

# **The Portrayal of the Inner Self in Alex Michaelides's *The Silent Patient*, AJ Finn's *The Woman in the Window*, and Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train***

By

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## **Abstract**

Psychological realism emphasizes characters' inner thoughts and motivation. This paper discusses the inner self in the *Silent Patient*, by Michaelides. *The Woman in the Window*, by AJ Finns, and *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins. This research will also examine the characters' inner selves and moral and ethical dilemmas. Identifying the features of psychological realism, such as characters' thoughts and motivations, minds and personalities, psyche and its relationship to a novel, and flashbacks of various types. These are psychological thrillers. These works compare the depression and abandonment. Inner conflicts, family issues, heartbreak, and tragedy as a common cause. Characters become murderers, cheaters, and depressed. These three works have many similarities. This paper concludes that the three books have different psychological elements. The conclusion of this paper shows psychological realism is seen in *The Silent Patient*, *The Woman in the Window*, and *The Girl on the Train*.

**Keywords:** Psychological realism, the inner self, *The Silent Patient*, *The Woman in the Window*, *The Girl on the Train*. Henry James

## **Introduction**

Psychological realism is a writing style was shown in late 19th- and early 20th-century. Henry James' fiction expressed romantic desires and family relationships. It focuses on the character, say Manikandan et al (2021). A novelist focuses on characters' inner thoughts, motivations, and actions.

Sanyal (2016:251) notes that psychological realism emphasizes character development over plot. This probes characters' minds to reveal mental images.

Literature and psychological realism are closely related because they both deal with human nature (e.g., perceptions and emotions). Using literature to understand youth's spiritual and emotional health (Prema, Arputhamalar, and Manikandan). Psychoanalysis and realism go together. Psychological realism explores characters' private thoughts and feelings. Psychoanalysis involves retelling the patient's

life story. Patients will be allowed access to suppressed areas.

This theory emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Psychology today claims to show both conscious and preconscious minds by examining the unconscious.

Psychological realism bases theories and predictions on factual data. Psychological transformation, social evil, hopelessness, and psychological isolation are also depicted.

Psychological realism uses flashbacks. Strachan identifies two flashback types (1990). Internal, external, and mixed flashbacks exist. One incorporates past events.

Internal retrospection suggests facing new challenges or reliving the past in the main story. Past events are respected.

This fills in gaps in published works. Knowing past events helps us understand new ones. Completion and repetition are involved (Genette, 1980; Strachan, 1990; Özigci, 2020).

External retrospection refers to past events included in the main narrative (Genette, 1980; Strachan, 1990). This flashback. Flashbacks before the story are both internal and external retrospections (Genette, 1980; Strachan, 1990; Peci & Gashi, 2021). This flashback only shows one event.

According to Mojalefa and Phala, (2005) the second group of flashbacks is random. This affects two events.

Psychological realism depicts characters' spiritual, emotional, and mental lives in literature. Young writers can capture a more accurate reflection of human nature and society using modern literary techniques. Psychological realism connects literary stories (Manikandan et al., 2021; Prabowo & Sinaga, 2020).

Anna, Rachel, and Megan are the book's main characters. The story is about alcoholism and romance. Anna has a daughter. Megan can't even care for her husband and child. She's confident in her looks. Rachel Watson reportedly doesn't drink. She's drunk.

## **Theoretical Background**

Psychological realism focuses on character thoughts and feelings, not actions.

Environment and characters' jobs. A novel's characters should be alive, breathing, and believable so readers can picture them. Psychological realism is a character-driven genre because it focuses on character motivations and thoughts to explain actions (Kennedy, 1989). Psychological realism depicts people's innermost thoughts and feelings realistically. Sen (2020) says psychoanalytic realism emphasizes central characters. These characters represent diverse human behavior and life experiences.

According to Szabados, psychoanalysis focuses on the unconscious mind (1982). According to this theory, subconscious memories shape your

actions. Modern psychoanalysis, interpretation, transference and countertransference analysis, and technical analysis are four fundamental components.

Sen (2020) argues that psychological realism only describes social settings, people, and places. These novels focus on universal themes rather than individual lives, which is striking. Khrapchenko (1972) says psychological realists prescribe the theory's characteristics and principles clearly. Khrapchenko emphasizes the importance of realistic 19th-century depictions.

While there is an abundance of critical and historical literature devoted to the general features of realism, various ways and means of realistic portrayal of reality are not explored sufficiently well. That is why it seems so important to analyze basic types of artistic

generalization in realistic literature and primarily in nineteenth-century literature.

