

Behind the Screen: Exploring the Challenges of Virtual Reality Technology in A.J. Finn's *The Woman in the Window*

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Abstract

This paper aims to present a psychological insight into how the heroine of A.J Fean's *The Woman in the Window* uses cyber virtual worlds to create defense mechanisms and coping strategies to pass her post traumatic disorders. It also explores how her extensive usage to this technology exposes her to be killed. For its theoretical framework, the paper uses virtual reality technology and its effects on people, especially psychiatric ones. Previous data explore the effect of social media on ordinary people. The researcher utilizes the psychological approach to analysis events, characters, characters' actions, and motives in the novel. So, reading *the Woman in the Window* from a psychological perspective helps indicate the problems that might face mentally ill people when they use the virtual reality applications. The paper concludes that the extensive indulgent in this technology exposes users to fatal dangers, reflecting the fate of the novel's heroine who has to suffer grave consequences due to her harmful engagement with virtual reality.

Abstract

Defense mechanism, coping strategies, social media, virtual reality worlds.

Introduction

Being cheap, beneficial and amusing, virtual reality world created through social media apps becomes available for everyone to use. It is noted that these apps make connection easier and faster, but they are not safe and may expose people to many dangers. That is exactly the case with A. J Fean's novel *the Woman in the Window* that warns people, against the cyber virtual world, especially when being available freely to psychiatric people. Anna fox, the protagonist in the novel, suffers from post-traumatic disorders and agoraphobia. She cannot leave her house and depend on virtual reality technology in every aspect of her life.

It is remarkably noted that of all the literary approaches used in the analysis and understanding of literature, the psychological approach stands as one of the most controversial for both the readers and the critics. The result of correlation between psychology and literature is the appearance of so many theories such as

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humanism by Rogers, Maslow and Ericson evolutionary psychology, and there are also Freud's ideas; many of these theories and ideas are applied in a literary criticism approach that reads literature through psychology.

Psychological approach deals with works which depict characters that can often be considered exemplary figures to real people in life. The study of these characters exposes the relationship between man and existence and the consequent problems. This helps understand the general meaning of life and helps man solve his problems. So, reading the Woman in the Window from psychological perspective indicates the problems that might face mentally ill people when they use this technology.

Utilizing virtual reality technology and societies as an effective therapy tool in post-traumatic disorder cases becomes common. In his novel, A.J Fean reveals similar and opposing points of view. He indicates how psychiatric patients use it to get their treatment. Also, they use it to create defense mechanisms and coping strategies that enable them to do whatever they like to adapt after their traumas. This is not effective in all cases, as this usage may result in many problems. In the light of studying agoraphobia and its symptoms that the protagonist of this novel suffers, this research reveals the merits and the demerits of the social media virtual worlds when used by characters who suffer from post-traumatic disorders.

What is virtual society and what are its driving forces?

We have been hearing recurrently the adjective "virtual" as a commonplace descriptor of social forms," where people do not have to live, meet, or work face to face in order to create goods and services or maintain significant social relationships(Shayo et al,187).Every aspect of life becomes easier to be done behind the screen. People can meet, do shopping or even involve treatment therapy through this technology.

Different new social forms and practices have appeared recently thanks to the rapid growth of virtual reality technology based essentially on information technology. These social forms and practices can be seen in virtual communication like social applications, virtual libraries like z library, and virtual educational platforms like Ifad and Idarak. Electronic virtual commerce and businesses have flourished in paralleling with the growth of this technology. The greatest benefit of this technology has appeared recently after the spread of the coronavirus pandemic that has made people, during a specific period, completely dependent on virtual technology to implement social distancing, to avoid the spread of the virus.

The matter has been worsened recently as people depend on these virtual societies for other different reasons and for long times. Indeed, "there is general agreement in the literature and the profound impact of information technology *I T* and its rapid adoption by individuals, groups, organizations, and communities has led to proliferation of 'virtual societies' "(Shayo et al, 188).

