



## Crafting Suspense: A Stylistic Analysis of *the Girl on the Train*

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### ABSTRACT

Suspense plays a pivotal role in shaping compelling narratives and has intrigued both literary critics and readers due to its power to hold attention and evoke emotional involvement. In fiction, suspense transcends simple unpredictability; it represents a deliberately crafted emotional journey that evokes anticipation and tension about what is to come. This study explores how suspense is generated and maintained in Paula Hawkins' novel *The Girl on the Train*, offering valuable perspectives on narrative craft and the strategic use of language to sustain reader engagement. This research utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyze the selected excerpts from the novel. Drawing on Leech and Short's (2007) model of stylistic analysis and Carroll's (1990) theory of suspense, this research examines how linguistic elements and narrative strategies interact to evoke anticipation, uncertainty, and emotional engagement. The analysis of the selected excerpts reveals Hawkins' strategic use of lexical categories and figures of speech to create a tense and immersive experience. This research demonstrates that suspense in Hawkins' novel is not solely plot-driven but also intricately woven into linguistic and structural elements, reflecting the protagonist's fragmented perception of reality. Hawkins' use of repetition, ambiguity, and vivid imagery aligns seamlessly with Carroll's parameters of suspense, enhancing readers' cognitive and emotional engagement. By showcasing how narrative and linguistic techniques synergize, this research contributes to the broader understanding of psychological thrillers and highlights the role of stylistic analysis in contemporary fiction.

## **Introduction**

Suspense in literary narratives is a complex emotional condition marked by feelings of uncertainty and apprehension about significant developments within a story. According to Carroll (2001), suspense is essentially an emotional reaction triggered by ambiguous outcomes that bear importance for both the characters involved and the audience. The effective creation of suspense hinges on two key elements: uncertainty and emotional investment. Kemertelidze and Manjavidze (2013) further categorized suspense into three types: hidden, macro, and micro. Hidden suspense tends to elude less attentive readers, macro suspense spans the entire storyline, while micro or secondary suspense is localized within particular scenes or episodes.

The trajectory of suspense as a literary device can be traced from early Gothic works such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), to the intricately woven tensions of modern psychological thrillers. When investigating suspense from a stylistic perspective, the deployment of language and narrative strategies becomes vital. Leech and Short (1969) defined style as the distinctive manner in which language is used by an individual in a specific context for a particular function. Although often conflated, style and genre are not synonymous. Harmor (2009) noted that style represents the personal touch an author brings to their message, while genre refers to the classification of texts based on thematic and structural features. Chandler (1997) explained that the term "genre" originates from notions of "kind" or "category," grouping literature into types such as mystery, suspense, and science fiction: each possessing unique stylistic hallmarks.

Mikos (2013) characterized the suspense genre as including detective fiction, thrillers, and horror, all designed to provoke excitement, tension, and curiosity. Carroll (1990) elaborated that suspense is driven by anticipation, the hope for a favorable outcome, and doubt surrounding whether it will be achieved. Kemertelidze and Manjavidze (2013) identified fundamental elements of suspense; such as causality, foreshadowing, conflict, and escalation; which are skillfully embedded into the narrative through linguistic choices, thereby justifying the importance of stylistic analysis.

The analytical framework provided by Leech and Short, which focuses on lexical categories and figures of speech, proves useful for investigating how suspense is linguistically constructed. Through examining aspects such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, metaphors, and similes, one can trace how specific choices amplify tension. For example, vivid adjectives and energetic verbs can intensify action, while metaphor and simile contribute to subtle hints that shape foreshadowing. Fill (2003) argued that deviating from linguistic norms often enhances suspense more than adhering to them. Elements like innovation, rarity, and unnatural language use contribute significantly to suspenseful effect. He also emphasized that suspense can operate across multiple linguistic layers, including lexical-semantic, syntactic, and textual-pragmatic, which must be examined stylistically to uncover deeper meanings within the text.

Stylistic analysis, therefore, involves a close examination of language and structure in literary texts. This includes attention to vocabulary, syntax, tone, and figurative language to identify patterns and understand their contribution to meaning and style. Short and Candlin (1989) described stylistics as a method rooted in linguistic principles aimed at analyzing literary discourse. Espunya (2014) explored suspense in *Third Girl* by Agatha Christie, revealing that variations in grammatical structure and clause organization can shift readers' perception of imminent danger and foreshadowing. Similarly, Anggita (2019) conducted a stylistic study of

Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train*, focusing on the author's use of figures of speech. The analysis showed that Hawkins employed comparisons involving animals, people, objects, and abstract ideas to mirror human thoughts and emotions. These figurative elements serve a dual function: they not only enrich the emotional landscape but also act as subtle cues that maintain suspense and keep readers invested in the narrative.

In Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* (2015), stylistic elements play a crucial role in generating suspense. The novel is a psychological thriller featuring Rachel Watson and utilizes her unreliable memory as a narrative device. Berve (2018) noted that the suspense in Hawkins' novel arises from the gradual revelation and reshaping of information through Rachel's fragmented recollections. Moreover, Fauziah, (2018) focused on the psychological conditions and characterizations of the women in the novel, revealing how their marital problems and psychological traumas influenced their behaviors and transformations. This exploration of characters' psychological depth is crucial in creating suspense as readers become invested in the complex and often unreliable perspectives of these characters which adds to the uncertainty and tension. By analyzing the language and stylistic features employed by authors, we can uncover how these elements contribute to the overall effect of the narrative.

Therefore, the emphasis of the current research lies in exploring various lexical categories and figures of speech used by the author to create suspense in the novel *The Girl on the Train*. For this purpose, stylistic analysis is done by using Leech and Short's (2007) checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories, along with theoretical insight on suspense by Noel Carroll 1990. This research provides a deeper understanding of how suspense is crafted and sustained in a written text. It focuses on storytelling techniques that are beneficial for literary writers.

### ***1.1 Problem Statement***

The genre of suspense in literature is characterized by a sense of anticipation and uncertainty that keeps the reader engaged and on the edge. Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* exemplifies this genre through its gripping narrative and plot twists. Various researches have explored different themes like anxiety, patriarchy, feminism, and other aspects such as psychological trauma and characterization of the novel like Fauziah (2018). However, few have delved deeply into the elements that contribute to its suspenseful nature.

By analyzing the language and stylistic features employed by authors, one can uncover the role of stylistic elements in generating suspense and contributing to the overall effect of the narrative. A considerable amount of research work has been done on different literary texts using stylistic analysis as a research tool (Imran et al. 2021; Anggita, 2019). The element of suspense is analyzed stylistically by using Leech and Short's model, (Espunya, 2014). However, Carroll's theory of suspense and Leech and Short's model of stylistic analysis have not employed as a combined approach yet, which lacks a holistic view of how authors strategically use language to craft suspenseful narratives. While previous studies focus on general stylistic elements or thematic explorations like Schubert (2023) and overlook the intricate interplay between linguistic structures and cognitive suspense mechanisms. Additionally, limited research examines how specific lexical categories and figures of speech work together to sustain tension throughout an entire novel particularly in *The Girl on the Train*. Hence, this combined approach is essential to understand how skillful linguistic and literary manipulation captivates readers.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of how *The Girl on the Train* developed into a suspenseful work requires a closer examination of the lexical categories and figures of speech

employed throughout the novel. By analyzing lexical categories and figures of speech, one can uncover the techniques Hawkins uses to sustain tension and intrigue that make the novel a compelling example of the suspense genre.

To fill this gap, the current research intertwines Leech and Short's checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories (2007) with Noel Carroll's theory of suspense (1990) to explore various lexical categories and figures of speech used by the author and their roles in creating suspense in the novel *The Girl on the Train*. This research aims to delve into the intricacies of crafting and maintaining suspense in written works, offering a deeper comprehension of storytelling techniques beneficial to literary writers.

### **Research Objective**

1. To examine the contribution of lexical categories and figures of speech employed by Paula Hawkins in *The Girl on the Train* for the creation and maintenance of suspense.

### **Research Question**

1. How do lexical categories and figures of speech employed by Paula Hawkins in *The Girl on the Train* contribute to the creation and maintenance of suspense?

### **Significance of the study**

Grasping how suspense is constructed is essential not only within the realm of literary scholarship but also for its practical relevance in creative writing. It contributes to more nuanced literary analysis and deepens our appreciation of the genre-specific methods that define suspense-driven narratives. This study examines Paula Hawkins' use of lexical choices and figurative language to build suspense, offering meaningful insights into effective storytelling techniques that may serve as a reference for future research.

In addition, the research sheds light on the mechanisms through which suspense is initiated and sustained in written fiction. It focuses on narrative tools that can be especially beneficial for emerging writers. The analysis allows scholars to pinpoint moments of heightened tension and explore the linguistic strategies employed to produce those effects. By doing so, the study helps both literature and linguistics students gain a more refined understanding of suspense as a stylistic and structural element, offering a dual lens through which to appreciate how authors skillfully manipulate language to draw readers into their stories.