These artistic generalizations will necessarily show the diversity of the aesthetic assimilation of the world and the role of the individual in it, as portrayed in texts that depict psychological realism. (p. 31)

This paper examines characters' thoughts and motivations, the mind and personality, and psychological pasts. *The Silent Patient* is about Gabriel and Alicia Bernerson. Alicia shot her husband five times. Afterward, she was silent. Theo Aber, her therapist, forces her to tell the truth. *The Woman in the Window* by AJ Finn is about Anna Fox, who had a tragic car accident and lives alone in New York City. She divorced Ed. Olivia is her ex-daughter. husband's Her divorcee has custody of their daughter. Anna survived an accident, but her husband and daughter died. *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins is a psychological suspense novel. Anna is a married woman with a young daughter. Megan, the second narrator, is self-confident despite being married and having a child. Third narrator is alcoholic Rachel Watson. She was fired for excessive drinking. Cathy doesn't know she was fired. Rachel pretends to work by commuting from Ashbury to Euston. She fantasizes about Jason and Jess, two couples she met on the train ride.

## Literature Review

*Life Is What You Make's* psychological realism was studied by Manikandan et al (2021). Ankita Sharma lives Preeti Shenoy's story. Ankita Sharma's life story depicts bipolar depression realistically. He wanted to give readers healthy thoughts and feelings.

Chen (2021) studied Henry James' psychological realism. New fiction WC moves from external to internal and objective to subjective. He considered his characters' psychological activities, brought realist art's external events inside, and bridged realist and modernist literature. James' novels explore pessimistic feminisms, each with its own subtypes, levels of cultural maturity, and analyses of how women mature and grow. Europeanized American women have European phenotypes. Chen believes psychology and novel development fueled psychological realism. *Life Is What You Make* It was tested for psychological realism by Manikandan et al.

Preeti Shenoy's *Ankita Sharma* is the story's protagonist. Ankita Sharma's life story depicts bipolar depression realistically. Author wanted happy readers.

Chen (2021) analyzed pessimistic feminism in Henry James' novels in relation to his psychological realism. This author's new WC on fiction writing shifts from external to internal and objective to subjective. He considered the psychological activities of the characters, transferred realist art's external events into the inner world, and transitioned from realist to modernist literary creation. James' novels explore pessimistic feminisms with different subcultures and cultural maturity. Europeanized American women have European phenotypes. Chen says the novel's development didn't cause this psychological realism.

Lothstein blasted *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides (2020). The book is about a woman's husband's murder and psychotherapy. Silence affects psychotherapy for violent patients. How do therapists treat violent patients? Patient revenge? Consultation room silence, lies, deceit. Meaning?

Anna Fox's agoraphobia was studied by Rai (2020). How did the protagonist's

agoraphobia affect her and others? Reading and noting relevant passages helped gather data. Anna Fox's agoraphobia linked to PTSD (PTSD). Her illness made her depressed and insecure, and she lost her job. Interesting find. The study cites her PTSD: She can't do her usual things. Agoraphobia was diagnosed. Instantly, her worldview shifts. She's depressed, frustrated, and won't survive. Always depressed (P. 80).

Ayu Nilasari and Thoyibi discussed domestic violence in *The Girl on the Train* (2020). The novel's depiction of domestic violence revealed its causes. Data collection, editing, organization, and analysis led to the study's conclusion.

Domestic violence is caused by a man's violent habit, economic problems, disloyalty, and jealousy. Plot, events, style, setting, and characters depict domestic violence. Paula Hawkins' desire to raise domestic violence awareness inspired the novel. Larbi examined the 20th-century psychological concept Interior Monologue (2019). 19th-century novelists James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf used this technique. Her psychological works experiment with her characters' psyches and go beyond realism. Characters drove plot. Woolf's stories explore tangled memories and emotions. The research focused on Woolf's philosophical underpinnings of the Stream of Consciousness and how she uses it to show and uncover her characters' anxieties, as well as the anxieties of World War I and disappointment with modern enterprise. Sihombing (2019) examined agoraphobia through *The Woman in the Window*. Anna Fox's agoraphobia is discussed. Before agoraphobia, she was a child psychologist. This study uses *The Woman In The Window* by A. J. Finn. Psychological fiction inspired this story. Sihombing studies the protagonist's agoraphobia's causes and effects. Anna's family's death caused agoraphobia. Anna has agoraphobia. Bowles (2016) compared *1001 Nights* and the Greek novel's psychological realism. This movie explores characters' minds. Longus's *Daphnis kai Chlo* from the fourth century CE depicts al-Nimwal-yaqn (*The Sleeper and the Waker*) (*The 1001 Nights*). Love and desire are in every novel. Pawar studied Ishiguro's psychological realism in *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), *An Artist of the Floating World* (1989), *The Remains of the Day* (1989), *The Unconsoled* (1995), *When We Were Orphans* (2000), *Never Let Me Go* (2005), and *The Buried Giant* (2007). (2015).