There are driving and enabling forces behind the rapid growth and the indispensable use of virtual societies besides global struggle to achieve IT implementation. This is briefed in the following figure that Jayne Gackenbach mentioned in his book Psychology and the Internet page 188:

| Driving Forces | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------|
| Information technology infrastructure | Enlightened and diversified population | Policies and politics | Global economies |

Virtual reality is a vast world created through modern technology that is being horribly daily progressed. What the novel deals with is the social applications as main parts of this technology that create virtual societies. The focus in this paper is on social media created in different types of modern virtual reality sets like phones or pcs.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In this respect, social media has been defined broadly as "the web and mobile platforms that allow individuals to connect with others within a virtual network where they can exchange various forms of digital content, including information, messages, photos, or videos"(Naslud et al245). Another definition indicates that social media "encompasses a range of Internet based communication tools, from traditional digital platforms such as blogs and online forums, to modern mainstream tools Facebook, Twitter, Youtubeetc" (Bian et al 15).The main purpose of any virtual social application or tool is to fulfill some sort of convergence and approaching among people with their same or different cultures to achieve different purposes in life.

The tools and the unprecedented growth in the different uses of social media have caused a revolution in the communication landscape world. This rapid growth of social media and its apps has made it easy for people to exchange their personal information while chatting for example. Social media is used in marketing, too.

Also, it is used in psychological treatment. It is noted that these evident uses that seem beneficial are sometimes suspected. Many people misuse social media for creating an unreal fake world, in many cases to deceive others or even to escape their painful real world. This kind of people use social media as a means that helps them cope, deny, or even hallucinate, in other words, to create mechanisms and strategies against their post traumatic disorders. They flee their trauma through indulging in a virtual world of their own creation in the different social platforms.

The problem has become more complicated because of the cheap cost of these platforms and applications. Thus, it can be easily accessible by anyone without any limits. According to Naslund, "In 2020, there are an estimated 3,8 billion social media users worldwide, representing half the global population"(245). It is a horrible fact especially when these studies assure that those users include sufferers of mental disorders. The same reference indicates that studies have reported and indicated that people living with a range of mental disorders, like depression, psychotic disorders, or other severe mental illnesses," uses social platform at comparable rates as the general population with use ranging from 70% among middle age and older individuals to upwards of 97% among younger individuals "(Naslund et al,245), a very dangerous rate especially when being used by mentally suffering persons. This is the same case in *the woman in the window*.

Agoraphobia and other psychological disorders

To understand the motive of the overindulgence in the virtual reality worlds in the novel, it is important to indicate the psychological history of its main characters. In this novel the heroine is Anna Fox a children psychologist, a character who suffers from clear psychological disorders diagnosed to be agoraphobic symptoms that she suffered from after her trauma of loss to her family. In this respect, agoraphobia is a term that was first used by Wesphal, a neurologist and a psychiatrist. It is coined to refer to those who usually have difficulty feeling safe in public places, especially where there are gatherings of people...fear can be extraordinary that those agoraphobic cannot stay outdoors."(Pamungkas,9). According to Fitri Faujiah, the word agoraphobia is derived from the Greek 'agora' which means 'market place' -in this respect any place safe home- and 'phobia' meaning 'fear of'. As in the novel under study agoraphobia is related to severe symptoms, either physical or psychological, of anxiety disorder accompanied with an uneasiness, fear or dread about leaving familiar surroundings (13).

Different causes lead to agoraphobia, one of these important causes is the environment where the victim lives. Some environmental influences may make a person vulnerable to experience negative emotional feelings across different situations. Other causes can be represented in early painful experiences that might have occurred stressfully, particularly those in which individuals perceived the events to be unpredictable and difficult to control, also contributing to the negative affectivity temperament (Pamungkas, 18).