### **Research Methodology**

The novel selected for this research is *The Girl on the Train*. It is a psychological thriller, written by British author Paula Hawkins in 2015. This research encompasses both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the text. Quantitative analysis provides objective data, according to the frequency and distribution of lexical categories and figures of speech. This helps in identifying patterns and trends that might not be immediately obvious through qualitative methods alone. Qualitative analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the context in which specific lexical categories and figures of speech are used. This is crucial for interpreting how these choices contribute to the narrative and thematic elements of suspense. It enables the application of theoretical frameworks to illustrate how linguistic choices create moral and emotional tension. Leech and Short's (2007) model of stylistic analysis and Carroll's theory of suspense are utilized as analytical and theoretical frameworks, respectively. Leech and Short's

(2007) model provides with a checklist of four main categories: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and context and cohesion to analyze linguistic and stylistic features. While Carroll's theory centers on several key parameters, including anticipation and prediction, uncertainty, emotional engagement, temporal dynamics, cognitive dissonance, and resolution to gauge suspense in a literary text. These parameters collectively shape the reader's experience, drawing them into the narrative's unfolding drama and keeping them engaged until the resolution is revealed. Combining these parameters with Leech and Short's 2007 checklist proposes a comprehensive analysis of how suspense is created.

### ***Procedure of data collection and analysis***

1. The chosen text for this study *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins underwent a detailed examination, and excerpts that had the elements of suspense in them were shortlisted
2. The next step was to identify the Lexical categories and figures of speech that highlighted the theme of suspense. .
3. Later, those devices were interpreted and analyzed in order to know how the author generates suspense throughout the novel by using these devices.

### **Data Analysis**

The data is analyzed by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate how lexical categories and figures of speech contribute to creation of suspense in *The Girl on the Train*. Through a combination of Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic model and Noël Carroll's (1990) theory of suspense, the analysis provides a detailed exploration of the linguistic and emotional mechanisms that Hawkins uses to evoke tension, fear, and uncertainty. This integrated approach offers a comprehensive view of how suspense operates on both a linguistic and narrative level in the text.

#### ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

##### ***Analysis of Excerpt 1:***

Text:

"THERE IS A PILE OF clothing on the side of the train tracks. Light-blue cloth a shirt, perhaps jumbled up with something dirty white."

##### **Analysis:**

<b>Words used to create suspense</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>
"Pile of clothing"	Noun
"Train track"	Noun
"Light-blue cloth"	Adjective + Noun
"Dirty white"	Adjective + Noun
"A shirt, perhaps"	Noun + Adverb
"Jumbled up"	Verb
"Something"	Pronoun

At the very beginning of *The Girl on the Train*, the narrator mentions a “pile of clothes” lying on the train track. The excerpt uses specific lexical choices to build an atmosphere of suspense and unease. The phrase “a pile of clothing on the train track” immediately suggests a sense of abandonment, setting a tone of neglect. The color “light blue,” often associated with sadness, melancholy, or longing, subtly imbues the scene with an emotional undercurrent. The choice of “light-blue cloth” invokes a sense of fragility, as if the item represents something lost or forgotten. In contrast, the “dirty white” color further deepens the feeling of decay and degradation. White, traditionally a color symbolizing purity or innocence, here appears tainted, hinting at something that has been compromised or marred. The ambiguity of these colors, with their uncertain mixture of light blue and dirty white, creates a sense of mystery and raises questions about their significance. The lack of clear identification, such as the hesitation in “a shirt, perhaps,” adds to the uncertainty. The objects in the scene are not firmly understood or defined, enhancing the sense of something important but elusive and heightening the suspense. These carefully chosen lexical elements, through their associations with emotion, decay, and ambiguity, make the scene feel unsettling and unresolved, inviting the reader to question what had happened, whose clothes were they, what is the significance of mentioning these clothes and what will come next.

***Analysis of Excerpt 2:***

Text:

“In my head I can still see that little pile of clothes lying at the edge of the track, abandoned.”

**Analysis:**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>
"Abandoned"	Adjective
"Little pile of clothes"	Noun
"In my head, I can still see"	Verb

In this excerpt, the word “abandoned” plays a crucial role in building suspense. It conveys a strong sense of neglect and disregard. The term immediately evokes a feeling of desolation, reinforcing the idea that whatever happened to the clothing (and potentially to the person associated with it) is shrouded in mystery. “Abandoned” does not just imply that the clothes are left unattended; it suggests a purposeful act, a moment of finality or irreversible loss, which heightens the tension surrounding the scene.

