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**The Notion of Criminality in Alias Grace by Margarete Atwood**

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## **Dedication**

*This humble work is wholeheartedly dedicated to:*

*My mom and dad for their prayers, love, and generosity and for teaching me all of life's  
important lessons*

*to my precious brothers for their endless support*

*To my lovely sisters Nesrine and Iman for always being there for me*

*And to all my beloved Family whom I adore immeasurably*

*Finally I'd like to congratulate myself for this effort and for never giving up.*

### **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that this dissertation has been carried out by me as a partial fulfilment for the Master's degree in English literature and civilization under the guidance and supervision of Mrs. Zeyneb Bougofa, Faculty of Letters and Languages, English Languages and Literature Department, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria. I further declare that the interpretations put forth in this thesis are based on my readings, understanding, and examination of the original texts. The reported findings I have used are duly acknowledged at the respective place. Also, I declare that this work is not published anywhere in any form.

**Karfa Hayat Sarra**

**Date: 08/ 06 /2023**

## **Acknowledgments**

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## Abstract

Margaret Atwood's novel "*Alias Grace*" captivates readers with its exploration of feminism, trauma, and crime through the compelling story of Grace Marks, a young woman imprisoned for her alleged role in a double murder. This dissertation embarks on a journey to unravel the intricate connections between feminism and defense mechanisms, specifically focusing on denial, displacement, and repression as they manifest within Grace's complex character. Employing a meticulous close reading approach, this study dissects how Grace Marks both embodies and challenges the socio-cultural and psychological implications depicted throughout the novel. The contextual backdrop of Atwood's work situates it within the realm of feminist literature, highlighting the pervasive influence of patriarchy on women's lives. Drawing from this foundation, the dissertation examines the multifaceted character of Grace Marks, unraveling the manifestations of trauma within her psyche. By scrutinizing her experiences, such as her imprisonment and alleged involvement in the murders, this research aims to shed light on how these traumatic events shape Grace's memory and sense of self.

**Key terms: Alias Grace, Crime, Defense Mechanisms, Feminism, Freud, Trauma, PTSD.**

### **List of Abreveitions**

**DID** : Dissociative Identity Disorder

**DSQ**: Defence Scale Questionnaire

**PTSD** : Post-traumatic stress disorder

**SASB**: Structural Analysis of Social Behaviour

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## General Introduction

### Background of the Study:

#### Canadian literature

According to Northrop Frye, Canadian literature is "the fruit of the British seed planted in American soil" (140). Canadian literature is literature originally known in Canada out of gathering British and American cultures in one language but has developed its own unique identity. Canadian literature distinguished woman writes much more than male writers in fiction in the light of the fact that the changes in the global view of the woman self and power, with the development of the position that led her to prove herself in the world of literature with a nationalist view to accrue Canadian identity problem.

In *Survival*, Atwood's work Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature in 1972, the book is a statement of belonging; it represents the expression of Canadian identity. She writes. "Canadian literature has been preoccupied with survival, and not just in the sense of physical survival. The themes of isolation, entrapment, and the struggle for personal identity have been recurrent in Canadian literature, reflecting the unique experiences of people living in a vast and often hostile territory" (Atwood 15).

Atwood's belief in Canadian literature and delineates nationally distinctive features of Canadian literature, for this theme, is not only about physical survival but also about the psychological and emotional struggles of individuals in a vast and often hostile landscape. Where she advocated both English and French novels and the main reason for writing this book is what Canadians are about, Canadian literature, and why they should read it as citizens of Canada. Further, many critics of Atwood's female character show the victim side of the woman under the name of destruction and colonialism, where she is under psychological pressure,

Atwood's humour, and her genius at interweaving the past and the present help her to be the major postmodernist in Canadian literature.

Postmodern literature is a reshaped of modernist thoughts within the ancient literature criteria for the exact purpose of postmodernism in Canadian literature, characterized by its self-reflexivity, fragmentation, and deconstruction of dominant narratives. Historiographic metafiction is one form of postmodern literature that combines elements of historical fiction and metafiction to challenge traditional notions of history and truth *Alias Grace*, the element of postmodernism found in the work reserved to describe fiction that is the character Simon Jordan, a doctor who is attempting to understand Grace's story. Atwood uses Jordan's character to comment on the process of historical research and writing and to question the reliability of historical accounts. To distinguish these paradoxical forms from traditional historical fiction called historiography metafiction ( Hutcheon 3-5).

*Alias Grace* is a novel written by Margaret Atwood and published in 1996, the novel tells the event of 1843 about an Irish maid Grace Marks who was sixteen years old when her family moved from Ireland to Canada looking for a better life. For substantial reasons, Grace and the manservant James McDermott were found guilty of the double murder at Richmond Hill, north of Toronto of their employer Thomas Kinnear and his housekeeper and lover Nancy Montgomery. While Kinnear's manservant was hanged for the crime, Grace had to pass life imprisonment where the society remained resolutely divided about Grace, in terms of considering her a scorned woman who had taken out her rage on two, innocent victims, or an unexpected criminal, implicated in a crime she was too young to understand. However, she has already been imprisoned for over a decade, and when a group that advocates for social reform attempted to prove her innocence, they couldn't succeed. However, interest in Grace's case is revived when Doctor Simon Jordan.

The novel is a work of Victorian Canadian literature fiction based on a true story about a real murder case related to a variety of historical events and hybrid literature sources like Gothic literature and using metafiction to enumerate it. *Alias Grace's* narrative of powerful women dealing with themes of feminism, crime, and truth covers both Male and Female Gothic.

Atwood is precisely concerned, with Grace Marks, the maid that part of the community tries to prove her existence and bring attention to her case, in the story many fragmentary and incoherent that was found as textual excerpts and fragments at the beginning of each chapter, coming from poems, letters, newspapers, and other textual sources.

### **Margarete Atwood**

Margaret Eleanor Atwood is the most influencer figure in Canadian literature, author, poet, critic, and feminist that arrived to international acclaim looking for national identity, her interest was in Canadian poetry from postcolonial literature to postmodern literature from short stories, critic and politics. The author of 18 fictional novels and a lot of books, poetry, and nine collections of short fiction, eight children's books her works were translated into more than 40 languages however she has rooted most of her work in her own country.

Her subject is concerned with Feminism survivor and victim mentality and looks for Duality: self and other, men and women. Atwood deconstructs power and dominance patterns in female interactions. Her works are concerned on the desire for self-expression of her female heroines, who are threatened and enslaved by patriarchal power systems. Since she links women's powerlessness with Canada's, her tales dramatically become the story of Canada as a powerless victim. In addition to her writing, Atwood is recognized as a prominent environmentalist and feminist who actively campaigns for social and political reform. She has received numerous accolades and distinctions for her literary contributions, such as the Booker Prize., the Governor General's Award, the Franz Kafka Prize, the Giller Prize in *Alias Grace*,

and other prestigious prizes of literature. and she is widely regarded as one of the most important and influential writers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

### **Literary Career**

At the age of twenty-two Margaret's literary career began with the publication of her debut poetry collection, "Double Persephone," in 1961. She went on to write several highly regarded books that earned her a place in the canon of world literature, including early novels like "The Edible Woman" (1969), "Surfacing" (1972), "Lady Oracle" (1976), "Life Before Man" (1979), and "Bodily Harm" (1981). Following the publication of "The Handmaid's Tale" in 1986, Atwood's writing took a darker turn and moved towards more complex narrative and historical modes, as evidenced by works such as "Cat's Eye" (1989), "The Robber Bride" (1993), "Alias Grace" (1996), "The Blind Assassin" (2000), and her most recent publication, "The Testaments" (2019), which serves as a sequel to "The Handmaid's Tale."