In this context it is important to indicate that the heroine suffers from some sort of trauma. Trauma always occurs due to loss and missing an intimate relationship through a traumatic death. These traumatic experiences cause terror, helplessness and physical stress disorders (khaled,11). This death causes some sort of shock and torture that differ from one person to another. Some people are able to bear the pains and grief of this loss; others suffer especially when being females. Females are more affected than males when exposed to these traumatic experiences. According to the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a definition of trauma is an experience that occurs to the individual as a result of an event or set of circumstances. And this experience causes severe emotional-physical harm with lasting adverse effects (1-7). Another definition is introduced by Charles R. Figley who defines trauma to be a deadly and unexpected experience, which has a long term impact and painful memories (23). It is to be noted also that Manitoba Trauma Information and Educational Center introduces three kinds of trauma, what matters in this context is the second one. This second type is external trauma that occurs due to different factors such as sudden death of a loved one. Anna experiences trauma after the loss of her daughter and husband in an accident. In this novel, one of the antagonists is Anna's post traumatic disorder and also agoraphobia symptoms.

Anna fox suffers from clear symptoms of agoraphobia that reflect her post traumatic disorders after her loss .They pass before her eyes when their car falls down into a cliff and she cannot help them, she begins suffering after this trauma. She explains, "That's when your troubles started, your problems going outside. Post-traumatic stress, Which I....I...mean, I cannot imagine " (Feen,313). Anna collapse once and twice to leave her house, then drags herself back inside and failed to go out. After the accident, doctors diagnosed her as suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) and agoraphobia problems as well. Anna explains,

At the hospital, they told me I was in shock. Then shock became fear. Fear mutated, became panic. And by the time Dr.Fielding arrived on

the scene, I was well, he said it simplest, said it best:" A severe case of agoraphobia ". I need the familiar confines of my home because I spent two nights in that wilderness, beneath those huge skies. I need an environment I can control because I watched my family as they slowly died (Fean,321).

Anna speaks scientifically about her crisis that she is well aware of her suffering from she indicates that agoraphobia is translation to the fear of the marketplace. The term is used to describe a range of anxiety disorders. First, documented in the late 1800s, and then codified as an independent diagnostic entity, a century later, though largely comorbid with panic disorder. one can read all about it, if you like, in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. DSM-5 for short.(Fean, 25)

Anna, the heroine of the novel under the study, goes on her exposition to the symptoms of her own suffering indicating that there are different fears that severely affect her; fears include being outside the home alone; being in a crowd, or standing in a line, being on a bridge, being in the center of a theater row(Fean, 25).

She suffers from fear of being outside her house in general, especially when she is alone that she spent a year in her house. She admits this fact when she says" I UPEND the hourglass on my desk; watch how the little pyramid of sand seems to pulse as the grains dimple it. So much time, nearly a year. ***I have not left the house in almost a year.***"(Fean31).

Another symptom of her suffering is her scare of being in open spaces in general even with others' company. She witnesses her neighbor being stabbed through her window but she can't help her. She fails to get out helping her. She faints when she tries. When the detective accompanies her in his car to her home, he asks her to come with him to speak with their neighbors but she refuses:

Detective Little: "I'd like to take you to speak with your neighbors with me,"...

I don't care. I don't care. I want to go home. You can bring them to my house. Cram them all in. throw a fucking block party. But take me home now, please.'(Fean, 167)

Anna's anxiety or panic attack from open spaces is a kind of phobia that not all sufferers of agoraphobia have, she indicates that many of the sufferers –The

most severely afflicted, the ones grappling with post-traumatic stress disorders – are housebound, hidden and terrified from the messy, massy world outside. Some dread heaving crowds; others, the storms of traffic. For her, it's vast skies, the endless horizons, the sheer exposure, the crushing pressure of the outdoors' open spaces (Fean, 27).

Anna fails to go outside her house as she spent three days in the cliff where her car fell, under the vast sky in the unlimited space. So, she locks herself in. She doesn't respond to therapy that her doctor tries to do during their online meetings. Whenever she tries to go out even with the companion of her doctor, she fails. Her doctor advises her to use an umbrella that might help her limit her feeling of open uncontrolled spaces, but she also fails, "Remember, you have your secret weapon," Dr. Fielding calls. It's not a secret, I want to cry; it's fucking umbrella "(Fean, 32).

As a result of Ann's failure to overcome her post traumatic disorders and agoraphobia, she tends to adapt with her psychiatric pain. Anna tends to create her own defense mechanisms and coping strategies through the virtual world that she lives in through the different social applications and virtual society that she logs into. She spends her time chatting with her doctor, friends and strangers that she does not know.