The narrator’s inability to move forward mentally intensifies the suspense. The phrase “In my head, I can still see” suggests that the image of the pile of clothes lingers in the narrator’s mind, preventing her from fully processing or letting go of the image. This mental fixation on the pile reflects the narrator’s emotional paralysis, indicating that she is trapped in a loop of contemplation and uncertainty. The fact that she cannot move past this image, creates a sense of stagnation as if the story is unable to progress because the narrator is stuck in a moment of confusion or trauma. This feeling of being unable to move on mirrors the reader’s own sense of frustration and curiosity, as they are left with the same unresolved questions. Why was the pile of clothes there? Who abandoned them, and what did it signify? The narrator’s inaction and inability to resolve this

haunting image magnifies the suspense, leaving both the character and the readers in a state of unease.

**Analysis of Excerpt 3:**

Text:

“The closer we get to Euston the more anxious I feel; pressure builds, how will today be? There’s a filthy, low-slung concrete building on the right-hand side of the track about five hundred metres before we get into Euston. On its side, someone has painted: LIFE IS NOT A PARAGRAPH. I think about the bundle of clothes on the side of the track and I feel as though my throat is closing up. Life is not a paragraph and death is no parenthesis.”

**Analysis:**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>	<b>Figure of speech</b>
"Anxious"	Adjective	
"Pressure builds"	Verb	
"Filthy"	Adjective	
"Life is not a paragraph"		Metaphor
"Death is no parenthesis"		Metaphor(Foreshadowing)
"Bundle of clothes on the side of the track"	Noun	Repetition
"My throat is closing up"		Idiom & Metaphor

This passage effectively builds suspense and unease by combining lexical choices and structural elements. The lexical choices here evoke a sense of tension and instability. The use of words like “anxious,” “pressure builds,” and “filthy” imply discomfort and foreboding as the narrator approaches Euston. These words belong to a semantic field of anxiety and apprehension, foreshadowing something unsettling about what lies ahead. The narrator’s increasing anxiety as the train moves closer to Euston illustrates Carroll’s concept of anticipation and emotional engagement; the reader is drawn into this emotional tension, wondering what awaits the narrator. Structurally, the sentence “How will today be?” is direct and simple, breaking up the flow of more descriptive language and punctuating the moment with uncertainty. This direct questioning aligns with Carroll’s theory, as it introduces suspense by engaging the readers in the narrator’s own uncertainty and setting up an unresolved expectation.

The metaphor “life is not a paragraph” acts as a reflective interruption that intensifies suspense through contrast. The notion that life is unpredictable and unstructured contrasts with the ordinary, day-to-day journey of the train ride. This statement also functions as foreshadowing, suggesting that life, and by extension, the narrative itself, lacks the neat closure of a paragraph. The reference to “death is no parenthesis” reinforces this idea, unsettling the readers with its implication that death is as integral and open-ended as life, without boundaries or explanations. The repetition of “Life is not a paragraph and death is no parenthesis” underlines the tension between life’s structure-less nature and the narrator’s desire for certainty.

Finally, the thought of the “bundle of clothes on the side of the track” triggers physical tension in the narrator, evident in the phrase “my throat is closing up.” This is the fourth time the same clothes are mentioned, yet both the readers and the narrator know nothing about it. This lexical

choice conveys a visceral reaction that involves the readers emotionally, a key element in Carroll's framework. The physical response builds suspense by emphasizing the psychological impact of the memory, drawing readers into the narrator's state of mind. Leech and Short's focus on figures of speech such as metaphor and symbolism in the line about "life" and "death" contributes to an atmosphere of existential dread, transforming the seemingly ordinary journey into a moment laden with suspense and introspection.

***Analysis of Excerpt 4:***

Text:

"I look down and notice that there's something on the floor, a hair band, purple, stretched, well used. Dropped by a runner, probably, but something about it gives me the creeps and I want to get out of there quickly, back into the sunshine."

