

CHAPTER IV

THE EFFECT OF POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ON THE MAIN CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY IN THE NOVEL *GIRL AGAINST THE UNIVERSE* BY PAULA STOKES

As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, Maguire Kelly has experienced the loss of the loved ones at her young age, Maguire grows up believing that she has caused a lot of troubles and bad luck. Even though she gains a new family and moves to the other town, she still experiences the trauma which cause her to struggle in facing her life and still haunted by the trauma. After some traumatic accident, Maguire described as an introverted and chose to shut herself in her room.

This chapter further discussed several points: the trauma experiences by Maguire, Maguire personality after the trauma and types of defense mechanism that she uses to overcome the trauma.

4.1 Traumatic Event That Happened in Main Character's Life

Trauma often result intense emotional and psychological distress, usually due to related experienced and events. However, trauma itself according to Tayson (2006) if a person experiences the trauma of sudden death, being separated from a loved one, losing a sibling or family, and so on. Traumatic event can cause someone into a bad mental health and can break someone's happy and safety feeling. People that suffered from PTSD have intense feeling and disturbing

thoughts related to their experience that last long after the traumatic accident has ended. People with PTSD may avoid situation or people that remind them of the traumatic event.

Through Maguire, Stokes represents how Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can effect victim's personality and social life. The explanation below is the cause of the trauma that Maguire experienced that caused her isolate herself and believe that she is a bad luck for people around her.

4.1.1 Car Crash Accident

First trauma was on a car crash accident that occurred during her eleven summer vacation on the rock climbing park of San Louis Obispo. Maguire remember all the details of the accident.

Connor and I were fighting about this boy who lived down the street when I saw the giant truck veer dangerously into our lane. The driver must have lost control of his rig as he navigated the twisting mountain road. Dad tried to swerve onto the shoulder at the last second, but we were driving along the side of a hill and there was just a few feet of concrete and a flimsy guardrail. The back of the truck clipped us, sending both vehicles straight through the guardrail and down to the incline. Our car flipped end over end and landed in a rocky ravine. Dad, Uncle Kieran, and Connor were dead before the paramedics could get us.

I didn't even get hurt (2)

From the quotation above Maguire remember all the details about the car accident. This accident had a huge impact on Maguire's psychology because she just lost three members of her family. The car accident and loss of family members caused great trauma for Maguire. In addition after the accident, people called her 'miracle kid' because she is the only one who survive from that accident, this made her even more depressed and guilty.

4.1.2 Roller Coaster Accident

One year after the car accident, Maguire had another accident which traumatized her again.

When I was twelve, a roller coaster car I was riding in careened off the tracks and crash to the ground at the nearby amusement park. That accident wasn't quite serious- we were at the bottom of a hill when it happened, and at least no one died-but every single passenger in our car had serious injuries, except for me. (3)

This second accident made Maguire believes that she was a bad luck, because again she is the only one who survive from the terrible accident. Not the same with the first accident, this time people started calling her 'witch' because she makes people around her harm. After the accident, Maguire and her mother decided to move to another city. Besides that, Maguire start to avoid interact with other people and choose to lock herself in her room.

4.1.3 The Neighbor's House Caught Fire

And then a few weeks ago, I left a candle burning on my windowsill and went for run. When I came back an hour later the next door neighbors' house was completely engulfed in flames.

You wouldn't think a brick could go up like a box of matches from one teensy dollar store votive, but it did. (4)

Moreover, from the narration above, another incident related to Maguire occurred. Apart from that, there were several incident that traumatized Maguire. Everything that happened, she believed that something happened to her and she was one of the main actors in the tragedy. She felt guilty towards the people who were hurt by being around her. I nod. "I went to my friend's sleepover party and everyone but me got sick. And then for a while nothing major happened, but there were smaller things, like the time some Rollerbladers fell down while I was running past them." (14)

Lastly, another bad things happened around Maguire, because of these bad events, Maguire finally decided not to interact and avoid activities that involve many people. These certainly affects Maguire's social life. Even though sometimes she feels lonely, Maguire feels lees worried nor guilty for hurting people near her.