Another psychiatric character in this novel is Ethan, a teenage boy who has many psychological disorders. This boy deceives Anna and avails her fear of going out to plan to kill her. We are before two characters who suffer from psychological disorders and spend most of their time using social media platforms. Ethan is adopted by a foster mother as his real mother deserted him when he was young because of her drug addiction. His real mother suddenly appears and he cannot accept her existence in his life. Ethan kills his mother and Anna watches him but she can do nothing, so Ethan decides to kill her, too. This teenager can deceive everyone as nobody knows that he has a real mother and the woman he lives with is a foster mother. Psychological disorders of teenagers accompanied with evil motives make Ethan kill his real mother and use social media as a catalyst that helps him plan to kill Anna, the only witness to his crime. The question that is to be raised is how and why Anna over uses this kind of technology; in fact the answer is: to create defense mechanisms and coping strategies that help her escape her trauma and disorders.

Defense mechanisms

Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies utilized by individuals to cope with stress and anxiety resulting from external and internal conflicts. These mechanisms serve to protect the ego from distressing thoughts and emotions, allowing individuals to keep relief and maintain psychological equilibrium. Introduced by Sigmund Freud and further developed by his daughter Anna Freud, these mechanisms are important for understanding human behavior and mental processes.

In a book entitled the Concept of Defense Mechanisms in Contemporary Psychology, it is indicated that the beginning was made by Freud who explains that the neurotic conflict takes place between the ego and the id, the ego seeking to bar the expression of certain instinctual impulses by using defense mechanisms (Kline, 3). According to Freud, defenses are unconscious. He listed them as sublimation, repression, denial, projection, undoing, reaction formation, isolation, regression (Kline 4, 5).

Darguns in the same reference shows that the term underwent many conceptual changes; Freud explains that the term defense mechanism is the result of the struggle by the ego against the unpleasant ideas (17, 18). Darguns indicates that Valliant is of the view that the ego tends to use defenses to "resolve conflict among the 4 lodestones of our inner life: instincts, the real world, important people, and the internalized prohibition provided by our conscience and culture (17).

Briefly speaking psychological defense refers to the process of regulating painful emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and loss of self-esteem. In other words, it's a mental process that operates to reduce some painful emotion. (Paulhus, 543). According to Brad Bowins, Psychological defense mechanisms represent a crucial component of our capacity to maintain emotional homeostasis. Without them the conscious mind would be much more vulnerable to negatively charged emotional input, such as that pertaining to anxiety and sadness. Fear and anxiety occur within the context of threat and danger (2).

It is very important to note that people differ at their responses to events and traumas in their lives. In other words, some individuals are more defensive than others and differ in their way and style of defense (Paulhus, 545). So, these defenses are various and differ in their usage from person to person and from one situation to another. There is variety of defense mechanisms such as denial,

repression, displacement and many other defenses that the protagonist of novel protects herself by some of it.

The question then is what are the reasons that make people tend to use these defenses? The answer briefly is that these defenses are used to eliminate unbearable bad feelings, in other words to escape some painful facts, either consciously according to Freud, or unconsciously according to other psychologists. these defenses are used to deny, hallucinate, compensate and cope with life difficulties.

Data analysis:

This is a first person novel that belongs to the psychological novel type, which discusses psychological disorders, problems of psychiatric persons and the consequences of these disorders and problems. It tells the story of Anna fox who suffers from a state of agoraphobia that occurred to her after an accident that resulted in her loss to her husband and daughter. Their car swayed and they spent nearly three or four days under the vast sky in an avalanche deserted by people. Anna was the only survivor, her husband and daughter were still alive but in a state of faint. She could not help them and they died in front of her eyes. Being the driver when the accident occurred and failing to help them survive, caused Anna a state of psychiatric disorders that followed this trauma. The period that she spent alone under the vast sky and the horror she experienced alone with the company of two disabled people caused her a state of agoraphobia, a sense of guilt, and other schizophrenia symptoms. She described her state," I can feel the outside trying to get in"(Fean,33).