**Analysis:**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>	<b>Figure of speech</b>
"Purple"		Symbolism
"stretched" and "well used"	Adjectives	
"something about it gives me the creeps"	Noun	
"gives me the creeps"		Colloquialism
Contrast between "shaded area" and "sunshine"		Symbolism

This excerpt creates suspense by combining vivid imagery, symbolic color associations and emotional responses. Each element contributes to a layered scene that unsettles both the narrator and the readers. The narrator's discovery of the hair band is laden with symbolic and sensory detail. Purple, often associated with sadness and mourning, lends a somber tone to the object, subtly implying a connection to loss or despair. The state of the hair band, described as "stretched" and "well used," suggests wear and neglect, which might evoke a sense of abandonment or a forgotten presence. These descriptions imbue the seemingly mundane object with emotional weight, enhancing its capacity to unsettle. The phrase "something about it gives me the creeps" heightens the suspense by leaving the cause of unease ambiguous. The indefinite "something" invites the readers to speculate, introducing an element of uncertainty that amplifies tension. The colloquialism "gives me the creeps" conveys an instinctive, visceral reaction, drawing attention to the narrator's immediate discomfort and encouraging the readers to share this feeling. The narrative's shift to a desire for escape suggests an urgent need to leave the shadowy and unsettling scene. The contrast between the shaded area where the hair band lies and the "sunshine" beyond serves as a symbolic opposition between unease and safety. This dichotomy reinforces the narrator's emotional engagement with the moment, compelling the reader to feel their discomfort.

***Analysis of Excerpt 5:***

Text:

"I can see Jess in her garden, and behind her a man walking out of the house. He's carrying something mugs of coffee, perhaps and I look at him and realize that it isn't Jason. This man is taller, slender and darker. He's a family friend; he's her brother or Jason's brother. He bends

down, placing the mugs on the metal table on their patio. He's a cousin from Australia, staying for a couple of weeks; he's Jason's oldest friend, best man at their wedding. Jess walks towards him, she puts her hands around his waist and she kisses him, long and deep. The train moves."

**Analysis:**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>	<b>Figure of Speech</b>
" See"	Verb	
"She puts her hands around his waist and she kisses him, long and deep"		Imagery
"Vowing revenge"		Foreshadowing
Train's movement as a transition		Symbolism

The excerpt effectively maintains suspense through vivid imagery, speculative narration, and emotionally charged language, closely aligning with Carroll's theory of suspense. The context, where Rachel's emotional turmoil intensifies and her thoughts turn to revenge, amplifies the tension in this scene. The suspense begins with the observational tone as Rachel describes Jess and the man in her garden. The phrase "I can see Jess in her garden" sets a tranquil, ordinary scene but the introduction of the man; "it isn't Jason," immediately disrupts this normalcy, creating an air of mystery. The use of short, declarative sentences reflects Rachel's dawning realization, building tension with each line. The narrator's speculative internal monologue about the man's relation with Jess creates uncertainty, a key component of suspense. These imagined scenarios highlight Rachel's attempt to rationalize what she sees, underscoring her anxiety and the reader's need to uncover the truth. The possibilities she lists heighten the ambiguity, delaying resolution and compelling the reader to share in her emotional unease.

The description of the kiss, "she puts her hands around his waist and she kisses him, long and deep," introduces a striking visual and emotional contrast. The detailed imagery of intimacy intensifies the suspense by confirming Rachel's worst fears. The kiss becomes a pivotal moment, marked by betrayal and emotional impact, aligning with Carroll's concept of anticipation and emotional engagement. The readers feel Rachel's shock and outrage, drawing them deeper into her perspective.

The context that follows, when Rachel recalls Tom's infidelity and vowing revenge, adds psychological depth to the scene. Her decision to punish Jess reflects the narrative's ongoing interplay between past and present betrayals, drawing a parallel between her unresolved pain and her reaction to Jess's actions. This context enhances the suspense by revealing Rachel's escalating emotional state, suggesting that her perceptions and actions may soon take a darker turn. Finally, the train's movement provides a powerful ending to the scene. The abruptness of this transition symbolizes Rachel's inability to intervene, leaving her and the readers, trapped in uncertainty. The motion of the train parallels the narrative's forward momentum, propelling both Rachel's turmoil and the suspense towards further revelations and conflicts.

**Analysis of Excerpt 6:**

Text:

“I feel uneasy. I walk around the house; I can’t settle, I feel as though someone else has been here while I was sleeping. There’s nothing out of place, but the house feels different, as though things have been touched, subtly shifted out of place and as I walk around I feel as though there’s someone else here, always just out of my line of sight. I check the French doors to the garden three times, but they’re locked. I can’t wait for Scott to get home. I need him.”