### **Alias Grace**

*Alias Grace* is a novel written by Margaret Atwood and published in 1996 shortlisted for Booker Prize and Governor General's Award in 1996 and also for Orange Prize for Fiction in 1997. Atwood in her work used historiographic metafiction form to expound the novel where the term Historiographic metafiction; refers to how some postmodern fiction writers, use metafiction to problematize conception of history. With challenges of gothic the novel, represent the mystery of the double murder of Thomas Kinnear and his mistress Nancy Montgomery in 1843, the charge of the crime was McDermott James the servant of Kinnear was executed however, he claims that Grace Marks is the one that responsible and who encourage him to commit the crime.

Grace Marks is an Irish maid who at the age of sixteen moved with her family to Canada looking for a better life, at the Kinnear house she was working under the survey of a wealthy

gentleman named Thomas Kinnear and his lover and housekeeper, Nancy Montgomery. Grace Marks and the manservant McDermott James were both found guilty of the offense, McDermott was hanged and Grace had to pass life imprisonment. The novel is told by Grace Marks before she was arrested, she tried to escape with McDermott, Even though Grace had been an accessory to the killing of her employer and his lover for nearly three decades, her culpability was not definitively proven. Nonetheless, her case garnered attention from both journalists and scholars.

In studying the character of Grace Mark's psychology with the Victorian society found stereotyping and prejudice as a result of her low social class and as a second sex, meanwhile, as an Irish nationality, the main source of the novel is the newspapers that claim that Grace is illiterate but in fact, she could read and how the society see Grace and celebrate murderess. Grace's character has a dissociative identity disorder, causing her to switch between different personalities. At times, she assumes the persona of Grace Marks, a blameless domestic worker, while at other times; she may embody Mary Whitney, the avenging spirit of her deceased friend. The character of Grace embodies the image of an uninvolved target. While Mary represents the cold criminal. The issue of memory that Grace faced is from these two souls in one body because she can't remember what she did when she is Mary Whitney.

At the heart of the novel is the idea of the criminal as a social construct. Grace's story is shaped by the attitudes and beliefs of the society in which she lived, as well as by the power dynamics of the master-servant relationship. Through her portrayal of Grace, Atwood explores how class, gender, and ethnicity intersect to shape perceptions of criminality.

### **Literature review**

Several articles released about Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* after the late 1990s reflect a degree of dissatisfaction with what seems to be the novel's contradictory intentions, especially offering a postmodernist criticism of history within the framework of nineteenth-

century literary norms there has been a rising interest in confronting significant problems that revealed Canada's terrible past with underprivileged women. Various study initiatives were carried out to investigate them employing multiple approaches and literary concepts. Like When 'feminism' becomes a genre: *Alias Grace* and 'feminist' television by Jana Cattien examines the 'feminist' critique in labelling cultural phenomena as 'feminist'. However, using a psychoanalytic examination, the research deals with the overarching feature of feminism thinking and gives a deeper probe of the struggle in the book.

A second investigation on the novel is Grace Marks, a Violent Madwoman or a Helpless Victim? Women, Madness and Crime in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* by Raquel Ayala Rotxés where she investigate the Victorian conception of women in the 18th century by highlighting the creation of femininity according to society, medicine, and culture. Another study about the novel is In Search of *Alias Grace*: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction by Margaret Atwood herself look for the facts, what she discovered, what escaped her grasp, and how this procedure influenced her story.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

People used to talk about *Alias Grace* as a historical crime that happened in Canada. the novel helps to acknowledge what happened in July 1843. Considering all the research done on this novel, not so many people dig deeper enough for the criminality side and psychological effects of the characters although the general story of the novel and the series has been discussed in many critical works. Therefore, this academic research will sheds light on a new perspective on *Alias Grace* of how Victorian society responded to feminism and Grace exhibits unusual behaviour that can be explained by psychoanalyzing her defence mechanisms.

## **Research Questions**

In the light of the above-mentioned research contextualization, the research will probe the following primary research question:

What are the motifs that led to the criminality in *Alias Grace*?

This primary question shall be investigated through the following sub-questions:

What are the defence mechanisms that were used by the character in the novel to repress the psychological issues?

How does Victorian society deal with the character of Grace Marks?

How has trauma affected Grace Marks's memory and her well-being?

How did the character's psychological complexities lead to the criminality idea?

## **Research Methodology**

This is a thematic study, and the research mainly descriptive analytical and qualitative. The study is in a psychoanalysis field basis on the Feminist approach's structure. And it focuses on Grace Marks psychology. It will rely on library research and previously published literature that is relevant to this study, as well as reading the novel and watching the *Alias Grace* series.

## **Aims of Research**

This investigation has several goals, some of which are investigating the portrayal of psychological issues in Victorian society in Canada. Studying the influence of historical events, and relieving criminality that the Irish maid faced which may be the main reason that caused her trauma.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

### 1.1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, we strive to offer an overview of the primary concepts of the current study, as well as broad definitions of the key literary theories on novel analysis. The theoretical framework of this study is to be divided into two sections to cover as much ground as possible in the available space.

The first portion of Feminism Theory in which the novel "*Alias Grace*" includes the nature of gender roles, how women are oppressed and marginalized, and the importance of agency and self-determination for women. One of the central characters in the novel, Grace Marks, a young woman who is subjected to various forms of oppression and marginalization throughout her life. As an Irish immigrant and a poor working-class woman, she faces discrimination and prejudice from those around her in partial society. She is also subject to sexual exploitation and abuse by her male employers and is forced to perform domestic labour without compensation or recognition.

However the same time, Grace exhibits a sense of agency and resistance, which is a key element of the feminist theory. Despite the many challenges she faces, Grace can assert her own voice assert her autonomy. She challenges traditional gender roles and expectations, refusing to conform to the stereotypical role of the submissive and obedient servant. She also challenges the legal system, using her intelligence and resourcefulness to manipulate those in power to gain her freedom.

The next part, titled Psychoanalysis from a Freudian Perspective, focuses on the basic principles of the theory that will be employed in the analysis. It will present an overview of the psychoanalytical tactics necessary for the study by describing the Freudian theory of The

Unconscious Mind and the Defensive Mechanism, which are embedded in the minds of the characters, to comprehend the psychological and cultural causes behind *Alias Grace*. Furthermore, to define and analyze the motivations for creating such art.

## 1.2 Feminist theory

Feminist theory arose in response to women's historical and current subjugation in diverse countries. Its goal is to investigate the social, cultural, and economic aspects that lead to women's marginalization and to fight for gender equality. Gender, feminist theorists believe, is a socially created term that affects and impacts people's identities, roles, and opportunities.

