



The Never-Ending Run: Childhood Trauma and Narcissistic Rage in Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

Ali Salami¹, Midia Mohammadi²

1- Assistant Professor of English Literature, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

2- MA in English Literature, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

In *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), Patricia Highsmith explores the lives of the American youth in post-war Europe and creates a fictional con artist, Tom Ripley, who attempts to climb the social ladder by pretending to be different characters. The narrative explores Tom's mental issues deterioration since going to Italy to fetch Dickie Greenleaf, the wealthy only child of an American ship industrialist. Tom's journey to Europe is his path to lose his identity and peace. Tom and Dickie both escaping different circumstances, befriend each other but are later separated when Tom's narcissistic rage triggered by being rejected leads to Dickie's murder and stealing his identity. In this study, the root of Tom's identity crisis and Dickie's restlessness is studied in the light of Heinz Kohut's theories on early stages of identity development, empathy, and narcissism. Kohut believes that parental figure's lack of empathetic reaction towards the child, ingrains the seed of future psychological problems.

Keywords: childhood trauma, violence, crime fiction, identity, narcissism, narcissistic injury