Different characters viewed the protagonist's inner life for the study. This novel's plot comes from characters' reactions, anxieties, and motivations. *The Girl on the Train*'s romance is examined by Utami et al. *The Girl on the Train* features a romantic triangle. Quality. It's psychoanalyzed. This study uses *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins (2015). Novel and its references provide secondary data. Rachel, Megan, and Anna's mental states are revealed. Second, the relationship affected the three characters' love lives, circumstances, and effect. Freud founded psychoanalysis, says Szabados (1982). Freud defined insight as recognizing "unconscious thoughts and motivations." Psychoanalysis aims to uncover unconscious emotions and experiences. Psychoanalysis treats anxiety and depression. "Curing" someone requires a cathartic (healing) experience.

Psychological realism is rare in literature. This paper compares three abandonment-themed works.

## **Importance of the Study**

This paper identifies and analyzes psychological realism in selected works. After examining "Psychological Realism," the paper examines the selected works to find commonalities. By interpreting these novels within the context of psychological realism, I hope to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth reading of these works and demonstrate

the genre's many facets. Previous studies seem to have overlooked *The Silent Patient*, *The Woman in the Window*, and *The Girl on the Train* by Alex Michaelides, AJ Finn, and Paula Hawkins. The current paper helps bridge this gap by focusing on the inner self and moral and ethical dilemmas characters face in the chosen literary works.

## Research Problem

Both psychology and literature seek to understand human nature, so realism is common in fiction (Moghaddam, 2004). Characters' inner motives, psychological processes, and mental narratives reveal the novel's psychological realism. Alex Michaelides' *The Silent Patient*, AJ Finn's *The Window*, and Paula Hawkins' *the Girl on the Train* use flashbacks and stream-of-consciousness to explore the inner self. In the current paper, character thoughts, motivations, minds, personalities, psychedelic pasts, and stream of consciousness are examined. This study also examines Alex Michaelides' *Silent Patient*, AJ Finn's *The Woman in the Window*, and Paula Hawkins' *the Girl on the Train*. The essay links psychological realism to the literary works it examines.

## Methods of Study

This paper examines how the female characters' personalities and psychological status are affected by abandonment in three novels, focusing on internal, external, and mixed flashbacks.

This trilogy is about abandonment. Alicia Bergerson's story begins after she kills her husband, Gabriel. Anna Fox and her daughter die in her second novel. In Rachel's third novel, the main character is her ex-husband, Tom. Megan is unhappy with Scott but stays with him out of fear of being alone. (Rachel's "Jess")

### *Key terms*

**Psychological realism** reflects a person's feelings, thoughts, emotions, and personality (Sanayl, 2016).

- **Flashback** is a literary technique called the plot (the second level of a text) by narratologists (Mojalefa and Phala, 2005).

- **The stream of consciousness** is a literary device that portrays a person's perspective in which the character's thought processes are written in relation to his/her sensual reactions to external occurrences or in a loose interior monologue. This modernist narrative device (Wilson, 2001)

### *Alex Michaelides's The Silent Patient*

A woman kills her husband in Alex Michaelides' *the Silent Patient*. This paper examines the criminal's mind, motivations, and spiritual, emotional, and familial aspects. This debut novel explores transformation, evil, hopelessness, and isolation.

Alicia's inner feelings that drove her to murder her husband include her family's problems, her mother's mental illness, and the man who used to watch her house. Her husband didn't believe her, so she saw a doctor. Her husband abandoned her when Theo asked him to choose between them, not believing her about the predator.

Manikandan et al. (2021) studied Ankita Sharma's bipolar depression life journey in terms of the character's inner torture. Diagrams explain *The Silent Patient*'s psychological realism.

### *Assassinating Gabriel*

Psychological realism is non-chronological. Events are presented non-chronologically through characters' thoughts and memories. Gabriel is Alicia's love.

Alicia said, "I've never been comfortable with words—I think in pictures, express myself with images" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 8). The couple seemed close.

I've been feeling depressed lately, about a few things. I thought I was doing a good job of hiding it, but he noticed—of course, he did, he notices everything. He asked how the painting was going— I said it wasn't. He got me a glass of wine, and I sat at the kitchen table while he cooked.