The rise of female authors paralleled the rising tide, or revival, of Canadian nationalism in the 1960s. Atwood rose to prominence as a prolific writer during a period when Canada, as a post-war independent state, was grappling with a lack of national identity while also experiencing a new wave of feminism and disenchantment with American imperialism. Where in the second wave of the women's movement indeed the female character was only found about men, in a male-dominated society, the female protagonist never had an independent character in any literary work it was all about men, and how they were dominating, thus women writing were a step forward to themselves. This gives the woman writing the ability to improve their power and wipes off stereotypes of the character of women being the other and the second sex. Not only the self-identity although this may be true society's point of view on her and her existence and how a woman can handle her own life.

In "The Second Sex," De Beauvoir investigates the concept of femininity and questions commonly held beliefs about women's subservient status in society. She claims that historically, males have defined and subjugated women, relegating them to the status of "Other." De Beauvoir sees the social, cultural, and existential ramifications of this oppression, emphasizing that women should be acknowledged as humans with action and freedom rather than as

biological distinctions. The *Second Sex* has been dubbed a "feminist bible," a term that is certain to turn off religious readers fearful of a sacred text and a personality culture.

(De Beauvoir 11)

### **1.2.1 History of Feminism**

Feminism has a long and complicated history; it reflects women's hardships and suffering, as well as their hopes for equality in male-dominated society. Many of these women oppose being at the whim of men and try to better themselves in society while pulling down the barriers that men have erected.

"Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class, but to create a society in which all women are free to develop their potential in the fullest way possible." They want to show their power and skill to achieve gender equality. Women created feminism to focus on women's daily lives and to highlight the various sorts of oppression that women have faced as a result of their prejudices in the political, economic, and social spheres (Lorde 123).

Feminism has been characterized as a modern ideology devoted to emancipation, autonomy, and rights it has been seen to be pushed toward the postmodern world, through female writers emerged and contributed to the growth of the novel. Women's role in the Victorian age is defined "women as secondary citizens to men" where the law of the society express that women's place is in the house environment where they were expected to marry and get birth to children and raise them well and take the house responsibility (Gallagher 57). As a result, they were a victim of oppression and brutality in their culture.

Women's role ideal is embodied in three models daughter, wife, and mother. "Expected to be gentle, refined, sensitive and loving. She was the guardian of religion and spokes woman for morality. Hers was tasked with guiding the more worldly and frequently tempted male past

the maelstroms of atheism and uncontrolled sexuality. Her sphere was the hearth and the nursery; within it, she was to bestow care and love, peace and joy” (Smith 655-656). Women who did not conform to these expectations were often stigmatized and marginalized, and their contributions to society were undervalued.

Victorian woman’s lives were tragic because of the male dominating society, especially for the lower classes but they endured and resisted this dreadful existence, and they did everything they could to survive. Many writers have depicted the lives of Victorian women in patriarchal ideals that dominated nineteenth-century society, thinking of women in a lower social status than men.

In a feminist script, the Victorian era was the golden age of the English novel, according to feminist critics, it was the movement in which feminists presented and interpreted women's experiences via the novel. Margaret Atwood is one of the great examples that succeed in giving a voice to the forgotten female figures, and women’s authors work to put the terrible reality that many women experienced into the forefront via their creative writings. These notions are widely considered to have been included as a result of the hard efforts of women who battled for their rights and delivered their life experiences, and arts to the world.

### **1.2.2 Women in Victorian Society**

The Victorian family was the most important part of society where a man had the main role and women reflected society’s standards and ideology's high expectations, biases, and prejudices of women where women were seen as inferior.

Marriage played a significant role in the life of Victorian women since it was only through marriage that women might achieve social prestige and position.. It was viewed as an oppressive institution for women in the nineteenth century, with husbands and patriarchal society viewing them as perfect wives if they obeyed the standards of a male-dominated society.

“The wife and children were expected to be obedient and submissive to her husband’s rules. By marriage, husband, and wife became one person in law—and that person was he. He had almost complete control over her body, and their Children belonged to him. Unless a marriage settlement arranged things differently, the husband was entitled to all his wife’s property, and he could claim any money she earned” (Perkins 73). Certainly, the fate of a woman was determined by her gender and social background. People from the upper classes had to embrace marriage as one of their few chances for survival (Price 38). The unmarried women from the middle class were called a “social problem”, therefore when women from the lower classes were given the opportunity usually enrolled in service at a young age until they got engaged and became married, and had children (Showalter 61).

In a society that not only saw women as childish, illogical, and sexually unstable but also left them legally helpless and powerless economically marginalized (Showalter 73). Showalter’s view of women in Victorian society defines as the women’s position above where they put men as the central figure in society and her as a powerless figure.

### **1.2.3 Mad Women in Victorian Society**

Jane Ussher has recognized that a typical second-wave feminism reading of madness is counterproductive for many female psychiatric patients because women should be solely responsible for their recovery by expressing their anger, recognizing the source of their oppression, demanding equal treatment, and resisting being labelled as mentally ill. It places the burden of change on the woman herself. She’d be exhausted - or at least satisfied - if she sought equality and refused to be pathologized.

“What we consider ‘madness,’ whether it appears in women or in men, is either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one’s sex role stereotype”. According to Chesler, when a woman "acts out" or deviates from traditional gender

roles that are devalued or viewed negatively in society, he argues that when men reject or deviate from traditional masculine gender roles, this can also be seen as "madness." Society expects men to be dominant, competitive, and emotionally stoic, and any deviation from these norms can be viewed as a form of mental illness or disorder (Chesler 93).

The concept of "female madness" can be seen as a form of resistance against the oppressive social and cultural forces that shaped women's lives in the Victorian era. Feminist scholars have sought to highlight the agency and power of women who have historically been marginalized and oppressed by patriarchal systems of control (Showalter 5).

Over time there is no one explanation that can include all of the variations of what might be considered madness. Where the term "madwomen" was often used in Victorian society to refer to women, this society sees that women are more likely than men to experience mental illness supported by empirical evidence who exhibited behaviour that was considered abnormal or deviant.

This could include symptoms of mental illness, such as depression, anxiety, or psychosis, as well as behaviour that challenged traditional gender roles and expectations. "They wouldn't know mad when they saw it in any case, because a good portion of the women in the Asylum were no madder than the Queen of England" (Alias Grace 20).

During the 19th century, women could be committed to an asylum for a variety of reasons, including "moral insanity" or "hysteria," which were not necessarily signs of mental illness. As a result, many women who were not actually insane were confined to asylums alongside those who were genuinely mentally ill.

### **1.2.4 Women Criminality**

Female criminality has been influenced by family status and the work environment that has controlled and oppressed women in different spheres. They can be explained in Heidensohn's writing about criminality, therefore, it is important to consider how gender and social roles intersect with our understanding of crime to ensure that we have a more nuanced and accurate understanding of who commits crimes, why they do so, and how we can prevent crime from occurring in the future.

“Their [women's] social roles and positions are essential to all explanations of crime since they depend on assumptions about “masculine” and “feminine” behaviour, on the nature of the family and women's role in it, and even on variations on the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres for men and women” (Heidensohn 314). This means there are significant variations between male and female criminal behaviour that is clear and obvious, and require explanation and interpretation (Goodstein 3).

