this heat. A film of sweat covers every inch of my skin, the inside of my mouth prickles, my eyes itch, mascara rubbed into their corners”. (page 31-32)

The third data shows that Rachel always has an internal conflict with herself to drink alcohol. She has two sides to her. On the one hand she feels that he is a person who suffers greatly when he does not drink alcohol, on the other hand she thinks otherwise. As medically explained at the beginning, that an addict



will feel restless if he can't drink alcohol, this also happens to Rachel who feels uneasy when she doesn't consume alcohol and feels there is adrenaline in her to stay drunk.

Data 4

“Rachel? Are you there? I know things aren’t good with you, and I’m sorry for you, I really am, but . . . I can’t help you, and these constant calls are really upsetting Anna. OK? I can’t help you any more. Go to AA meeting after work today”. (page 32-33)

The data above is a dialogue between Tom, Rachel's ex-husband and herself. Tom begs Rachel not to keep contacting him because it bothers Anna, his new wife. This is something Rachel sometimes does when she feels lonely and after drinking alcohol. Tom told her to go to the club of ex-alcoholics.

Data 5

“I AM EXHAUSTED, my head thick with sleep. When I drink, I hardly sleep at all. I pass out cold for an hour or two, then I wake, sick with myself. If I have a day when I don’t drink, that night I fall into the heaviest of slumbers, a deep unconsciouness, and in the morning I cannot wake properly, I cannot shake sleep, it stays with me for hours, sometimes all day long”. (page 48)

From these data we can know that Rachel was really feeling very tired and miserable because of her addiction to alcohol. The data explains alcohol causes her to have trouble sleeping problems. If she drinks alcohol it will cause insomnia and can only pass out from drunkenness for an hour or two. But when she wakes up he will feel scared and disgusted with herself.

Evicted from Her Friend's House

Data 6

“What on earth happened to you? She says, then raises her hand. Actually, Rachel, I’m sorry, but I just don’t want to know. I cannot have this in my house. I cannot have . . . She tails off, but she’s looking back down the hall, towards the stairs. I’m sorry, I say. I’m so sorry, I was just really ill and I meant to clear it up . . . You weren’t ill, were you? You were drunk.you were hungover. I’m sorry, Rachel. I just can’t have this. I can’t live like this. You have to go, OK? I’ll give you four weeks to find somewhere else, but then you have to go”. (page 66)

The data above shows that Rachel gets another misery, namely that she is kicked out of Cathy's house. Cathy is her best friend who has been giving her a



house to boarded. But Cathy really couldn't stand living with a patient like Rachel anymore. Rachel wreaks havoc at Cathy's house which this time is intolerable. Cathy's house was full of Rachel's vomit and urine strewn all over the stairs and hallways. And of course this is done under the control of alcohol. Even though Cathy had often warned him not to drink alcohol again for the sake of his good and health as well. But it is indeed a difficult thing to warn a heavy alcoholic. Eventually Cathy kicked Rachel out of her house.

Data 7

“Give me a ring, OK? And come straight home, Rach, don't go to the pub. I don't intend to. I wanted a drink at lunchtime; I was desperate for one after what happened in Witney this morning. I didn't have one though, because I had to keep a clear head. It's been a long time since I've had anything worth keeping a clear head for”. (page 94)

The seventh data contains a message for Rachel from Cathy not to go to the Pub, a place where people will come to drink alcohol. However, from the data above, information can be found that Rachel did not want to get drunk that day. She wanted to keep her mind clear so she could think. We can find the fact that Rachel has not been able to think about things for a long time and remember them in detail and clearly. This is due to the effects of his alcohol addiction. But making the decision to just one day not drink alcohol is a serious inner struggle from within.

Suspected of Megan Hipwell's Murder

Data 8

“Had you been drinking on Saturday evening? He asked. Before you went to Witney, had you been drinking? The heat came rushing back to my face. Yes, I said. Mrs Watson ~ Anna Watson ~ said that she thought you were drunk when she saw you outside her home. Were you drunk? No, I said, I keeping my eyes firmly on the detective so that I didn't catch Cathy's eye. I'd had a couple a drinks in the afternoon, but I wasn't drunk. If you remember anything about Saturday night, anything that might be helpful to us, would you please call me? He said, handing me a business card. (page 103)

This conversation shows Rachel being interrogated by detectives. She was asked several questions by the detective. Rachel is being interrogated regarding the case of the disappearance of Megan Hipwell or the woman she has been calling Jess. She's been missing since a few days ago. At the same time Anna saw Rachel who was drunk in front of her house. This was a disadvantage for Rachel. She realized that she was considered one of the people suspected of Megan's



disappearance. Especially the day that Megan disappeared Rachel was in the same residential area as her residence. Plus she is an alcoholic, exacerbating and increasing the possibility she can do anything beyond her control without her knowing it. This was enough to add to the misery she had been through all this time in her life.