I like watching Gabriel move around the kitchen. He's a graceful cook—elegant, balletic, organized. Unlike me. I just make a mess (Michaelides, 2019, p. 8).

Alicia used to write in her diary about her feelings towards her husband in order to just assure him that she was fine because he used to worry about her.

I can't bear the thought of him worrying about me. I don't ever want to cause him and distress or make him unhappy or cause him pain. I love Gabriel so much. He is without doubt the love of my life. I love him so totally, completely (Michaelides, 2019, p. 9).

The narrator then describes Gabriel's murder by Alicia. During the incident, she is found with slashed wrists. "Her wrists had deep, bleeding cuts across veins" (Michaelides, 2019, p.12).

After a failed suicide attempt, Alicia is charged with murder. While the lawsuit is pending, she paints Alcestis, a Greek heroine who sacrificed her life for her husband. Alcestis shows the flaws in this analogy.

Gabriel was photographing models for Vogue on the day he died, while Alicia worked on her exhibition. Gabriel was killed and "drove home at 11 p.m." (Michaelides, 2019, p. 11). Barbie Hellmann heard gunshots and called police, who arrived in 3 minutes. Police found evidence that Alicia killed her husband when they entered the house.

*Alicia was discovered standing by the fireplace.*

*Her white dress glowed ghostlike in the torchlight.*

*Alicia seemed oblivious to the presence of the police.*

*She was immobilized, frozen—a statue carved from ice—with a strange,*

*frightened look on her face as if confronting some unseen terror (Michaelides, 2019, p. 11).*

The narrator shows how Alicia remains silent when police investigate Gabriel's death. Despite not saying or doing anything, her facial expressions reveal fear and a major secret.

Police found much blood. Red blood means it's Gabriel's. They found a pool of blood near Alicia's feet and on her white dress, as well as fresh, bleeding cuts on her wrist veins.

Alicia doesn't speak after her husband's death, but she paints. Psychiatric nurse: Alicia doesn't sleep or eat.

The findings support Pawar's (1982) paper, which focuses on protagonists' reactions, fears, and motivations to challenges. Author details Gabriel's betrayal. The author wanted Theo to describe Kathy's infidelity while at the grove to deceive the reader into thinking they happened during his time there, when they happened the year before. Kathryn Fyber's affair with Gabriel. Alicia's husband claims Kathy left her laptop open so he could discover her

infidelity. Six years earlier, when Kathy had an affair with Gabriel, Alicia's husband, Theo stormed into Alicia's house, captured her, and exposed the affair, reactivating a long-buried trauma that drives her to shoot Gabriel.

Gabriel refused Alicia's request to die. Theo told Alicia Gabriel betrayed Kathy then. Theo abandoned Alicia and Gabriel. Gabriel's pleas were ignored. She remained silent because Gabriel had sentenced her to death (Michaelides, 2019, p. 202). "Gabriel had tyrant's eyes, my father's eyes, and stood up for the betrayed and brokenhearted," she said. My dad was right—I deserved death. I was useless. Gabriel treated me thus (Michaelides, 2019, p. 202). She then asked, "What else? No, I didn't kill Gabriel. His murder. Mikelides (2019, p. 202)

### ***The Characters' Psychological Origins***

#### ***Alicia***

Characters' inner turmoil Alicia witnessed her mother's car suicide as a child. Alicia tried to kill herself when she drove into a brick wall with her mother.

Alicia describes her mother Eva's mental illness, in which she drove her car through a wall to kill herself and her daughter. Alicia is the only survivor after Eva's death.

She feared becoming like her mother even after painting Gabriel on the cross. "Is madness in my blood?" she asked. Michaelides (2019, p.46) describes Alicia and her husband's marital problems. She admits that she fought with him because he wanted her to have a child, but she was afraid to do so because she doesn't want to end up like her mother and have a child with mental illness.

*Alicia's lawyer, Gabriel's brother, Max, assaulted her. As Alicia said, Max grabbed my arm hard and pulled me toward him.*

*I lost my balance and fell onto him.*

*He raised his fist and I thought he was going to punch me.*

*"I love you," he said, "I love you; I love you, I love—" Before I could react, he kissed me. I tried to pull away but he wouldn't let me. I felt his rough lips all over mine, and his tongue pushing its way into my mouth. Instinct took over (p. 84).*

#### ***The Secret Motives of Alicia***

These inner motives are conveyed by psychologically realistic portrayals of the characters Alicia also fools Theo into thinking she hasn't seen him since the night he broke into her home and assaulted her. Using only her diary, she sends Theo on an irrational quest. She also fabricates the death of Gabriel in order to prove that Theo was the one who attacked her.