**Analysis:**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>
"Someone else has been here"	Pronoun
"Subtly shifted out of place"	Adverb
"A presence always just out of my line of sight"	Noun
"Walking around the house"	Verb(Repetitive)
"checking the French doors multiple times"	Verb
"waiting for Scott"	Verb phrase

This passage creates a palpable sense of suspense by amplifying the narrator’s growing unease and disorientation. The repetition of small, anxious actions such as walking around the house and checking the French doors multiple times, serves to heighten the feeling of being on edge. The narrator’s internal dialogue, particularly the thought that “someone else has been here while I was sleeping,” introduces an unsettling uncertainty. This feeling of intrusion is compounded by the suggestion that things have been “subtly shifted out of place,” which evokes a sense of paranoia as if the house has been subtly violated, even if no overt evidence exists. The idea of a presence “always just out of my line of sight” deepens the tension, playing on the fear of being watched or followed. The narrator’s need for reassurance, expressed through waiting for Scott, creates emotional vulnerability, making the readers anxious to understand what is happening and whether the source of this unease will be revealed.

**Analysis of Excerpt 7:**

Text:

- “1. She has run off with her boyfriend, who from here on in I will refer to as B.
2. B has harmed her.
3. Scott has harmed her.
4. She has simply left her husband and gone to live elsewhere.
5. Someone other than B or Scott has harmed her.”

**Analysis:**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>
"Run off with her boyfriend"	Verb
"Has harmed her"	Verb
"Simply left her husband"	Adverb
"Gone to live elsewhere"	Verb phrase
"someone other than B or Scott"	Pronoun
"Conflicting possibilities"	Noun

The series of statements builds suspense by presenting multiple, conflicting possibilities about what has happened to the woman, each creating a different narrative direction. The ambiguity of the situation heightens the tension, as the reader is left to question which of these possibilities, if any, is the truth. The first statement, "She has run off with her boyfriend, who from here on in I will refer to as B," introduces a sense of abandonment, but also a suggestion of agency on the woman's part, leaving the reader wondering if this is a voluntary decision or if something darker is at play.

The following statements, "B has harmed her" and "Scott has harmed her," inject a sense of danger, hinting at potential violence from both men. These possibilities introduce suspicion and fear, as the readers are unsure which character is responsible for her harm, or if either is. The statement that "she has simply left her husband and gone to live elsewhere" creates further uncertainty, presenting the possibility that her disappearance might not be linked to violence at all, but to personal choice. Finally, the suggestion that "someone other than B or Scott has harmed her" implies an unknown threat, expanding the scope of potential danger and further deepening the mystery surrounding her fate. Each statement propels the readers deeper into a web of conflicting ideas, keeping them hooked on the uncertainty.

***Analysis of Excerpt 8:***

Text

"There was never anyone there not on any of those nights and not today and yet I stopped dead as I looked into the darkness this morning, because I could suddenly see myself. I could see myself a few metres in, slumped against the wall, my head in my hands, and both head and hands smeared with blood."

**Analysis:**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>	<b>Figure of speech</b>
"I could suddenly see myself"	Modal verb (could) + adverb (suddenly)	
"Passive observer in their own experience"		Metaphor
"Slumped against the wall"	Verb phrase	
"My head in my hands"		Imagery
"Both head and hands smeared with blood"		Imagery

The passage builds suspense by blurring the line between reality and the narrator's perception, creating an atmosphere of disorientation and unease. The initial statement, "There was never anyone there," suggests an earlier sense of uncertainty or fear, only to be followed by a jarring shift: "I could suddenly see myself." This sudden vision of the narrator as a passive observer in their own experience is unsettling, as it implies an intrusive, almost ghostly presence. The vivid image of the narrator "slumped against the wall, my head in my hands, and both head and hands smeared with blood" introduces a violent, disturbing scene without explaining how it came to be. The lack of clarity surrounding whether this is a memory, a hallucination, or a premonition raises anxiety, keeping the reader in suspense. The vision of blood suggests trauma or danger, deepening the emotional tension and leaving the readers to question the narrator's safety, mental state, and the truth behind this eerie vision.

***Analysis of Excerpt 9:***

Text:

"The police are here, Rachel,' she says, and my entire body goes cold. 'They want to talk to you.'"