As a result of this suffering and agoraphobic disorders, Anna trapped herself in her house. She did nothing but consumed too much wine, had depression bills and stalked a lot about her neighbor's activities and routines. She talked to her late daughter and husband everyday but suddenly the reader discovered that they passed. She indulged in creating defense mechanisms and coping strategies to fulfill post traumatic adaptation with the help of different virtual technology sets and social media applications. In other words, she sank into her virtual society. So, she began to deny, cope, hallucinate...etc. In this context it is to say that "Defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection are part of the unconscious processes that protect the individual from anxiety and help maintain psychological stability"(Myers,64).

Denial

The invention of virtual technology sets and social technology in general makes life easier in many aspects especially in the field of connection and convergence among people. These sets and apps bridges far distances and make it possible for a person in the Far East to be connected -virtually- with another in the Far West. Exchanging information, books, and goods and even exploring other worlds with different cultures become possible. Indeed, life becomes easier but there is always a price that humanity has to pay for this unprecedented progression in this technology as it has merits and demerits like anything in the world.

Of the disadvantages of this technology is its misuse in different fields. For instance, some people use it to deny their reality. This is what happens to Anna Fox, who creates herself a virtual world where she tends to feel safe. This happens through indulging in a state of denial as a first created defense mechanism in this novel. Anna defends herself and tries to defeat her trauma. She tries to fight her fear through denying it. In this context it can be said that, "Although overlapping with other defenses, denial refers primarily to defense against painful aspects of external reality" (Paulhus, 546). Psychologists always relate this defense to cases of loss by death. People tend to flee their terror of acknowledging that someone has passed

Denial, which means refutation or refusal in the English language, is used in the field of psychology to describe a mode of self-deception. People, who suffer from different psychiatric problems, utilize several means to fulfill this denial. They deny in order to be able to protect themselves from feeling of threat, scare, or even to flee accepting a painful truth like death. In Freud's explanation to what he called defense mechanisms, he declares that denial, as one of these defenses, is potentially dangerous psychologically, because a person denounces to see or accept what happens in the physical real world as a truth while others verify as real (Ritchie, 2). In the denial case, the problem is that the patient cannot accept or believe or even bear that life can go on as before the trauma but without someone. So, she creates a state of psychological negation and refusal to flee the painful reality of loss.

Later in the 20th century, Elisabeth Kubler tackled people's sense of grief after loss to dear persons. Kubler indicated that response to loss takes place through five stages; denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. According to Kubler not everyone experiences all of them or even lives in a prescribed order. She declared that the person who may be in denial is grieving the loss of a loved

one (7), Kubler went on to explain her explanation to denial and its importance as a first stage of grieving that helps people to survive loss. According to her, "In this stage life makes no sense. We go numb. We try to discover a way that may help us cope and make life possible. Denial helps us pace our feelings of grief. These feelings are important; they are the psyche's protective mechanisms" (Kubler10).

Denial, as a defense mechanism, is fulfilled and assisted in this novel by modern technological sets and social apps that Anna uses to chat with people whom she does not know in reality, to deny her family's death. Also, she denies and this is clear in her long imaginative talk with and messages to her dead husband. Her denial is clear, too, when she spends a good deal of time joking with her dead girl. The reader suddenly discovers her family death just at the end of the novel.

Moreover, Anna logs into many social sites, chats with its members about different topics. She never mentions her loss, all that she says to anyone who asks her about her family, "We do not live together" as a clear denial to the fact that they passed. Her virtual self-created society helps her deny her trauma as she can find people who believe her story easily because they do not know her personally. This is one of the biggest dangers of these societies where anyone can create his-her story and expose it to others who often believe it very easily. It is supposed that people say the truth. In the virtual open society many people are victims of faked stories; as it is not supposed to ask others their ids while chatting through these platforms.

A person who suffers from social or psychological problems always finds a way to escape his suffering through these platforms. There, he denies his painful reality for the sake of another self-created comfortable fake world. In this created world one feels comfort and satisfaction because you can easily create fake accounts or even chat with people who do not know you personally.