As she put it, "That first time I met him in the therapy room, I wasn't sure—there was something familiar about him, but different—I recognized his eyes, not just the color but the shape" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 199). As a result of Alicia's ruse, the story's readers and viewers are left in suspense until the very last scene.

#### ***Theo***

Because of a variety of factors, Theo's inner turmoil is on display. To begin with, after learning that his wife is having an affair with Gabriel, he sneaks back home to smoke

marijuana alone. In the meantime, he uses his wife's computer.

It appears that his wife has been cheating on him with multiple emails. As a result, he has no one with whom he can discuss his concerns about the infidelity of the person he loves the most, his wife. It was only after Theo learned of Kathy's betrayal that he realized he was unsuitable for her. As a result, he wonders if Kathy's love for him was sincere or merely a ruse. It dawns on Theo that he has no one else he can turn to for help but Ruth. The two of them decide to meet up. At his request, she makes herself available and listens to him as soon as he arrives at her home.

### ***AJ Finn's The Woman in the Window***

The Woman in the Window by A.J. Finn explores Anna Fox's agoraphobia and pain.

She wants to be a child psychologist before agoraphobia forces her to quit. This paper does not present events chronologically and explores character motives.

Anna's first-chapter flashback discusses marriage and fidelity. Anna's window shows Dr. John Miller's wife Rita cheating on him. She finds it amusing that the doctor's marriage is in disarray despite being therapists. Anna remembers Rita Miller's Sunday affair with a contractor. She blames Dr. Miller's wife for her treachery because of his busy schedule.

Anna is disappointed she can't find Rita. She's anticipating it because of her neighbor's divorce. Anna doesn't want her neighbor to be happy because she's alone. Anna's inner feelings may indicate she wants others' lives to be shattered.

### ***The characters of the Story***

#### ***Anna***

Anna practices psychology. She also lives with Ed and Oliva, Ed's daughter.

They went to Vermont to avoid a blizzard. Ed and Anna broke up because of Anna's relationship with her business partner Wesley, dampening holiday cheer. Anna's husband crashed after reading a text from her lover while driving. Anna and "Wesley" were friends before dating. Anna says Wesley was her "business partner, grad school mentor, and private practice recruiter." (Finn 2018:44)

Anna blames herself for her infidelity, her husband discovering it, and the vacation planning. Due to the accident, she caused, her husband and child soon died of hypothermia.

*At the hospital, they told me I was in shock. Then shock became fear. Fear mutated and became panic. And by the time Dr. Fielding arrived on the scene, I was—well, he said it simplest, said it best: "A severe case of agoraphobia." I need the familiar confines of my home—because I spent two nights in that alien wilderness, beneath those huge skies. I need an environment I can control—because I watched my family as they slowly died. (Finn, 2018, p. 316).*

#### ***Ethan***

Ethan becomes a cold-blooded killer in the novel. Simultaneously, he kills "Katie" and Anna.

Ethan, however, has no regrets. Anna witnesses a murder at a neighbor's house, but the victim and perpetrator aren't who she thought.

Ethan was adopted and witnessed his biological mother's affair with David. He killed

both his biological parents and Anna.

His past may have made him a serial killer.

According to Szabados, psychoanalysis focuses on the unconscious mind (1982). Your actions are shaped by your subconscious memories, says this theory.

### ***Mind Realism***

Dr. Anna Fox, a former child psychologist who lives in a quiet neighborhood with a park, exemplifies the story's psychological realism. She became a depressed, unhappy woman overnight. Her husband and daughter died. She lives alone with her cat. She became more introverted. She had PTSD. The character's inner motives, psychological process, and mental narratives are established. Psychological Realism focuses on character thoughts and motivations, not external settings or occupations.

Non-linear narrative style begins with Anna Fox's beautiful and successful life and ends with her miserable and isolated life after her family's death. 2019-09-23 (Noyes, 2019). Anna's first-person narration makes the reader feel like they're there with her. First-person narration reveals Anna's thought process, making the story more relatable. Anna shows this by logging her daily thoughts, feelings, and activities.

### ***A Novel by Paula Hawkins Entitled "The Girl on the Train"***

#### **Introduction**

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### ***Non-chronological order***

Anna's neighbor's wife has an affair with her husband when the story begins. Soon, he'll return." "He'll get her this time." Finn (2018), p. 10 has more. Anna's habit of eavesdropping on her neighbors with a camera and "Ten seconds" were then discussed. As I zoom, the camera twitches. He pulls keys from his pocket. Moments." 12-p. She described her neighbor's divorce in the following paragraphs.