Data 9

“It didn’t happen. No doctor has been able to explain to me why I can’t get pregnant. I’m young enough, fit enough, I wasn’t 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 miscarriage, I just didn’t get pregnant”. (page 110-111)

The data above shows that Rachel cannot have children even though she is in good condition. From the data above, it can also be seen that Rachel has had problems with alcoholism for a long time, and that seems to make her look more miserable. A woman who is barren and also an alcoholic is a figure of Rachel and is one of the factors in the divorce between her and her ex-husband.

Data 10

“I felt isolated in my misery. I became lonely, so I drank a bit, and then 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 I lost”. (page 112)

From this data, it can be concluded that Rachel is a very lonely person. She has no place to sharing and complain, no one wants to be around drunks. However, if she is in this

lonely and suffering condition, Rachel will continue to drink alcohol again and again until she feels no longer lonely, even though in reality this will exacerbate her addiction to alcohol and she will continue to be ostracized by her surroundings if she still has this bad habits.

Data 11

“I can’t blame all this for my drinking ~ I can’t blame my parent or my childhood, an abusive uncle or some terrible tragedy. It’s my fault. I was a drinker anyway ~ I’ve always liked to drink. But I did become sadder, and sadness gets boring after a while, for the sad person and for everyone around them. And then I went from being a drinker to being drunk, and there’s nothing more boring than that”. (page 112-113)

The eleventh data shows that Rachel consciously said that she was a drunk from the beginning. She doesn't blame anyone for her alcohol problems. But the



desire to drink alcohol and get drunk will increase when she is sad. And she will continue to drink alcohol to relieve her sadness. But this turned out to be a bad start for Rachel, as time went on she became a heavy drunkard and made people around her distant and bored due to what she did when she was under the effect of liquor. And this also makes her feel more alone and lonely.

Data 12

“I want drink and I don’t want one, because if I don’t have a drink today then it’ll be three days, and I can’t remember the last time I stayed off for three days in a row”. (page 126)

The data shows that Rachel has not drunk alcohol in almost three days and if she didn't do it today it would be a record for herself, not drinking alcohol in three days which is a long time She hasn't had it again since she became a heavy drunkard. But there is always a conflict from within herself between drinking alcohol or not, to stop being an addict but she already feels very dependent.

Data 13

“I’m so pleased for you, Rach, she said. Getting yurself sorted. You’ve had me worried. Then she told me that she was going to spend the weekend at Damien’s and the first thing I thought was that I’m going to get home tonight and have a drink without anyone judging me”. (page 136)

This is conversation between Rachel and Cathy, it can be seen that Cathy's mood is relieved after knowing that Rachel has resolved her problem with the police regarding the disappearance of Megan Hipwell. And Cathy told him that she would spend the weekend with Damien and not come home. However, finally Rachel's unstable mind returned to drinking alcohol because there would be no one to scold her today. For an addict like Rachel, alcohol is an outlet for what he has experienced so far, alcohol serves as a temporary reliever of sadness and loneliness.

Data 14

“I don’t look well. Still,three days off isn’t bad,and I’ll start again today”. (page 141)

The quote above shows that Rachel has managed to abstain from drinking alcohol for three days, but she still feels unwell. This happened as a result of long-term alcohol consumption that she had been doing for a long time. The alcoholics will be clearly visible just from the look on her face, especially the eyes.

Often Lies and Loses Job because of Alcohol



Data 15

“I can feel the heat come to my face, my stomach a pit of acid. Yesterday ~ sensible, cleared-headed, right-thinking ~ I decided I must accept that my part in this story was over. But my better angels lost again, defeated by drink, by the person I am when I drink. Drunk Rachel sees no consequences, she is either excessively expansive and optimistic or wrapped up in hate. She has no past, no future. She exists purely in moment. Drunk Rachel ~ wanting to be part of the story, needing a way to persuade Scott to talk to her ~ she lied. I lied”. (page 145)

From the data above, it can be seen that Rachel regretted the decision she had made, by contacting Scott Hipwell, the husband of Megan. She pretends to know Megan and wants to meet Scott in person because she may have information about Megan's mysterious disappearance. Rachel is not lying if she has information about Megan. However, she must lie to be someone who has known Megan for a long time, even though in reality she only knows Megan and Scott through the window of the train she rides every day because the train is right in front of Megan and Scott's yard. She was forced to lie because she was under the effect of alcohol, it was actually just Rachel's curiosity about them without seeing what consequences she could get by providing information about someone who would later be prolonged and deal with the police. Rachel continues to experience conflict with herself, she will regret what she did while she was under the influence of alcohol when she woke up or woke up from her sleep.

Data 16

“You didn't know how to tell me? How about : Cathy, I got fired because I was drunk at work? How about that? I flinch and her face softens. I'm sorry, but honestly Rachel. She really is too nice. What have you been doing? Where do you go? What do you do all day? I walk. Go to the library. Sometime ~ You go to the pub? Sometimes. But ~ why didn't you tell me? She approaches me, placing her hands on my shoulder. You should have told to me”. (page 210)

The data provides information that Cathy has not known that Rachel has long been fired from her place of work. Because all this time Rachel had always acted like she usually went to work by train in the morning and came home late in the night. So Cathy thought that Rachel was very busy with her work. But now she knows Rachel was fired from her job because of alcohol problems. Cathy feels that she has been fooled by her friend all this time, but Rachel is too shy to tell because she feels very grateful to have been helped by being allowed to stay at Cathy's house, she doesn't want to make some problem again by admitting that she was fired because she was drunk at work.