## **1.3 Psychoanalysis from a Freudian Perspective**

Freudian psychoanalysis provides a comprehensive and varied perspective of the human mind, delving into the unconscious, early events, and defense mechanisms. Its long legacy demonstrates Freud's significant significance and the continuing usefulness of psychoanalytic concepts in understanding and managing psychological issues.

### **1.3.1 Freudian Psychoanalysis Criticism**

Psychoanalysis was not initially created by Sigmund Freud as a distinct field of study or medical practice. Instead, it consisted of various ideas, concepts, and notions that significantly impacted literary interpretation and criticism.

According to Freud, language provides a means of revealing underlying anxieties, fears, and desires that are often repressed by cultural norms. Freud believed that cultural and societal constraints prevent individuals from easily expressing their desires. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of focusing on languages and other symbolic expressions, such as gestures, noises, facial expressions, and writing, to uncover repressed desires and anxieties.

Freud's study of the link between language and the unconscious created the basis for both psychoanalytic procedures and critical studies. In literary criticism, psychoanalytic methods are used to analyze the language and symbolism used in literary works to reveal the author's unconscious desires and anxieties and those of the characters (Nayar 64).

Sigmund Freud described the Id as the most primitive and innate desire of an infant, which was primarily focused on finding pleasure by releasing built-up tension and energy. The Id operates based on somatically-formed instincts and is not restricted by practical concerns or external circumstances. The infant gradually learns to cope with the limitations of reality through experiencing frustration. The ego, on the other hand, develops through a process called the secondary process, which prioritizes the reality principle rather than the pleasure principle that drives the id (Freud 10).

### **1.3.2 Freudian Psychoanalysis Strategies**

Psychoanalysis is a collection of psychological theories and therapeutic methods influenced by Sigmund Freud's works and beliefs. Its basic tenet is the concept that everyone has unconscious thoughts, wants, emotions, and memories. As a result, in this discussion, we will look at Freud's ideas on the unconscious mind and defence mechanisms, as well as their roles.

### **1.3.3 The Unconscious Mind**

Freud's model of the human psyche categorized it into three parts - conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. The unconscious mind comprises suppressed thoughts and primary desires that are not influenced by the external world. It lacks any sense of time and is not bound by the logical principles or regulations of the conscious mind. Paradoxes and inconsistencies do not affect it. The preconscious mind acts as a mediator, where ideas from the unconscious are transformed into language and then forwarded to the conscious mind (Freud 118).

### **1.4 Defence mechanisms**

Sigmund Freud described defence mechanisms as mental activities that keep dangerous thoughts and effects out of consciousness. Anna Freud, the daughter of Sigmund Freud, in her book "The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense," provided a definition of psychoanalysis as the study of the unconscious aspects of the human psyche, specifically the examination of suppressed instinctual urges, emotions, and fantasies. According to Anna, the term "psychoanalysis" should be used specifically in reference to new discoveries and insights related to this area of study (Freud 3-4).

Defence mechanisms, according to another definition, help in the resolution of disagreements generated by internal or external forces. Freud reveals the unique character of defensive mechanisms, namely the obsessive conflict between the Ego and the Id. These defences are depicted as unconscious in psychoanalysis and can be characterized as effective, where manifestations of innate desires are tolerated, or failed, where the instinct is not revealed and continuous repetition of the defence is necessary. (Hentschel 3).

According to Freud's theory, the ego protects itself from danger arising from both internal and external sources. Internal danger refers to the fear of one's own instincts or desires,

which may result in defence mechanisms to avoid anxiety. The external danger occurs when individuals fear disobeying authority figures such as parents, resulting in objective anxiety for children or superego anxiety for adults, which stems from the internalized conscience and its prohibitions (Freud 60-63).

#### **1.4.1 Denial**

Freud provided a great illustration of how psychotic denial is employed defensively in 1894, and how knowledge of this defence makes certain psychotic episodes understandable. Freud did not use the term "denial," but he did discuss the function of denial in hallucinations. He described a young lady in love with a man who does not reciprocate her feelings: "Finally, in a state of great tension, she awaited his arrival. When all the trains that could have brought him there had passed, she went into a state of hallucinatory confusion: he had arrived, she heard his voice in the garden, and she raced down in her nightdress to greet him. She spent the next two months in a blissful dream, the substance of which was that he was always at her side." (Freud 58-59). He made a clear distinction between this defence mechanism and others such as displacement, repression, and isolation, in terms of its function in protecting against external reality.

The defence mechanism of denial focusing on internal explanations or fallacies instead of external reality involves avoiding the uncomfortable truth of a situation. being the least complex involves simply negating a perception, thought, or feeling by attaching a negative marker such as "no" or "not" and is typically observed in young children or someone who continues to buy expensive clothes despite being in significant financial debt may be using this defence mechanism.

### 1.4.2 Displacement

Freud's early works introduced the idea of "affects" or "excitation" as a distinct quantity that was capable of displacement, increase, and discharge (Freud 60). He recognized the importance of this displacement of emotions in comparison to previous views that gave more importance to ideas than feelings. Nevertheless, he faced difficulties in conceptualizing these defence mechanisms until he overcame the philosophical and theological hurdles and associated excitement with ideas (Freud 54).

Simply displacement is a defence mechanism that involves transferring one's emotional response. According to Freud, displacement is the process of moving negative emotions from an unacceptable target to a more acceptable or less threatening one. When individuals realize that expressing certain thoughts or ideas to a particular person, this may result in an adverse burden from one person or situation to another redirecting emotions toward someone or something else.

### 1.4.3 Repression

In contrast to other defence mechanisms, Freud did not invent the concept of repression. In his work *Psychology as a Science* (1824), J.F. Herbart wrote extensively about *verdrängung* (the term Freud used for Repression) of thoughts, which may have indirectly inspired Freud through Theodor Meynert, his psychiatric mentor. Schopenhauer acknowledged the function of defensive forgetting in psychopaths "How unwillingly we think of things which powerfully injure our interests, wound our pride, or interfere with our wishes," Schopenhauer observed in 1818. The resistance of the will to allowing what is opposite to it to be examined by our intellect is the point at which madness might infiltrate the mind theology, but he concentrated on forgetting concepts and situations rather than emotions (Whyte 140).

Repression is a defence mechanism in which undesirable ideas or impulses are blocked subconsciously. It may be seen in individuals who have no memory of a traumatic event, even if they were fully conscious and aware at the time of the event, and aims to shield themselves from the anxiety or discomfort that may arise from memories or emotions. Its purpose is to protect oneself from the potentially distressing consequences of these thoughts or feelings.

### **1.5 Defence Mechanisms and The Effect on Psychic Well Being**

Bond analyzed several studies that investigated the relationship between the use of defence mechanisms and various mental health conditions such as personality disorders, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and PTSD. Overall, the results of these studies suggested that the Defence Scale Questionnaire (DSQ) is a helpful tool in distinguishing between patients with personality disorders and those without. The studies found that individuals with personality disorders tend to use immature defence mechanisms like denial, dissociation, and projection were used, which was associated with the presence of psychiatric disorders. This relationship was also observed in a group of men from lower and working-class backgrounds. more frequently, as measured by the DSQ, while mature defence mechanisms are less commonly used. Moreover, patients with borderline personality disorder exhibit a distinctive pattern of using immature, distorted defence mechanisms such as splitting, omnipotence/devaluation, and primitive idealization, which distinguishes them from other personality disorders (Bond 127-158).