4.2 Maguire's Personality After the Traumatic Accident

Presumably, Maguire's introverted personality is the result of the car accident that killed her father, brother and uncle, also other incident that happened to her and people around her. According to Oktaviani in her article, introvert is a person whose attention directs his own feelings and thoughts. Introversion shows personality to subjective experience, concentrating self to the internal and private world where the reality is the result of observation, tends to isolated, shy, contemplative, nervous easily, reserved, unfriendly, even anti-social, and busy with their own internal life (2021:51). Following are the characters of Maguire as a teenage girl.

4.2.1 Anxious

In the book written by James G. Hollandsworth, Jr *"The Physiology of Psychological Disorder: Schizophrenia, Depression, Anxiety, and Substance Abuse"* (1990), the meaning of anxiety are characterized by feelings of subjective distress (e.g. apprehension, fear, etc.) and avoidance behavior. Some of these disorder have distress as the classic feature, while for other avoidance behavior is the primary characteristic (146).it means that anxiety is a condition of people who are feeling uncomfortable with their physics or mind, they perceive that something bad will be happen in their life. In Maguire's case, she has lost her father, brother and uncle, which is the most important people in her life. As the result of Maguire's traumatic experiences, there are several effects that affect her personality, anxiety is one of them.

There are people going in and out of the bathroom, but no obvious hazards. No lurking strangers. When you're disaster magnet like me, it makes sense to constantly be assessing your environment for dangers. I'm not too worried about anything bad happening inside Dr. Leed's inner office because it's just the two of us, but anytime I'm stuck in public I try to do a quick check of my surrounding every few minutes. (16)

Based on the quote above, it can be said that Maguire looks restless and fear when she is in a public place. Maguire feels uncomfortable in public places where there are lots of people because it will make her anxious, she is afraid that something bad will happen to people around her. Maguire's anxiety is related to trauma in her past which makes her think that she is a bad luck and can hurt people around her, therefore she isolated herself from the "world". "I have been hiding from the world since I was twelve. That's when the roller coaster accident happened and people started to talk." (226). This dialogue shows that Maguire began to isolating herself from society when she was twelve, when people started talking about her and saying that she is a bad luck. This anxiety has been pressing her to be someone who avoids people and would not do anything related to public space.

Apart from being anxious when she is in public places, Maguire is also afraid when she has to drive with other people.

Jordy makes a big point of buckling his seat belt, checking his mirrors, and signaling before he pulls away from the curb. I squeeze my eyes shut for a moment but the force myself to open them. I can't possible prevent an

accident if I'm not paying attention. He slowly drive to the end of my street and turn left. My entire neighbors is dark. I exhale a heavy breath and fold my hand in lap. (139)

The quote above shows how Maguire is very anxious every time she drives, because it reminds her of her past trauma where she had a car accident and lost her family members. After that traumatic accident Maguire never rode with anyone other than her mother, but she did that because she had no other choice. To relieve her feelings of anxiety, Maguire is always aware of her surroundings and also performs some rituals.

I tell him about my five-second checks, how I look for fraying electrical cords or tripping hazards or classmates who look like they could get violent, etc. "I also knock on a wood a lot, throw salt over my shoulder, wear a lucky amulet you know, basic good luck stuff. I shrug. "can't hurt, right?". (30)

This ritual she performs every day to make sure no one will get hurt. Moreover, Maguire always writes all the bad events around her in her notebook. This reminds her that danger can happen at any time and she has to be careful with her surroundings.

4.2.2 Difficulty in Forming Relationship

Trauma has an impact on a person's ability to form a relationship. Whiffen and Oliver states that Post-Traumatic Stress plays a role in inhibiting the victim's

ability to engage in special interest behavior in relationship, this is due to hypervigilance, lack of emotional regulation and self-deregulation (Whiffen & Oliver 2004). Maguire in the novel *Girl Against the Universe* is shown as an introvert, where she has no friend and limits herself to sharing personal emotion with those closest to her and peers to keep her emotion to herself. After those traumatic incident, Maguire draws a line between herself and her surroundings. She find it difficult to start communication and have a good relationship with other people.

My stepdad, Tom, looks up from his newspaper. He's an engineer of some sort. Chemical? Mechanical? Honestly, I don't know, but then I've never much of an effort to ask. Don't get me wrong; he's not a wicked stepfather or anything. He's basically cool. It's just even after three years, it still feels like I'd be betraying my real dad if I got too close to him. (37)

It can be seen the trauma of losing the closest person still lingers in Maguire unconscious mind. The car accident that caused her father death, had an impact on Maguire's relationship with her stepfather. Although Maguire admits that her stepfather is a kind and considerate person to her, Maguire chooses not to get too close with him because of feeling of guilt towards her real father. Maguire continues find difficult to connect not only with her stepfather but also with her friends. Maguire is never really friends with other student at her school.