**Analysis:**

<b>Word/Phrase</b>	<b>Lexical Category</b>	<b>Figure of speech</b>
"The arrival of the police"	Noun	
"My entire body goes cold"		Imagery
"They want to talk to you"	Verb	

This line creates immediate suspense by introducing an unexpected and ominous development: the arrival of the police. The narrator's physical reaction, "my entire body goes cold," indicates fear and anxiety, signaling that something significant and possibly dangerous is about to unfold. The vague reason, "They want to talk to you," heightens the mystery.

***Analysis of Excerpt 10:***

Text:

"My heart was fluttering like a trapped bird. I couldn't speak, because all I could see at that moment was myself, slouched in the underpass, blood on my hands. Blood on my hands. Mine, surely? It had to be mine. I looked up at Gaskill, saw his eyes on mine and knew that I had to say something quickly to stop him reading my mind. 'I didn't do anything,' I said. 'I didn't. I just ... I just wanted to see my husband ...'"

**Analysis:**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Figure of Speech</b>
"My heart was fluttering like a trapped bird"	Simile and imagery
"Blood on my hands"	Repetition
"Myself, slouched in the underpass"	Imagery
"Stop him reading my mind"	Hyperbole

The passage intensifies suspense through the narrator’s growing fear and the unsettling image of blood on her hands. The simile, “My heart was fluttering like a trapped bird,” powerfully conveys the narrator’s panic and vulnerability, while the repeated mantra “Blood on my hands” evokes guilt and confusion, deepening the emotional tension. The narrator is trapped in a moment of cognitive dissonance, unsure whether the blood is their own, which keeps the readers uncertain about their involvement in whatever event has occurred. The fleeting vision of “myself, slouched in the underpass” suggests a traumatic or violent episode and the uncertainty surrounding it heightens the tension.

When the narrator locks eyes with Gaskill, there is a sense of urgency in the need to “say something quickly to stop him reading my mind.” This suggests that the narrator feels exposed as if Gaskill can somehow uncover their hidden thoughts or guilt. The desperate denial, “I didn’t do anything,” only deepens the mystery, leaving the reader questioning the truth.

***Quantitative Data Analysis***

Quantitative analysis provides a systematic approach to studying language and stylistic elements within a text, revealing how figures of speech and lexical categories contribute to its thematic and emotional impact. In the context of *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins, this method involves identifying recurring elements such as metaphors, imagery, repetition, and specific lexical choices and analyzing their role in crafting suspense.

The table shows the frequency of recurring lexical choices and figures to speech that contribute to craft and maintain the element of suspense in the novel.

<b>Lexical Categories or Figures of Speech used to create suspense in novel</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Description</b>
Pile of Clothing	5 Times	The vague description of the pile evokes a sense of unease and mystery. Throughout the text, it is mentioned five times, with uncertainty surrounding its nature and status.
Something / Nothing	Something= 235 Times Nothing= 101	The words “something” and “Nothing” are indefinite, which create suspense.
Dirty White	1 time (combined)	White symbolizes purity, but when it becomes dirty, it implies decay, thereby creating suspense. (See the contextual analysis above.)
Not Sure/ Unsure	Not Sure= 21 times Unsure= 2 times	Most of the time, the narrators are uncertain about what is happening, and this uncertainty is mirrored in the readers as well.
Accident	7 times	The word “accident” causes suspense by hinting at an unexpected and potentially catastrophic event, leaving the details and consequences unknown.
Pressure (in combination with builds)	1	The phrase “pressure builds” creates suspense by suggesting an impending climax or crisis, heightening anticipation for what will happen

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Abandoned	3	next. A symbol of loss or neglect, often associated with death or disaster.
Running	29	This verb suggests urgency, creating uncertainty.
Killed	13	This word is used to heighten the tension.
Blood	74	Every time the word “blood” is mentioned in the text, it creates unease.
...a shirt, perhaps...	1	The uncertainty of the object heightens the feeling of something being off or incomplete.
A little pile of clothes lying at the edge of the track	1	The repetitive mention of the pile creates suspense.
Dustier and more forlorn	1	The progression of the pile’s condition signals something sinister; the pile of clothes is deteriorating, suggesting neglect or an ominous event.
“A filthy, low-slung concrete building”	1	These adjectives have been used to describe the building suggest a dark side of it.
“Throat is closing up”	1	A vivid physical metaphor for anxiety and impending doom.
“Purple, stretched, well used” (hairband)	1	These details about the hairband, specifically the word “stretched,” signal wear and tear, hinting at its previous owner or the passage of time, adding an eerie vibe.
“Life is not a paragraph, and Death is no parenthesis”	1	This ominous graffiti suggests an existential reflection, foretelling that something life-altering (perhaps death) is imminent. Life is unpredictable.
“Dustier and more forlorn”	1	The pile’s condition worsening is symbolic of something decaying or nearing an end, heightening the sense of inevitability.
“Shrill and desperate”	1	The tone of the voice adds to the suspense, indicating that something is wrong and creates a sense of urgency.
“This isn’t a good idea. I know it’s not a good idea”	1	The repetition of these words that it’s not a good idea builds suspense, as the narrator is resisting something dangerous or ill-advised.
“Something sharp, serrated maybe”	1	The detailed description of the injury evokes unease and anticipation of something violent.
“The inside of my mouth hurts, as though I’ve bitten my cheek, there’s a metallic tang of blood”	1	The vivid imagery of blood and pain makes the situation feel immediate and physical, escalating the sense of danger.
“My hair is matted with blood”	1	Blood imagery is strongly associated with violence or injury, creating a sense of dread.
“I feel as though someone else has been here”	1	The imagery of someone having been in the house heightens the fear of intrusion, raising paranoia and tension.