#### **1.5.1 Trauma**

The Greek term for 'wound' is 'trauma,' according to Merriam-Webster. The Greeks exclusively used this phrase to describe bodily injuries. However, it is increasingly used to describe emotional wounds. Because stressful experiences might result in psychological problems PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, is a psychiatric illness that has taken a long

time to heal in persons who have observed or experienced catastrophic events. Depression, Anxiety, sadness, flashbacks, and recurring nightmares are hallmarks of this disorder, which usually develops as a result of traumatic experiences such as combat exposure, abuse in childhood, sexual assault, or natural catastrophes ("Trauma").

In 1920, Freud took the term trauma from Greek, where it refers to skin piercing. He used the term trauma figuratively to show how the mind's protective screen (the functional ego) might be breached and the mind can feel pierced and injured. It is the balance between our sensitivity to external stimuli and our ability to sustain a functioning capacity to accept the input in terms of the mind. This is fundamental to the analytic perspective since it is related to the availability (or lack) of excellent, solid internalized experiences and objects with which to tolerate and handle severe demanding circumstances. This ability develops in newborns and early children as a result of adequate parental care (Garland 9).

### **1.5.2 Female Trauma in Dissociative Identity Disorder**

Dissociative identity disorder, also known as Multiple Personality Disorder, is characterized by post-traumatic dissociative, chronic, and complex experiences that contribute to its psychopathological nature, DID is more commonly diagnosed in women than in men (Kluft 337). Individuals possess innate physical, mental, and emotional coping mechanisms. Nonetheless, under significant traumatic experiences, these mechanisms may become overburdened or even fractured as the mind tries to identify and activate its natural defense mechanisms. These mental fractures can lead to dissociation, a process where a person can detach themselves from the intense consciousness of a traumatic event (Foote et al. 623).

In literature, study scholars claim that DID is the outcome of traumatic childhood experiences, trauma is very common in people with DID; around 71% have undergone physical abuse and 74% have endured sexual abuse (Foote et al. 625).

A study involving 25 women who have D.I.D and consume alcohol revealed that they had a stronger feeling of self-hatred but less internal conflict compared to the control group. The evaluation used SASB (Structural Analysis of Social Behaviour) to determine their intrapsychic conflict and self-hostility levels. As outlined in Freudian psychoanalysis, the intrapsychic process refers to the interaction and interplay between the ego, superego, and id. This process shapes an individual's self-concept.

### **1.5.3 Traumatic Memory**

Traumatic memory is an emotional response to an extremely distressing event, such as natural disaster, accident, or rape. These events can surface on their own or be triggered during psychotherapy sessions, without any need for memory enhancement techniques.

Sigmund Freud and his followers, as well as nineteenth-century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1818/1896), theorized that portions of traumatic events are frequently repressed and stay unreachable in the recesses of the unconscious for long periods of time. A traumatic incident, according to Freud (1922), "subjects the mind to such a very high increase in stimulation that assimilation or elaboration of it can no longer be affected by normal means, and so lasting disturbances must result."(Freud 232).

According to Janet (1925), very stressful events restrict the field of consciousness and result in the separation of components of traumatic memory from conscious awareness. He contended that such occurrences are mostly recalled in nonverbal, sensory form and as informative bits. Similarly, current proponents of this viewpoint contend that traumatic experiences are processed in such a way that memory of the trauma is difficult to recover directly as a cohesive narrative.

Traumatic memory plays a vital role in the diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), often manifesting in distinctive and pervasive ways. Classical conditioning is thought

to explain some of the unique symptoms associated with traumatic memories. When nonspecific stimuli are closely linked in time and space to the traumatic event, they can become conditioned stimuli that trigger the same fearful, helpless, and panicked reactions experienced during the initial trauma. Traumatic memories can persist for a lifetime, leading to associated stress symptoms that may generalize to neutral stimuli in daily life, and even intensify over time.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In general, the initial chapter establishes the foundation for analyzing the personality of the character's actions as well as women in the Victorian age. This chapter's aim was to examine the theoretical framework of the dissertation. Where the first half of the chapter focused on Feminist Theory, wherein the researcher discussed the extensive history of feminism and its conceptual importance and the idea of depicting women in society through the Feminist movement in the novel.

Afterward, there was an analysis of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis, commencing with his critique and explanation of the concept of psychological defences has been a topic of interest in the field of psychology for over a century. As introduced by Sigmund Freud, defences are unconscious mechanisms that the ego uses to ward off anxiety-provoking effects. These mechanisms, including repression, denial, and displacement, allow individuals to manage conflict and regulate emotional experiences. Freud's original concept of defences has been further developed and studied by later theorists such as Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, who have classified defence mechanisms into psychotic and neurotic categories based on their severity and impact.

## **Chapter Two: Literary Background and the analysis of the Characters**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The initial chapter is devoted to comprise the literary context, encompassing the Psychoanalysis study of *Alias Grace*'s major character. The first section of this chapter outlines the plot of the novel to understand the characters and studying the feminism thinking that is found the second section is a psychological analysis that aims to understand the double personality that Grace represents the third section is about which defence mechanisms and trauma that are influenced the main character Grace Marks.

### **2.2 Alias Grace Novel**

*Alias Grace* is a fictional novel that draws inspiration from true events. The use of the term "alias" in the title implies that in their pursuit of the truth about Grace Marks, both readers, and characters may be frustrated by the constant contact with deceit and dishonesty. Grace Marks, was a well-known figure in 1840s Canada, having been convicted of murder when she was only sixteen years old. on July 23, 1843, happened the Kinnear-Montgomery murders that were widely covered by Canadian, American, and British newspapers. The mix of violence, sex, and class conflict made the case particularly attractive to journalists of that time when the case was particularly sensational, as Grace Marks was young and beautiful, while Kinnear's housekeeper and mistress, Nancy Montgomery, had a scandalous past, being pregnant at the time of her death. Grace and her fellow servant James McDermott after the double murder of their employer Thomas Kinnear and his housekeeper, they had fled to the United States together, and the press assumed they were lovers (*Alias Grace* 376).

Grace's story is fascinating because she claims that her friend and former maid, Mary Whitney, was the true culprit behind the double murders that Grace was accused of. This claim

is seen as a "psychological defence" that raises doubts about Grace's sanity or intention to commit the crime. Furthermore, Grace's exemplary behavior in prison draws the attention of those interested in rehabilitation, and her potential innocence has led many physicians to visit her. The arrival of Dr. Simon Jordan, who is a fictional character created by Atwood, adds complexity to the story as he delves deeper into the mystery of Grace's possible innocence. Atwood's use of fiction to retell a historical event with inaccuracies in official records and accounts highlights her conscious role in reshaping Canadian collective consciousness.

*Alias Grace's* tale is told from two perspectives, each linked with one of the novel's two narrators. When Grace Marks narrates, her point of view takes centre stage, offering insight into her own restricted views and experiences. Dr. Jordan's point of view, on the other hand, dominates the passages told by an anonymous narrator. Despite speaking in the third person, this narrator has total access to Dr. Jordan's thoughts and feelings, explaining everything from his subjective point of view.