Then, Anna's marriage, their accident, her denial about Ed and Oliva's deaths, and her drinking were discussed. Anna's doctoring and her family's home sale plans were discussed. Anna confessed to her tenant about her lack of self-care. She thinks her voice is unattractive.

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Rachel loved Tom very much. Their divorce tortured her. She indicates that clearly by saying:

I close my eyes and let the darkness grow and spread until it morphs from a feeling of sadness into something worse: a memory, a flashback I didn't just ask him to call me back. I remember now, I was crying. I told him that I still loved him, that I always would. Please, Tom, please, I need to talk to you. I miss you. No no no no no no no. (Hawkins, 2015, p. 15).

Rachel expresses her feelings and sorrows over her separation from her husband by crying and begging him to stay. She remembered when her husband left when she closed her eyes. Rachel is insecure because her husband left her, cheated on her, and accused her of imagining unreal things due to her drinking. She remembers when her husband left her because she couldn't have children and she's unattractive. His infidelity hurts her. She was insecure, lonely, and alcoholic. Her job was lost.

Both Rachel and Megan have inner conflicts that prevent them from living normally (Hawkins, 2015, p. 18).

It is clear they struggle with memories, but each of them seeks to achieve a certain objective. As indicated below:

Psychological Realism is the literary genre that delves on the internal life of the characters. Realism is lent to the text through a focus on the thoughts and motivations of the characters rather than on their occupations and external settings alone. The principal aim and characteristic of this genre are that the characters who inhabit a novel should be believable and living, breathing human beings who the readers can readily and inadvertently relate to (Sen, 2019, p. 13).

### ***Non-chronological order***

Out-of-order storytelling is a narrative technique. Paula Hawkins's *Girl on the Train* (2015) is non-chronological. The book begins with an epigraph, or quote.

book's mood This novel begins with two quotes about Megan's misery. Following:

She's buried beneath a silver birch tree, down towards the old train tracks, her grave marked with a cairn. Not more than a little pile of stones, really. I didn't want to draw attention to her resting place, but I couldn't leave her without remembrance. She'll sleep peacefully there, no one to disturb her, no sounds but birdsong and the rumble of passing trains (Hawkins, 2015, p.7).

The above epigraph is from Megan's point of view and describes how she buried her baby next to railroads. The non-chronological order of events doesn't explain what she's doing.

One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl... Three for a girl. I'm stuck on three, I just can't get any further. My head is thick with sounds, my mouth thick with blood. Three for a girl. I can hear the magpies—they're laughing, mocking me, a raucous cackling. A tiding. Bad tidings. I can see them now, black against the sun. Not the birds, something else. Someone's coming. Someone is speaking to me. Now look. Now look what you made me do. (Hawkins, 2015, p.8).

The above quote describes how Tom murders Megan and how she thought about her

two babies while he was killing her. Events are arranged non-chronologically. Megan's misery, painful moments, and murder are abruptly shown. The author jumps around in time. This is non-linear storytelling. Kim et al. (2017) defines a nonlinear narrative as "a storytelling device that portrays story events out of chronological order, e.g., in reverse order or going back and forth between past and future events." The story's events are rendered in random order by combining past and future events.

The novel's events are mentioned non-chronologically, so the author begins with Rachel's drinking habit and how she takes the train back and forth to pretend she's still working after losing her job. She thinks others have better lives than her. Then she mixes the events that made her an alcoholic.

Later, the novel describes Megan and Anna's current status, such as the hole in Megan's heart from leaving her loved ones and the reasons she's miserable. Anna is an alcoholic and selfish, stealing Rachel's husband, and she doesn't like Rachel or Megan, according to the novel.

A non-linear narrative dominates the novel because events are not organized nor comprehensible because they are rendered in non-chronological order. Kim et al. (2017) defines a nonlinear narrative as "a narration technique depicting events in a story out of chronological order, such that the relationship among the events does not follow the original causality sequence".

The third novel's non-linear narrative describes events that changed the characters' lives. After her husband divorced her and she lost her job due to her drinking, Rachel became an alcoholic. Past events changed her life completely.

Megan lost Ben and Libby. Her first boyfriend left despite promising he wouldn't. Scott, her husband, stifled her freedom by reading her emails and intervening in her life. He once dominated her. All of her painful memories, along with her husband's dominance and control, changed her life so much that she cheated on him and got pregnant from her lover, Tom, without remorse.