The school day proceeds in an orderly fashion, thanks to a predictable routine and my five-second checks. I survive first-hour gym and then sit

through European literature and trig. I eat lunch by myself outside, on the front steps of the school. (38)

From the narration above, it is shown that at school, Maguire always isolated herself from society. She has no friend and prefers to spend her lunch time alone. Maguire feels no one wants to be friends with someone like her and she also thinks her friend will get hurt if they are around her. “I sit through the rest of my classes doing my best not to call attention to myself or make eye contact with anyone (70). Here indicates that Maguire needs to hide from other people by not attracting their attention and she does not have to speak to anyone. It is also represent her isolation, but she also feels her friends isolated her.

“If I don’t see them laughing at me then I’s not really happening, right? Except. Of course, it is, and I can totally hear them” (70). Despite being difficult to communicate and have no friends, Maguire is aware of what others think about her. She thinks no one like her. Maguire keeps her true feelings and thoughts locked inside her, thus suppressing herself. Maguire hide her identity and became an introvert. She also thinks her condition of being excessive self-consciousness causes problems in forming a relationship.

4.2.3 Self-Blame (Always Feeling Guilty)

People often wish that they could have done things differently after the death of a loved one, this can make them feel guilty and end up blaming themselves. Guilty in the bereavement context has been defined as “a remorseful emotional reaction in

bereavement, with recognition of having failed to live up to one's own inner standard and expectations in relationship to the deceased and/or the death" (Li J 166). Maguire as the only one who survived from the car accident that happened to her family, shows guilt and always blame herself.

"It means just because I was present at an accident doesn't mean I caused it. But going rock climbing was my idea. The amusement park was my idea. Everyone get hurt or die." My voice rises in pitch. "And those aren't only instances. And all the event have only one thing in common: me. What other explanation is there beside that it's my fault, that I'm ...cursed or something?" (13)

From the dialogue above, it is clear that Maguire blames herself for the accident that occurred. The accident that caused her family die, was a painful thing for Maguire. "And guilt. Guilt because you wonder if the universe made a mistake. Guilt because you know you're not any better than those who die." (1). Even at the beginning of the story, guilt is what Maguire tells to the readers. The fact that all the accidents that happened caused people to get hurt but coincidentally she is the only one who survived made her feel responsible for the accident. This has an impact on Maguire's mental health where she thinks she is bad luck. "All I know is my being around other people puts them at risk." (14). "Yeah. I have this phobia of other people being hurt when I'm around-it's why I don't ride the team bus, why I don't eat in the cafeteria, why I go to the therapist. Before I started at Pacific Point, I was basically a loner.". This two statement from Maguire, shows if she believes that she can threaten

the safety of people around her. This makes her difficult to move forward and grows, therefore Maguire chose to isolate herself.

4.2.4 Negative Core Belief (Always Think Negatively About Herself)

Core belief, define as fundamental, absolute, and lasting comprehension that a person develops about him or herself, others , and the world, are constructed from the effort of extracting meaning from significant childhood or formative experiences (Beck 2011). Beck also identified three categories of negative core belief about the-self: helplessness, unlovability, and worthlessness. Helplessness includes several belief related to personal incompetence, inferiority and vulnerability. Unlovability is the beliefs or fear that a person is unable to get the attention and intimacy they desire. Worthlessness is defined as a negative moral sense of self in which a person believes him or herself to be unimportant or burden to others (2005).

On Maguire's case as result of some trauma she experienced, making Maguire believed that she is bad luck for people around her. That belief comes from the trauma that occurred when people around her died or injured while she always survived. "I mean I'm unlucky. Bad stuff happens around me." I fold my hand in my lap. "You're risking your life just by being in this room with me." (12). It can be seen, Maguire believes that she is bad luck and can make people around her hurt.

"Well, if so, people should probably not be in the same place as me. That's like being hit by lightning five or six times.." Only it's not. It's worse. It's like being with your

friends and family and watching them get hit by lightning while you just stand there, unscathed, wishing you'd never suggested leaving the house in the first place.