This is what happens with Anna. In order to adapt after her trauma, she logs these platforms and chats with people who do not know her. She denies her problem comfortably as those people believe her story- that she does not live with her husband and daughter- without any suspicion. Whenever they ask her about her family, she denies their death and says that they do not live together. Briefly speaking, virtual society enables people to live in an imaginary world, where they create their own fake stories and where they deny their painful true lives and traumas. Some people do so just to be able to bear life without their passed beloved persons.

Anna denies as her internal desire is to refuse the fact of her family death, while there are external pressures from people that her family death is a fact. The solution for her is to deny through her virtual world where people do not really know her. She does so to make the internal meet with the external. Nancy McWilliams (2011) in her book - "Psychoanalytic Diagnosis: Understanding Personality Structure in the Clinical *Process* explains, "Defense mechanisms are not just about shielding oneself from internal conflicts but also about navigating the complex interpersonal landscape, they help manage the interaction between internal desires and external pressures"(45). This leads to another defense which is compensation. Denial creates feelings of guilt and inferiority that need to be compensated.

Compensation

The main problem of Anna fox is her isolation that is imposed on her due to her suffering from severe agoraphobic symptoms. As a kind of solution, she tends to replace the real world that she cannot encounter with a virtual world through the internet. In other words, she substitutes her limited small place where she lives and cannot leave for another unlimited vast virtual one with the help of social media aps. According to Anna's own words, most agoraphobic sufferers " are housebound hidden from the messy massy world outside; some dread the heaving crowds; others the storm of traffic. For me, it is the vast skies, the endless horizon, the sheer exposure, the crushing pressure of the outdoors" (Fean,25). This exposes those sufferers to some sort of obligatory isolation, so they had to create a substitution, in other words, a virtual world where they can adapt and compensate for their isolation. Anna says, "As a doctor, I say that the sufferer seeks an environment she can control" (Fean, 25).

Anna decides to log frequently on a site concerned with people like her. It is a site where those who suffer from agoraphobia gather in an attempt to help each other. There, she asserts their isolation when she speaks about one of those she chats with. Anna says "Sally spent four months indoors, isolated in the most isolated city in the world" (Fean, 26). This isolation reveals need for compensation. So, they use this site and social media in general to create an alternative world. In this psychological context, compensation can be referred to as;

- a) A process that occurs when a person exaggerates in showing a specific behavior to hide some sort of shortage or lack in doing another.
- B) A process through which a motive conceals or offsets another motive either fully or even partially.

In other words Gerald Corey defines compensation to be, "a defense mechanism in which an individual covers up weaknesses or deficiencies by overemphasizing strengths or achievements in other areas"(65). The result is a compensatory behavior that aims at avoiding disability in some of personality characteristics to reach a partial satisfaction when one faces an obstacle in some area that obscures feeling fully satisfied.

It is a defense mechanism that reflects weakness or feeling inadequacy in one life area through achieving excellence or gratification in another area. According to Nancy McWilliams, "Compensation involves counterbalancing perceived deficiencies by emphasizing other aspects of oneself or one's achievements."(169)

According to Freud, compensation is a defense mechanism that saves one against feeling deficiencies in some aspects of life. Being incapable of fulfilling the desired satisfaction makes an individual tend to strive in order to achieve some sort of alternative to hide their disability. Anna fails to go outside her home even to do her necessary needs. So, she depends completely on the internet for implementing her needs to compensate her failure to go out her house:

"How long have you been like this how long did you say?" she asks."Six month?"

"Almost eleven."

" So what do you do all day ?"

"I counsel people" I say nobly.

"who?"

"people online.".....

"And I take French lessons online. And I play chess," I add.

"Online?", "Online"..

"So the Internet is a sort of your...window to the world."(Feen, 60)

Anna adopts this mechanism to compensate for her imposed isolation. So, she logs in different sites and social applications to achieve this compensation. There, she finds company that makes her busy all the time. She considers that she fails as a wife and as a mother. Thus, through her virtual world created in these sites, she

builds relationships with patients and friends who tell her their sufferings and problems. Being a children psychiatrist, Anna can advise and help them come over their pains and thus help herself compensate for staying without practicing her work. Hence, with help of virtual technology, she succeeds-online- in compensating for her isolation and her failure with her family.