Anna is a selfish, self-centered woman. She steals Rachel's husband Tom and hates Rachel for stalking him. She hates Megan because she thinks her husband likes her. All of these reasons cause Anna to become an alcoholic because of Tom, so her past events completely changed her life.

This novel's flashbacks are external retrospections that refer to events that occurred before the start of the story. Rachel was employed, married, and non-alcoholic in the flashback, but she became unemployed, divorced, and alcoholic. Her husband's infidelity led to her pathetic condition.

Stream of consciousness, a literary style that reflects characters' thoughts, feelings, and reactions, is evident in flashbacks. Rachel's husband's infidelity causes her to become an alcoholic and depressed. She envied the train couples. She realized they don't live the perfect life she envisioned. The novel is a thriller set in London, England.

The *Girl on the Train* revolves around Rachel, Megan, and Anna. Rachel is on the train, Megan is watched by her, and Anna steals her husband.

The novel reflects the narrator characters' betrayal. Rachel's husband divorced her after cheating and marrying and having a baby with Anna. Rachel becomes destitute, drunk, and jobless. Her husband cheated on her, and she lost everything that brought her joy, so she gained these qualities. Inner conflicts and feelings drive her to drink heavily. Psychological realism focuses on the character, according to Manikandan et al. (2021). This genre analyzes the characters' inner feelings and motivations for performing their roles in the novel.

The novel shows how Megan and Rachel can't escape their miserable pasts and uncertain futures. Both focus on their past rather than their future. Rachel can't forget the happy times she spent with her ex-husband Tom, who abandoned her. She's unemployed, alcoholic, and childless. Rachel remembers all these events. Megan, the narrator, was abandoned. Megan's past abandonment events deterred and affected her future.

Tom can't kick his bad habits, too. He went from one relationship to the next, such as being married to Rachel, then divorcing her and marrying Anna, then having an affair with Megan, his daughter Evie's babysitter. Megan was pregnant when Tom killed her. Anna kills Tom with Rachel's help because she's become an alcoholic like Rachel.

Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train* (2015) is a psychological thriller. Rachel, Megan, and Anna narrate this chapter. Each is lonely, depressed, and abandoned. Inner conflicts and self-affect each protagonist.

## **Conclusion**

The paper shows psychological realism in novels. Previous chapters analyze characters' thoughts, motivations, minds, personalities, and psychological pasts. Stream-of-consciousness in psychological realism is examined. Internal, external, and mixed flashbacks are described. Psych thrillers.

Psychological realism is a character-driven method that focuses on what motivates characters to make certain decisions and uses character's thoughts to comment on social or political issues (Jose, 2018, p. 247).

This paper is psychologically realistic because its characters experience loneliness, family problems, infidelity, and abandonment. All do harm. Alicia has a mental disorder when she kills Gabriel.

### ***Non-chronological novels***

The *Silent Patient*'s narrator describes Gabriel's death while he was photographing models for Vogue and Alicia was working on her exhibition. Gunshots and evidence of Alicia's husband's murder followed. Gabriel betrayed Theo's wife Kathy, according to the author. The author manipulated the timeline to make the reader think Theo's infidelity happened at the grove. By visiting Alicia, Theo exposed Gabriel's affair. Alicia shoots her husband. Gabriel doesn't show remorse because he doesn't say he loves Alicia.

Non-chronological events occurred throughout *The Silent Patient*. Nonlinear narratives emphasize characters' actions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings, per Suganya and Padmanabhan (2019). *Disorganized* (2019, p.547).

The *Woman in the Window*'s narrator says Anna lost her husband and daughter after he discovered her affair.

Anna pities Ethan because he moved to a new city alone. Ethan killed his parents and tried to kill Anna; the author writes. Ethan hides in Anna's house to learn her plans because she witnessed a crime in her neighbor's home, but the police don't believe her, and Ethan accused her of having psychological issues.

Nonlinear narrative emphasizes character thoughts. Postmodern narratives show the protagonist's inner world. Thus, fictional narrative helps us understand human action and thought, and the protagonist becomes real (Suganya and Padmanabhan, 2019, p. 547).

In the three literary works, nonlinear narratives explain human actions and thoughts; Alicia kills her husband after discovering his infidelity. Her cruel aunt and father want Alicia to die instead of her mentally ill mother.

Girl on the Train follows three miserable narrators. The story begins with an epigraph about Megan's misery, including the death of her baby and how she was thinking of her baby when Tom murdered her. Megan's misery, pain, past, and murder are described quickly. Megan's life is beautiful and happy, but she's lonely and abandoned.