“So you really believes that you're ...
cursed?” “I know it sounds crazy.” (14)

It can be seen from dialogue above, Maguire always thinks negatively about herself. She believes that she is cursed and is a danger for those around her. This also be seen from the following narration. “My stepdad is working late, and my Mom won't be able to pick me up for an hour and a half. If I were normal, I would just take a bus or taxi home. I am not normal.” (16). The trauma from the car accident that caused her family die greatly affected Maguire's mental condition. After the car accident she avoided riding with other people. One more example that shows Maguire thinks badly about herself. “Because I'm sick of people getting hurt in my presence. I'm sick of feeling like I can't do anything or go anywhere without having it end in some kind of disaster.” (176). Despite thinking she is bad luck, sometimes Maguire wishes it was not. Her bad faith in herself make Maguire isolate herself. This certainly affect her social life. It can be concluded that past trauma can affect how victims thinks about themselves.

4.2.5. Fatalistic

Fatalism refers to the belief that human character and action is determined not by our desire or ideas, but by something larger over which we have little control

(Straughan 1998). In other words, people who believe in fatalism believe that human cannot do anything because they are controlled by fate all worldly problems are completely submitted to god. In this novel, Maguire shows an attitude where she always think that universe hates her because of all bad things happened around her, this lead her to a fatalistic personality.

Dr. Leed drums his fingertips on the edge of his chair. “Well, if you’re going to be stuck here every week for a while, why not talk about things? I can help you if you let me, Maguire.”

I shake my head.” No one can help me.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because the Universe hates me.” (9)

It can be seen from the dialogue above in the beginning of the therapy session with Dr. Leed Maguire thinks that no one can help her. All the bad things happen around her are things that should happen because the universe hates her. Because of the fatalistic personality, Maguire made an excuse for not doing the therapy.

4.3. Maguire’s Defense Mechanism in Dealing With Her Past Trauma

As a human being, a person does not want to feel anxious, pain and depress, so it is natural for every person to take action in order to defense themselves. According to Tyson (2006) states defense is the process that occur in the unconscious of oneself to reduce pressure in order to avoid things that are unable to be handle (15). Furthermore, Gogdak (2015) states defense mechanism is the mental strategy used by the ego to continue blocking the harmful behavior while at

the same time reducing anxiety (348). Sometimes when those feeling of depression and anxiety taken a lot of place in someone, then the ego defense itself. The ego deals with the balance of the Id and the superego.

The effects of Maguire's childhood trauma can be seen from the way she is thinking and action towards people. That has been discussed in the previous subchapter that Maguire has to face some difficulties which are: anxiety, self-blaming and difficulty in forming relationship. Those characteristic make Maguire having more problem in her adolescence life. In this subchapter the writer will discuss the types of defense mechanism that Maguire use to overcome her Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

4.3.1 Denial

Denial is a defense of refusing to acknowledge that something terrible is happening. People who practice denial know that what they are doing is wrong or harmful, but they use various excuses to make it acceptable. In other word, as stated in Theories of Personality (2005), denial is a defense mechanism related to repression in which rejecting the fact that traumatic event or threat is exist (Schultz 59). This is also one of the defense mechanism used by Maguire. Her Id tries to suppress the stress from the traumatic accident and take it out from her mind, if there is something or someone related to the accident showing up it could recall the memory and pain that she had at that time, Maguire use her ego to denial the traumatic accident. One of her denial attitude is refusing to ride in a car with anyone

other than her mother, as seen from this narration “Since the accident, I’ve only been in a car by myself or with my mom. And the only reason I can bear it with Mom driving is because for a while I had no choice.” (18).

From the dialogue above it seen that Maguire refuse to get a ride with other people, although she knows exactly that Jordy would take care of her, she prefers to ride alone rather than ride with Jordy. This is an act of rejection that occur because of the traumatic accident in her unconscious mind. In addition Maguire also denies the existence of her stepfather “Honestly, I don’t know, but the I’ve never made much effort to ask. Don’t get me wrong, he’s not a wicked stepfather or anything. He’s basically cool.” (37). This statement from Maguire shows that her ego is rejecting her stepfather even though she knows that her stepfather is kind. The trauma from lost a loved one made Maguire unconsciously reject the existence of her stepfather, this was also because of feelings of guilt towards her real father.

By denying this fact, Maguire hopes that the trauma, guilt and fear that exist within her can disappear. Although it is hard to forget the accident that happened, it is easier to her to think that accident just a coincident not because the universe hates her.