### **2.3 Novel Main Characters Analysis**

Grace Marks, the novel's primary heroine, is a convicted murderer who says she has no recall of her part in the killing. Grace's best friend, Mary Whitney, and Dr. Simon Jordan, a young psychiatrist entrusted with examining Grace's sanity and regaining her memories, are both major characters in the narrative.

#### **2.3.1 Grace Marks**

The novel *Alias Grace* delves into the experiences of an immigrant woman with a father who is an alcoholic and abusive who physically and emotionally abused her. Her father's behavior contributes to her painful experiences and may impact her eventual actions. When her mother experiences violence, and several siblings, she grows up in a challenging and difficult household. While on a trip abroad, her mother falls ill and passes away, leaving young Grace

to take on the role of caregiver and maternal figure for the family. She lacks protection and financial resources. Her fate is shaped by the false testimony of an untrustworthy man, leading her to be labeled as both insane and a murderer. (Alias Grace 21)

Grace departs from her family and takes a job as a maid in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alderman Parkinson. It is there that she befriends another young servant named Mary Whitney, who tragically dies while undergoing a secret abortion in an effort to avoid a grim fate. Grace is quiet and withdrawn, and it is unclear whether she is actually insane or simply pretending to be (Alias Grace 2).

A woman's lack of protection is a crucial component in attracting strong men such as those chosen for the analysis demonstrate. Their domination is perpetuated by using Grace as a tool to improve their status in society. They need to victimize or criminalize her to demonstrate that they are worthy saviors, a practice that weakens her and increases her susceptibility.

Grace's quilt, which she sews in her new house, represents how her life has been closely linked with Mary and Nancy's for over three decades. Weaving a quilt from swatches of clothing belonging to each of the three ladies symbolizes their bond. "But three of the triangles in my Tree will be different. One will be white, from the petticoat I still have that was Mary Whitney's; one will be faded yellowish, from the prison nightdress I begged as a keepsake when I left there. And the third will be a pale cotton, a pink and white floral, cut from the dress of Nancy's that she had on the first day I was at Mr. Kinnear's, and that I wore on the ferry to Lewiston, when I was running away. I will embroider around each one of them with red feather stitching, to blend them in as a part of the pattern And so we will all be together." (Alias Grace 375).

### 2.3.2 Mary Whitney

Mary's tragic fate highlights the challenges that women faced during the Victorian era, and how they were often punished for actions that were outside of their control. Her story serves as a reminder of the importance of challenging social norms and advocating for gender equality.

Mary is Grace's closest companion and mentor. The two become acquainted when Grace starts working at Mrs. Alderman Parkinson's household, where Mary also serves as a maid. Despite the age difference, Mary takes Grace under her wing and introduces her to the ways of a servant's life. Mary has a fun-loving, mischievous personality and a coarse Canadian accent, and strongly believes in equal treatment for everyone, regardless of their social status. Tragically, Mary becomes pregnant by Mr. George Parkinson, her employer's son, and dies after undergoing an abortion.

Mary Whitney is vindicated when Grace is finally released from jail after defying all attempts to classify and completely comprehend her. Mary, like other female characters such as Grace's mother and Nancy Montgomery, reflects Grace's own experiences. Their bad fates, such as being trapped in abusive marriages, having abortions fail, or dying violently, may easily have been Grace's. Even minor characters, such as Jordan's landlady Rachel Humphrey and Lydia, the Governor's daughter, demonstrate how women are constrained by social conventions, with any transgression swiftly punished. Rachel, locked in a loveless marriage, has an affair with Jordan in the hopes of getting married but is abandoned (*Alias Grace* 299).

All of these women's lives become entwined with Grace's in a complicated web of female competition and camaraderie. Grace becomes engaged in each of the women's lives, either directly or indirectly "I had a rage in my heart for many years, against Mary Whitney, and especially against Nancy Montgomery; against the two of them both, for letting themselves

be done to death in the way that they did, and for leaving me behind with the full weight of it. For a long time, I could not find it in me to pardon them." (Alias Grace 373).

Grace's voice narrates what happens to them in the end. Grace relates their tales as well as her own, and by the conclusion of the book, her storytelling has become a symbol of female solidarity and forgiveness: giving voice to those who have been silenced.

### **2.3.3 Dr. Simon Jordan**

Dr. Simon Jordan is "as Mary Whitney used to say. He's tall, with long legs and arms, but not what the Governor's daughters would call handsome" (Alias Grace 26). He is a young doctor from Massachusetts the United States of America. Despite being born into the upper classes, he experiences financial hardship after his father dies. He resides with his mother and has no desire to marry or start a family. Instead, his ultimate goal is to become the director of his own mental institution. Trained as a medical doctor, he views himself as a scientist with a strong dedication to studying mental health and the human psyche. As a result, when presented with the chance to assist and observe the renowned murderer Grace Marks, he immediately travels to Canada (Alias Grace 27).

Dr. Simon Jordan is a young psychiatrist who is trying to uncover the truth about the murders of Thomas Kinnear and Nancy Montgomery. He brought fruit to Grace Marks during their meetings as a way to build rapport with her and to create a sense of trust between them. In the Victorian era, fruit was seen as a luxury item that was not easily available to people of lower socio-economic status.

By bringing her fruit, Dr. Jordan was demonstrating his kindness and concern for Grace's well-being, which helped to establish a more comfortable and open environment for their conversations. Additionally, Grace had a fondness for fruit, and Dr. Jordan used this as a way to establish a common ground with her and to make their interactions more pleasant. By

bringing her a small treat, he was able to show that he valued her as a person and not just as a subject of his investigation (Alias Grace 28).

The images that come to Simon's thoughts are similar to Pre-Raphaelite paintings in which women are represented as innocent animals in need of rescue by a masculine hero - in this case, a doctor. Before even meeting Grace, Simon had imposed societal expectations of what an exiled woman should look like onto her. "This was a period of both extreme sexual oppression and the assumption that males were entitled to female bodies," writes critic Maria Medlyn.

The novel portrays him as a contemplative individual with ingrained sexist and classist biases. His beliefs about women are evident in his manipulative behavior, and he judges their actions through a prejudiced lens. He worries about his societal position based on his gender and profession, and this leads him to belittle women. However, there are moments.,Dr. Jordan becomes emotionally entangled with Grace, which puts his professional judgment into question. He is drawn to her intelligence, wit, and enigmatic personality, which leads him to blur the boundaries between his personal and professional life. This is because he is unable to confront the repercussions of his actions.

#### **2.4 Female representation and feminism trends**

Within a historical context, the female representation and feminism it throws insight on the difficulties that Grace Marks pass through and the role of the Victorian woman while Grace Marks herself works as a domestic servant. During the nineteenth century, this was an often careers for many working-class women. Grace's responsibilities include cleaning, cooking, and aiding her employers with home activities. (Alias Grace 47). Work as a governess, giving private tutoring or teaching roles within rich houses, was another option for educated women

at the period. Despite the fact that it is not expressly stated in the novel, this employment was frequently linked with middle-class women. (*Alias Grace* 56).