Coping strategies

Much research has been made regarding adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies that individuals tend to use as moderators especially after stressful or traumatic events. In this context, coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral strategies a person employs to manage stress (Alipan,39). Lazarus and his colleagues defined coping as "the person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and or/internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources" (Nakano,160)

Heather et al mention that there are two main conceptualizations of coping; the first focuses on problems while the other regards emotion -focused strategies. The problem- focused coping strategies are those that directly address the problem that causes the stress, seek information about the stressor and make a plan of action to resolve or manage the stressor. In contrast, emotion focused strategies tend to manage the emotional distress associated with the stressor and disengage from the emotion related to the stressor to achieve emotional support (Littleton,977)

The second branch of the coping strategies conceptualizes approach strategies focused on the stressor itself. In contrast, avoidance coping strategies focus on neglecting or forgetting the causes of the problem or the trauma. Avoidance strategies always focus on avoiding the stressor or one's reaction to it; for example withdrawing from others, denying that stressor exists, and disengaging from one's thoughts and feelings related to the stressor (Littleton, 978).

Anna tries to cope with her trauma that resulted in her loss to her daughter and husband through avoiding speaking about the accident. It is remarkable that avoidance as a coping strategy is different from denial as a defense mechanism. In denial she refuse to admit that they are dead and always hallucinates and talks with them on her cell phone and speaks about them to her virtual friends. While in avoidance coping strategy she avoids completely mentioning a word about the accident. Anna suffers from schizophrenia where she is sometimes aware and in this context she uses coping strategies. while many other times she is completely

consciously absent and uses defense mechanisms. She avoids when she is aware and denies when she is unconscious. A very simple difference but it already exists.

Either denial, as a defense mechanism, or avoidance, as a coping strategy is achieved through her over use of virtual technology sets and sites that she spent nearly all her day and night browsing to fulfill escaping and avoiding from her painful real life .

Spying

Using virtual societies to achieve defense mechanisms or even coping strategies has its merits and demerits. However, it may be considered less dangerous than its use for spying. Spying on others is one of the most negative uses of virtual reality apps or internet sites in general. *The woman in the window* arouses important questions regarding this topic. Are internet users being spied on, are they being watched? Just search any topic using Google and open some of the resulting pages to find on the screen what is called cookies. Cookies are pieces of data that when you accept are stored to track any website you log in. In other words, accepting these cookies exposes you to be spied on and watched very easily. According to Frank Pasquale, "Social media surveillance mechanisms enable both private companies and state actors to engage in covert monitoring and data collection, fundamentally altering the privacy landscape." (143).

This spying and violation to one's privacy may occur for political reasons to spread specific ideas and persuade people with some policy. Also it may be done for economic reasons to market specific goods. Shoshana Zuboff says that "Surveillance through social media represents a form of economic exploitation where personal data is harvested and analyzed to influence behavior and preferences" (257). This is done for marketing and selling purposes.

Social media societies and apps including Facebook, twitter, Happn, Instagram, passing by smart cars or even smart homes, all these apps that are being developed terribly every day, enable people to spy-directly or indirectly- on each other. Just search any product on Google and do not be surprised to find all your applications turned into pages of advertisements about the product you searched. It is even thought that with the help of social media, companies think it is easy to succeed online as all that they need is a Facebook page to hit its consumers and that people will share conversations and experiences watched by Facebook without a company's involvement (Gancho,4).

It becomes more dangerous as people chat and even exchange personal information through these apps. Lawsuits have been passed by governments regarding invasion of privacy. This might be for security or political or economic purposes. But the problem is that spying and hacking became available for ordinary people who misuse these applications to achieve immoral purposes. Zeynep Tufekci, "The pervasive nature of social media allows for unprecedented levels of surveillance and monitoring, which can be employed by various actors for spying on individuals and groups." (198). Moreover, David Lyon indicates that, "Social media platforms are not just tools for communication; they have become avenues for extensive surveillance and data collection, often without users' full awareness" (45).