4.3.2 Displacement

Displacement is an act of finding the substitution to direct an impulse or desire. When a person feels the target or object to direct the impulse is threatening, then searching for the replacement of them is the way to redirect the impulse (Boeree 177). This is done due to the unavailability of objects that can satisfy the desire.

This type of self defense can help in reducing stress and giving a person satisfaction by relieving the impulse. The fear and anxious that arise due to the trauma she as experienced fills the Id. In the defense mechanism process, Maguire uses notebook and Buddhist symbol as a distraction from her anxiety over losing her beloved family. Maguire wrote all the bad things that happened to her and all the anxiety she felt. It can be said that the notebook is like an outline for her trauma, guilt and fear.

I pull a midsize spiral notebook out of my purse. The words “Luck Notebook” are scrawled in black ink across the cover. The front part is all the bad things that have happened over the past few years. I realize I forgot to write down what happened with Jordy. I turn to the section where I record all of the unlucky happenings and their outcomes and jot down a basic description. (68)

This explains how the notebook is very important for Maguire, she always carries it with her. There, she can write down all the bad incident and write whatever she thinks without any fear of people judging her. Beside the notebook, Maguire also wearing a Buddhist symbol which she believes can bring a good luck. “The mystic knot is a Buddhist symbol of luck that I bought online after the roller coaster accident. It’s supposed to ring positive energy to every aspect of your life. I wear it 24-7 when I’m sleeping, when I’m showering, even in gym class.” (10).

This also shows how Buddhist symbol is important for Maguire. She always wear it, it gives herself confidence to get through the day. For Maguire, the notebook

is the safest place to express herself without fear of being judge by others. Moreover, the Buddhist symbol is a diversion from her unconscious mind that she is bad luck for people around her. Notebook and Buddhist symbols are the things that can distract Maguire from her trauma.

4.3.3 Rationalization

Rationalization is an action that Maguire uses quite often as a form of self-defense. In *Personality Theories* (2009), it is explained that rationalization is reversing the rational thought in order to reduce the threat of some events or impulses. This one is used often by many of us, sometimes at the level that we are conscious of using it, to make our actions are reasonable (Boeree 179). Shortly, rationalization can be described as making excuses to justify our actions. In Maguire's case, she has decided to isolate herself due to the fear of hurting people around her. Even when there comes the time that she must to go out, she chooses to lock herself. Her Id is filled by with guilt for the people who are hurt by being around her, her ego decides to keep Maguire quite during the therapy process and isolate herself from her surroundings. In such situation, she tries to rationalize that she isolate herself is her choice and she has the right to do so

Once I accepted the fact that I was bad luck, I shied away from group activities. And groups. And activities. I started spending a lot of time in my room, tucked under my covers reading books. There's only so much damage a book can do,

and I wasn't worried about hurting myself. Accidentally, hurting yourself is way better than hurting other people. (15).

We can see this in her narration that Maguire refuse to go out and interact with other people, instead she prefers to shut herself and read books. Sometimes she got lonely but Maguire feels this is the best option, because she is afraid of other people getting hurt if they are around her. At the beginning of therapy session with Dr. Leed, Maguire also chose to silent and did not respond to Dr. Leed question about her trauma.

Dr. Leed drums his fingertips on the edge of his chair. "Well, if you're going to be stuck here every week for a while, why not talk about things? I can help you if you let me, Maguire."

I shake my head." No one can help me."

"Why's that?"

"Because the Universe hates me." (9)

Instead of answering the questions, Maguire said the accidents happened because universe hated her. Maguire used her right not to answer Dr. Leed question. The writer concludes that this is one of her efforts to make excuses, therefore she does not have to remember her trauma. Stokes clearly describes that Maguire's rationalization made her cannot accept her trauma in the past and losing a loved ones. Maguire believes isolating herself is a reasonable thing because she do not want others to get hurts. Maguire uses that rationalization to defend herself from the anxiety and negative thoughts she was suffering at that time.

Based on the explanation above, the writer concludes that Maguire use three types of defense mechanism; denial, displacement, and rationalization. It is evident that defense mechanism influence the victim's behavior. The actions that Maguire takes contribute to help her dealing with post-traumatic condition that affect various aspect of her life. At the end of the story, with her courage, Maguire managed to deal with her trauma. She gets a friend and things are slowly getting better for her.