The novel also emphasizes how many women, many of whom play the role of Grace's mother figure, tell stories and demonstrate behaviours to other women that appear to represent a type of dogma or gospel that they are compelled to repeat to one another from the day they are born. When Grace and Mary went into town for errands, for example, " Mrs. Honey preached us a sermon before we set off, and said we were to behave modestly, and go and come back straight away, and not speak to any strangers, especially men; and we promised to do as she said." (*Alias Grace* 120).these female exhortations to one another, particularly to the younger generation, point to the presence of something deeper. They confirm the presence of a terrible potential that all women are prone to and set out to shield one another against, an intimate understanding of trauma they have inherited at birth.

Another instructive example of female solidarity and attempts to shelter one another from the real lived experience of this hereditary trauma occurs as Grace and Mary set for bed. As Mary combs the little girl's hair, she warns her of the perils that await her, saying, "You will be a beauty, and soon you will turn the men's heads." (*Alias Grace* 130).

Grace Marks was symbol to a criminal mad women the perfect example for the Victorian criminal women that charged with and convicted of killing Thomas Kinnear and Nancy Montgomery. Grace's mental and emotional well-being suffers greatly as a result of the murder and subsequent imprisonment. The pain of the crime, as well as the doubt surrounding her role in it, have a profound impact on her view of reality and memory.

#### **2.4.1 Rethinking the Mad Woman Narrative**

In *Alias Grace* society considered Grace mad the idea that society sees madness as a direction or a choice, rather than as an illness or condition that is beyond one's control. "I had

gone mad again. Gone mad is what they say, and sometimes Run mad, as if mad is a direction, like west; as if mad is a different house you could step into, or a separate country entirely" (Alias Grace 22)

Dr. Simon wishes Grace demonstrated indications of madness or fragility, as this could suggest a more direct road to the forgotten memories. Grace, on the other hand, maintains a surprising amount of calm, which surprises him. Her collected manner is compared to that of a duchess, implying a degree of control and self-possession that defies his expectations when he said that " My object is to wake the part of her mind that lies dormant — to probe down below the threshold of her consciousness, and to discover the memories that must perforce lie buried there. I approach her mind as if it is a locked box, to which I must find the right key; but so far, I must admit, I have not got very far with it. It would be helpful to me, if she were indeed mad, or at least a little madder than she appears to be; but thus far she has manifested a composure that a duchess might envy"(Alias Grace 106)

## **2.5 Female criminals in a patriarchal society**

Atwood explores the concept of criminal women in the 19th century and the ways in which patriarchal society constructed narratives around female criminality when Grace said that a "murderer is merely brutal. It's like a hammer, or a lump of metal. I would be a murderess than a murderer if those are the only choices." the ways in which societal factors can shape criminal behaviour while also exploring the individual psyche of the female criminal. Grace suggests that being a murderer is a simple, brutal act - like using a hammer or a lump of metal. It implies that a murderer is someone who kills without thought or remorse, using violence as a blunt instrument. However, Grace goes on to suggest that there is a distinction between being a "murderer" and being a "murderess." She implies that being a murderess involves a certain level

of cunning or intelligence - that it requires more than just brute force. While the word "murderess" is when it was once used to describe a woman who committed murder, and it carries a connotation of premeditation and cold-bloodedness. (Alias Grace 13).

## **2.6 Grace Marks's Defence Mechanisms**

Throughout the story, Grace Marks demonstrates dissociative identity disorder (DID) or what called multiple personalities that develop as a result of her traumatic experiences. Among these are "Grace" and "Mary Whitney." Each personality has unique qualities, memories, and actions, and they can take control of Grace's mind at any time. These personality transformations occur as a defence mechanism to shelter oneself from the painful facts of her background. Each identity possesses different traits, memories, and behaviours, and they may take control of Grace's consciousness interchangeably.

### **2.6.1 Denial**

Grace's denial is a form of psychological self-defence. By refusing to acknowledge her involvement in the murders, she protects herself from the guilt and shame that would come with admitting to such a heinous crime, she denies any involvement in the Kinnear's house and what happened to her employer and his housekeeper also insists that she cannot remember what happened on the day in question.

Her denial allows her to maintain a sense of control over her own story and identity, even in the face of overwhelming evidence and societal condemnation. As the witness of McDermott and Jamie Walsh when they said :

"Grace Marks, she led me on.

Young Jamie Walsh stood up in court,

The truth he swore to tell;

O Grace is wearing Nancy's dress,

And Nancy's bonnet as well!" (Alias Grace 10).

Grace regularly ignores the gravity of her experiences, especially the sexual assault she suffered at the hands of her father and Mr. Kinnear. She frequently minimizes the gravity of these incidents, arguing that they were not as horrible as others have made them out to be.

### **2.6.2 Displacement**

Grace's use of displacement as a defence mechanism reflects the ways in which individuals can struggle to cope with emotions and traumatic experiences, and how they may unconsciously redirect those emotions onto other people or objects. Grace displaces her feelings of sadness and loss towards her mother into the character of Mary Whitney. Mary's friendship gives her a sense of belonging and helps her to cope with the difficulties of her life as a servant (Alias Grace 164).

Grace also demonstrates displacement, which involves channelling her sentiments onto items or people that are less dangerous than the source of her discomfort. When she feels frightened or agitated, for example, she frequently concentrates on boring things like knitting rather than tackling the true issue at hand. Grace displaces her anger towards her employer Thomas Kinnear onto Nancy Montgomery, his housekeeper with whom he had a romantic relationship. Grace becomes jealous of Nancy and accuses her of using her femininity to manipulate Thomas (Alias Grace 6).

### **2.6.3 Repression**

Repression is a defence mechanism in which a person blocks out or pushes away traumatic memories or emotions from their consciousness. Grace was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Rather than confronting these emotions directly, Grace often represses them and blocks them out of her conscious awareness.

According to Earl G. Ingersoll, the implications of quilting as a metaphor for storytelling is a prominent theme within *Alias Grace*, with each part of the novel named after a traditional quilting pattern. Atwood suggests that recollection and storytelling rest on the selection of what one chooses to remember. As Grace constructs her life story, she makes use of postmodernist conventions to challenge essentialist ideas of identity and the relatability of history. Furthermore, a number of scholars have explored the complex historical and fictional epigraphs in the novel, which reveal the unreliability of memory and the difficulty in distinguishing between fact and fiction. Through the repression defence mechanism, Grace Marks attempts to forget past events that are too painful or traumatic. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes evident that Grace's repression defence mechanism is not entirely successful. Atwood's narrative focalization is uncertain, shifting between internal and external perspective

Grace struggles to recall specific details about the murders, including who committed them and what her own role in the events was. She frequently insists that she cannot remember certain details or events, suggesting that she has repressed these memories as a way of coping with the trauma. Grace frequently experiences vivid dreams and hallucinations that may represent her repressed emotions and memories. For example, she has a recurring dream about being trapped in a cellar with a group of rats, which may symbolize her feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. (Alias Grace 98)

## **2.7 Investigating the influence of trauma**

The death of Grace's mother, Mary Whitney and Nancy Montgomery were Grace's encounters with the object of feminine bodies are devastating experiences in her life. However, it is possible that the association of female sexuality with dread and danger stems from a deeper source than observing female victimization in Victorian society.