The author discusses Rachel's drinking and London trip, citing her husband's betrayal and inability to conceive as reasons she became an alcoholic. Megan's misery and lost loved ones are then discussed. Anna steals Rachel's ex-husband Tom and dislikes Rachel and Megan, the writer says.

### ***Stream-of-consciousness novels***

Stream-of-consciousness shows characters' thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Stream of consciousness describes a person's thoughts and feelings. Theo exposed Gabriel's affair with Kathy, so Alicia killed her husband. She killed her husband and now suffers mental illness. The novel depicts Alicia's painful past, including her mother's suicide attempt and death and her father's confession that he wants her to die instead. Lydia tormented Alicia with Paul. Theo's father abused them. She cheated, Cathy. The protagonists are hurt.

Anna's husband and daughter die in *The Woman in the Window*. Anna believes she still has parents. They talk daily. Accident causes agoraphobia. Only heavy drinking and spying on neighbors helped her.

Anna's mean. While snooping, she sees her neighbor's wife betray her husband. She wants to ruin her neighbor's marriage. Because Ethan has no friends, Anna befriends him. She was called crazy when she saw a crime from her window.

The novel focuses on three miserable narrators. Rachel is infertile, unemployed, and her husband cheated. So, she drinks to feel better. She feels sorry for others. Rachel would watch Megan from her London train window. Megan has a perfect family, says she.

### **Flashbacks**

Flashback is a narrator's explanation of a literary work's chronological order when past and new events are mixed.

In *The Silent Patient*, the flashback is external retrospection, narrating past events like Theo injecting Anna with morphine and her mental illness. This flashback gives backstory (Mojalefa and Phala, 2005).

Anna has internal flashbacks about her husband's infidelity and the car accident that

killed her family, and external flashbacks about her neighbor's infidelity and how she wishes her marriage would fail. This flashback describes earlier events.

The Girl on the Train uses flashbacks to show new and old events. Rachel, Anna, and Megan recount new and old events. Rachel is unemployed and divorced; she takes the train to hide her situation. No family and infertility make her lonely.

Megan cheats on her husband because he controls her life; she's desperate because she lost her brother, boyfriend, and daughter in a bathtub; and her boyfriend, Tom, killed her when he knew she was pregnant.

### ***Comparing novels***

#### ***Loneliness***

Three works portray lonely protagonists. In *The Silent Patient*, Alicia kills her husband after learning of his infidelity from her therapist. Alicia's father doesn't love her, her mother committed suicide, and her aunt tortured her. Her husband brought her joy and enthusiasm, but she killed him. She became a silent, lonely psychiatric patient.

Anna loses her husband and daughter in the novel. She stayed home with agoraphobia, spying on neighbors and imagining conversations. Solo.

Rachel, Anna, and Megan are the main characters. Rachel is lonely because she's unemployed, divorced, and childless. Anna killed her husband with Rachel's help after he betrayed her with Megan. Megan cheated to relieve her loneliness.

#### ***Betrayal***

Both Theo and Alicia fear abandonment after being betrayed in *The Silent Patient*. They know their infidelity but want them to stay because they're lonely.

In *The Woman in the Window*, Anna had an affair with her lessee business partner David. Anna slept with David. Following:

Master bedroom and bath. This year, I spent a lot of time in my dual-adjustable sleep system mattress. Ed's side is soft, mine is firm. He said, strumming the top sheet, "You're sleeping on a brick." I told him, "You're sleeping on cumulus." He kissed me slowly (Finn, 2018, p.19).

Anna cheated on her husband, per the quote. Her business partner sent her messages to hide her affair from her husband while she was driving. Her infidelity caused her family and agoraphobia.

Rachel, Anna, and Megan narrate. Rachel's abusive husband Tom divorced her and married Anna but cheated with Megan. Megan betrayed Scott because he controls her life, according to the novel.

In the three novels in this paper, murder and infidelity are associated with psychological realism because the killers have inner conflicts, familial problems, and betrayal. This causes aggression.

This paper examines psychological realism in Alex Michaelides' *The Silent Patient* (2019), Adam Finn's *The Woman in the Window* (2018), and Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the*

Train (2018). (2015). The paper concludes that the three protagonists are abandoned, dissatisfied, and betrayed. In *The Silent Patient*, Alicia killed her betraying husband. Anna betrayed her husband with her business partner, and he caused a car accident that killed her husband and daughter.

These characters were dissatisfied. Alicia is a silent mental patient after killing her husband over betrayal and painful memories.

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