Data 17

“later, sitting on the sofa with Cathy, drinking tea, she tells me how it’s going to be. I’m going to stop drinking, I’m going to get my CV in order, I’m going to contact Martin Miles and beg for a reference. I’m going to stop wasting money going backwards and forwards to London on pointless train journey”. (page 210)

From this data, it can be seen that Rachel decided to be more open to her best friend, Cathy. She decided to stop being an alcoholic. Although this will not be easy for her, because when she decided to stop being an alcoholic, Rachel always experienced upheaval from within. The temptation of intoxicating drinks always haunts her and eventually always makes her fail. She decided to start finding a new job and not to commute aimlessly to London every day.

Data 18

“I creep out on to the landing and tiptoe down the stairs in the half-light. I flip the little cupboard open and lift out the bottle: it’s dissapointingly light, not much more than a glassful in there. But better than nothing. I pour it into a mug (just in case Cathy comes down ~ I can pretend it’s tea) and put the bottle in the bin (making sure to conceal it under a milk carton and a crisp packet). (page 211-212)

Rachel is still very dependent on alcohol, she even secretly hides alcohol in a small cupboard that Cathy doesn't know about. Rachel is in complete conflict with herself, with her addiction to alcohol, even though she has determined many times to stop being an addict but in the end all attempts will fail. She always feels restless and her heart beats faster if she has not consumed liquor.

Depression, Infidelity and Alcohol Add to the Misery in Her Life

Data 19

“All right. OK. Can we go back a bit? To when the problem started. You said it was . . . four years ago? Can you tell me about that time? I resisted. I wasn’t completely lulled by the warmth of his voice, by the softness of his eyes. I wasn’t completely hopeless. I’m wasn’t going to start telling him the whole truth. I wasn’t going to tell him how longed for a baby. I told him that my marriage broke down, that I was depressed, and that I’d always been a drinker, but that things just got out of hand”. (page 250-251)

This data shows when Rachel was doing a counseling session with Kamal Abdic. She didn't want to reveal the beginning of the misery that had befallen her continuously, starting four years ago. Even though Kamal was trying his best to



get Rachel to tell him, she still didn't tell her completely. Everything has become out of control since four years ago, she is eager to have children like other couples, her household is falling apart and her addiction to alcohol is getting worse, especially since she gets a lot of pressure from the problems she faces in her life.

Data 20

“He had an affair, I said. He met another woman and fell in love with her. He nodded, waiting for me go on. It wasn't his fault, though. It was my fault. Why do you said that? Well, the drinking started before . . . So your husband's affair was not the trigger? No, I'd ready started, my drinking drove him away, it was why he stopped . . .” (page 255)

The data above explains that Rachel's alcohol addiction problem was one of the reasons her husband chose to divorce her. Apart from having an extramarital affair committed by her ex-husband, her addiction to alcohol has clouded her household atmosphere and in the end it was no longer possible to continue. Rachel's ex-husband can't stand living with a sick person like her and chooses to have a relationship with another woman secretly without her know it.

Data 21

“He starts out by asking me how I'm feeling, when I last had a drink. Sunday, I tell him. Good. That good. He folds his hands in his lap. You look well” (page 269)

From the data above, it can be seen that Rachel has begun to make peace with herself, this is evidenced by for the first time she managed not to drink alcohol for four days. This is a good start for her, slowly the conflict with herself has begun to be controlled.

Data 22

“You asked me, last time, about how the drinking started. He nods. I became depressed, I say. We were trying . . . I was trying to get pregnant. I couldn't, and I became depressed. That's when it started”. (page 269)

From the last data, it can be concluded that all the misery that happened to her and Rachel's alcohol addiction started with depression. This happened because Rachel could not have children and after trying various ways she still failed to conceive. This is what caused her to become a heavy alcoholic, because from the start Rachel was already very fond of liquor plus her depression made her seem to lose her way, which in the end she lost everything she had. Husband, happiness, family and even work, one by one began to stay away from Rachel's life which was very chaotic.



CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis that has been done, it can be concluded that alcohol plays a very important role and dominates the storytelling in the novel *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins. The data that was found explain directly or indirectly that alcohol and the problem of alcoholism experienced by Rachel Watson is one of the main causes of the misery she has experienced so far. The influence of alcohol often makes Rachel uncontrollable and forgets the events she experienced when she was under the influence of the liquor.

The misery experienced by Rachel due to alcoholism included: losing her job, negative thoughts from the surrounding environment, divorce, and depression. This habit of drinking out of bounds became more and more when she felt lonely, even Rachel couldn't calm down if she hadn't drunk it, at least once a day. Although there are often inner conflicts within her to immediately stop being an alcoholic, but in fact it is difficult to implement considering that Rachel really likes liquor itself.

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