To locate a trauma sufficiently serious to cause the development of a Dissociative Identity Disorder, one must examine the sections of Grace's story that are disordered and blank in 'repression, silence, ellipsis, elaboration, and imagination'. Peonies, a symbol of the victimized female body, thrive solely in "the soil for them is emptiness, it is empty space and silence " as Grace put it. The ellipses in Grace's narratives contain the terrible recollections that linger from the tragedy. (Alias Grace 242)

The most obvious reason is the traumatic memory of the horrible murder perpetrated in Mr Kinnear's house; yet, Grace suffers from trauma-related amnesia even before the killings. Actually, the aforementioned PTSD symptoms that may lead to DID are most commonly produced by the trauma of childhood sexual abuse such symptoms, which would explain Grace's chronic amnesia, which began with Mary's death, include a recurring vision of a man blocking the cellar door, which appears both in a dream and in reality, as well as an apparent series of trance-like states, of which Grace is unaware, and during which she apparently committed or was an accomplice in the murder of Mr Kinnear and Nancy. (Alias Grace 210)

## **2.8 Revealing the Notion of Criminality**

In *Alias Grace*, the concept of crime is examined from numerous angles, raising concerns about the nature of guilt, innocence, and cultural impacts on criminal behaviour. The story goes into the nuances of Grace's character as well as the events surrounding the killings, leaving readers wondering if Grace is actually guilty or a victim of circumstance.

The circumstances that led up to the killings are vague and open to interpretation. Grace's memory of the crimes is skewed, and her viewpoint is altered by her psychological condition. Nancy Montgomery and Thomas Kinnear are both slain, and the killings are conducted with an ax.

The law, the medical profession, the church, and the media all perceive Grace as a disruptive force: a woman who committed and/or assisted in the commission of a murder, a lunatic, and/or a member of the working class who dared to upset the social order. Grace is "the one who celebrated murderess," a lunatic, an innocent victim, a crafty temptress, and "a romantic figure" at various times (Alias Grace 13).

Grace Marks grew up in a difficult and abusive home. Her father is an alcoholic, and her mother has mental health problems. Grace's childhood is influenced by her early exposure to violence and instability, which impacts her understanding of relationships. Grace faces prejudice because of her social standing, gender, and ethnicity. She is subjected to societal prejudices, which restrict her chances and causes her to be treated unfairly.

Nancy's treatment of Grace might be regarded as both emotionally and physically abusive. Nancy is sometimes seen to be volatile, manipulative, and abusive towards Grace. She exploits Grace's fragility by using her as a pawn in her personal and romantic relationships. Nancy's handling of Grace might be considered emotional and psychological abuse.

Grace's emotional condition is delicate, impacted by her prior traumas as well as the upheaval in the Kinnear home. She has memory gaps and dissociative episodes, which make it difficult for her to completely comprehend her own actions and intentions. The story of Grace Marks' criminality has been told in a variety of ways. According to one of these tales, Grace may have had a hand in Nancy's death and aided her own cause by eliminating herself from arrival. There are several stories about Grace Marks' participation in the killings, and one of them claims that Grace may have urged McDermott to kill Nancy in order to eliminate competition for Kinnear's sexual interest.

Nancy's rage and jealousy were fuelled by Grace's allegation of Kinnear lustfully gazing at her while she was cleaning the floor, which led to the expulsion of both employees.

Furthermore, Kinnear is not the only male figure with a "hankering for servant girls" - in Jordan's visions, Grace represents the young maids and industrial employees he dreamt about as a youngster. Kinnear and Jordan, as members of the ruling class, both want Grace, who is from the working class. (*Alias Grace* 378-379).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter is meant to provide a psychoanalytic analysis of *Alias Grace* main characters Grace Marks in the light of her traumatic past and the defence mechanisms resulting. The first section details the novel and the characters that had effect in Grace life like Mary Whitney, and Dr. Simon Jordan are all interesting and well-drawn characters each character adds to the novel's themes of trauma, memory, and the struggle for self-identity, making it an interesting

The second section deals with Grace's defensive systems of denial, displacement, and repression in the novel aim to shelter her from the unpleasant memories and feelings that would otherwise overwhelm her. These techniques, however, hinder her from properly processing and recovering from her prior trauma, resulting in her persistent psychological suffering.

## General Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the psychological processes that developed from Grace Marks' Alias Grace protagonist's tragic experience. It dives into the character of Grace Marks and the defence mechanisms she adopts to protect herself from anxiety-producing emotions and thoughts associated with her psychological issues.

The research begins by explaining the necessary theoretical explanation for the investigation. The work then delves into the protagonist's psychological composition, her defensive mechanisms that are related to her traumatic events, and their destructive and constructive influence on her in personal and interpersonal terms. To summarize, the first chapter gives the recommended theoretical framework for carrying out the investigation. The first section provides an overview of feminist thinking. It gives a description of literary characters. The psychoanalytic literary approach is the focus of the second part. Four important points should be addressed in this section. First, it provides an outline of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and what it offers to comprehend the personality through three basic levels of consciousness. As a result, it addresses his theory on the unconscious mind and how it can produce defence mechanisms.

Chapter Two offers a psychoanalytic examination of the novel's protagonist, Grace Marks the chapter delves into her traumatic past and the defence mechanisms that have resulted from it. Grace's character is explored in detail, along with the effect of other characters such as Mary Whitney and Dr. Simon Jordan on her life. As depicted in the chapter, Grace employs different defensive systems such as denial, displacement, and repression to shield herself from unpleasant memories and emotions resulting from her experiences. These mechanisms, however, prevent her from effectively dealing with her trauma and lead to ongoing psychological distress.

This study is supposed to be thematic, qualitative, descriptive, and analytical. Its goal was to illustrate the primary psychological issue of trauma, as portrayed in *Alias Grace* characters as well as analyze its effects. Finally, this investigation is still far from being perfect. It is worth noting that the primary research topic has been addressed throughout the first and second chapters. Several critics studied this work with varied interpretations, mostly via the language and historical scope, while the psychological viewpoint was ignored. As a result, the work tried to give social and psychological literary critique on Grace Marks *Alias Grace*.

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### ملخص

تأسر رواية " المدعوة جريس " القراء باستكشافها للنسوية والصدمات والجريمة من خلال القصة مشوقة لغريس ماركس، وهي امرأة شابة مسجونة لدورها المزعوم في جريمة قتل مزدوجة. تبدأ هذه الأطروحة في رحلة لكشف الروابط المعقدة بين النسوية وآليات الدفاع، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الإنكار والنزوح والقمع كما تظهر في شخصية جريس المعقدة. باستخدام نهج القراءة الدقيقة، تشرح هذه الدراسة كيف تجسد جريس ماركس وتحدي الآثار الاجتماعية والثقافية والنفسية التي تم تصويرها في جميع أنحاء الرواية تضعه الخلفية السياقية لعمل أتوود في عالم الأدب النسوي، مما يسلط الضوء على التأثير المنتشر للنظام الأبوي على حياة المرأة. استنادًا إلى هذا الأساس، تدرس الأطروحة الشخصية متعددة الأوجه لغريس ماركس، مما يكشف مظاهر الصدمة داخل نفسياتها. من خلال التدقيق في تجاربها، مثل سجنها وتورطها المزعوم في جرائم القتل، يهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على كيفية تشكيل هذه الأحداث المؤلمة لذاكرة جريس وإحساسها بالذات

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، آليات الدفاع، الصدمة، فرويد، اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة، الجريمة المدعوة غريس