The greatest danger can be seen when the internet, in general, is used by psychiatric individuals. This can be traced in the novel through the protagonist Anna and her human antagonist Ethan, (her main antagonist is her post traumatic disorders and agoraphobia). Ethan is her young teenager neighbor who suffers from complex psychiatric disease and misuses social media to deceive Anna as he pretends through social platforms to be someone else. Availing her agoraphobia and panic from going out, Ethan deceives Anna and hacks her phone and smart security system procedures of her house. He is about to kill her.

Regarding spying made by Anna, it can be exposed in the title of the novel. Anna is a widow who lost her family in a horrible accident that left her with severe agoraphobic symptoms. So, she is always in the window whether it is the real window of her house or the different virtual internet windows. She spends nearly all her night and day spying on her neighbors through these different windows.

Through the windows of the internet and the virtual societies available there, Anna uses Google, for instance, to get the available information about her neighbors. She does so to satisfy her desire of spying and following others news to fill the emptiness of her life. Her life is empty after her loss to her family, especially with her suffering from agoraphobia that bans her from getting out her house. This of course helps her waste time; thus, creates her own avoidance coping strategy to avoid thinking in her personal trauma. Briefly speaking, she spies to create her virtual world to substitute for her isolation.

While spying through her home window Anna watches a crime murder, she sees Ethan's mother stabbed and bleeding in front of her window. She tries but fails to help her as she cannot go outdoors. She calls the police. The police come and she gets a surprise when they bring a woman to her insisting on calling her Ethan's

mother. Anna cannot recognize this woman and tells the police that there is another woman who visited her and told her that she is Ethan's mother. She tries to prove her words but the police consider her words some as a sort of hallucination as her neighbors tell the police about her accident and trauma. One of the greatest dangers that this kind of person suffers is the fact that no one considers their words seriously, so, no one believes her. Ethan, an intelligent psychiatric teenager, begins his plan to spy on Anna to kill her to hide his crime of killing his true mother.

Being addicted to virtual societies, Anna is an easy victim to be caught by Ethan. He begins visiting the same sites she logs and where she has accounts. He creates fake accounts pretending to be an old woman who suffers from agoraphobia, the same mental illness Anna suffers from. Thus, he succeeds in getting all the necessary information he needs to spy on her for achieving his purpose, as he logs in the same sites that she logs. Naively, Anna indulges in online chatting with Ethan and he gets the necessary information to hack the security system of her home, laptop, and even her phone.

Once upon a night, Anna wakes up to find Ethan sitting in the chair beside her bed in her bedroom. She thinks herself hallucinating but she gradually begins to be sure of his existence in her bedroom. Ethan begins to tell Anna about his spying on her, availing the virtual societies she lives in. She is the only one who knows his true mother and watches her stabbed. Ethan is about to kill Anna as he delays her phone and safety system. He knows well that she cannot escape as she suffers from agoraphobia. So, he sits beside her bed speaking about his achievements and intelligence in planning to kill her and how she falls in the trap he sets for her. He gets all that he needs and succeeds in hacking her security system. He hurts her cat in order not to make any sounds. Anna escapes and Ethan falls down dead.

Conclusion:

The woman in the window is one of the novels that tackles important themes like the dangers of virtual worlds created through different social media applications. The writer shows how these apps can be beneficial for communication among people from different distances. Also it can be used by people obliged to stay home for different reasons as in the case of Anna, the protagonist of this novel who suffers from agoraphobia that disables her from going out. On the one hand Anna uses these apps for shopping, for amusements and even for treatment as she communicates with her doctors through the internet where she attends her treatment sessions, on the other hand, Fean tolls the bills of

the dangers that can happen to the users of these virtual worlds. The problems become more difficult especially when the users are psychiatric. They can be victims and exposed to be killed as in the case of Anna, or can even be criminals as in the case of Ethan who was about to kill her.

The findings of this research indicate that one must not indulge and exaggerate in using social media and virtual reality technology. Speaking with strangers is very dangerous, there is no safety on these applications and one must take care when using it.

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