

By Emma Grice

Part A – Speaking

Identity is evolutionary, affected by one's inner beliefs, and in order to achieve self-awareness one may undergo certain physical, emotional and mental suffering. Texts such as the play *"King Lear"* written by Shakespeare, and the novel *"The Girl on the Train"* written by Paula Hawkins can be studied to reveal the comparisons of how composers reveal ideas about one's identity. Through these texts the concepts shown are that identity is fluid and fragile where individuals can manipulate their external character in order to achieve a greater ambition. Also that through hardship, one may become enlightened and self-aware.

An individual's behavior can be transfigured to achieve acceptance or something they internally desire. Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, reveals that individuals can manipulate their external character in order to achieve a greater ambition. Gonerill establishes the idea that she reshapes her behavior to achieve something greater. In the first scene, Gonerill on command excessively flatters Lear despite claiming she loves him

"more than word can wield the matter"

Using hyperbolic irony in her flattery, she successfully sways the titular character into giving her a part of the kingdom. The audience knows this manipulation of her words is only a strategy, as in the end of the scene there is a direct contrast in Gonerill's dialogue when she discusses Lear's "poor judgement" in front of Regan. This contrast in Gonerill's tone when talking to Lear face to face vs Regan in privacy, presents the idea that she masks her beliefs with deceit, manipulating her identity dependent on who she is speaking with.

Similarly, in the novel, *The Girl on the Train*, Rachel manipulates herself to form an identity out of lack of her own. Rachel feels as though she has "no past and no future".

After hearing about a disappearance, Rachel desires to gain information, so through deceit she creates a new persona pretending that she was a friend of the missing to get the oblivious partner into sharing details. Rachel in the midst of her email to the partner says "I want to drag knives over my skin, so I can feel something other than shame."

Using tactile and visual imagery Rachel expresses that although she may be deceitful, she feels an overwhelming amount of shame as a result of her crave for acceptance. This contrasts the behavior of Gonerill where her manipulation was due to a cruel intention, whereas Rachel's was out of self-pity and the need to be accepted.

Identity is fluid and fragile which only through mental, physical and emotional suffering one may become enlightened. Lear was a respected king, in the beginning, addressed using the epithet "Royal" as opposed to the later used epithet of "Lunatic" when he is banished out into the wilderness. It is during the storm Lear is stripped fully of his status and authority. Pathetic fallacy of the storm shows the physical representation of Lear's suffering, and its intensity showing the necessity of self-knowledge for Lear. Only in the midst of the storm, he is granted self-knowledge and understanding, allowing him to feel compassion for the people such as Gloucester and others around him. This sudden enlightenment allows Lear to strive to reach his potential.

Although, in *The Girl on the Train*, Rachel refuses to come to terms with her identity loss. Her gin and tonic remind her of the nostalgia she felt before she was stripped from her title and position. Rachel's alcohol addiction is an extended metaphor seen as her emotional suffering, as to avoid self-confrontation she consumes alcohol to the point she blacks out. Rachel is suffering despite being self-aware as she says

"I lost and I drank and I drank and I lost."

This repetition emphasizes the stream of conscience where she acknowledges the rough cycle she is stuck in. In comparison, Rachel through her addiction has become aware of her suffering despite not wanting to break free, whereas Lear at his most vulnerable, gains insight and changes his beliefs and attitudes. Both texts reveal that identity is fluid and that self-awareness comes from hardship.

Conclusively, both texts reveal different or similar ideas about identity and the idea that it remains evolutionary and is able to be hidden through deceit and manipulation.

Thank you for listening.