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“Slumped against the wall, my head in my hands, and both head and hands smeared with blood”	1	The graphic and disturbing image of the character’s bloodied state intensifies the emotional suspense, suggesting a traumatic event.
“I’m going to do something I will regret”	1	The warning of regret creates internal conflict and a sense of impending danger.
“Something bad is going to happen”	1	The foreshadowing of a bad event adds weight to the situation, signaling that consequences are inevitable.
“Blood on my hands. Blood on my hands”	1	The repetition of this phrase creates a sense of guilt or responsibility, amplifying the tension.
“Have they found something? Have they found her?”	1	The questions about finding someone or something in the garden creates an intense feeling of dread, as if the discovery will be life-changing or dangerous.
“My heart was fluttering like a trapped bird”	1	
“I feel nauseated, dizzy”	1	Physical sensations of illness enhance the sense that something is deeply wrong.
“I go cold”	1	A sudden physical reaction signals fear and foreboding.
“My head swims”	1	This physical sensation suggests confusion and emotional overwhelm, contributing to suspense.
“The light is bad today, the weather’s turned, the sky leaden, threatening”	1	The bad weather and poor visibility symbolize the character’s mental or emotional state, contributing to the overall dark tone.
“There’s nothing out of place, but the house feels different”	1	The contrast between the appearance of normalcy and the feeling of unease deepens the suspense, suggesting something is amiss but remains hidden.
“I’m more afraid of success than failure”	1	This statement introduces fear of unknown consequences, amplifying the uncertainty about what might be revealed.
Terrible	27	The word “terrible” has a negative meaning and the text is used to create suspense.
“A smear of blood”	1	The presence of blood, especially with uncertainty about its origin, evokes violence and danger, raising the stakes of the scene.
“Flooded with dread and adrenaline, I see darkness coming”	1	The imagery of flooding with dread and seeing darkness emphasizes the imminent threat and creates a sense of danger.

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“I could taste his blood in my mouth”	1	This visceral and violent imagery adds intensity, suggesting danger, conflict, and heightened stakes.
“Nameless dread”	1	The phrase emphasizes a deep, unexplained fear that is both universal and personal, keeping the reader on edge.
“I’m too afraid to venture into that darkness”	1	The metaphor of darkness suggests an unknown or dangerous truth, implying that confronting it could lead to irreversible consequences.
“They stopped dead when they saw me”	1	The sudden pause in Tom and Anna’s reaction builds suspense about the characters’ interactions and the consequences of their meeting.
“Dark, handsome face”	1	The description of the suspect in attractive terms adds a layer of complexity and ambiguity, hinting that appearances might be deceiving.
“The truth is going to be terrible”	1	This statement foreshadows an unpleasant revelation, increasing the sense of anticipation about what will be discovered.
“I could be in real trouble”	1	This foreshadows potential legal or personal consequences, adding weight to the narrative.
“He looks too soft, too beautiful to be a killer”	1	The contrast between appearance and reality creates suspense, suggesting that the truth about the character is not as it seems.

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## **Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of this research on *The Girl on the Train* provide a multidimensional understanding of how linguistic and stylistic elements contribute to the novel’s suspense. The combination of both the quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation illuminates how Paula Hawkins employs specific lexical categories and figures of speech to engage readers emotionally and cognitively.

### ***Creating Atmosphere of Suspense through Lexical Patterns***

One of the key findings is the deliberate use of certain nouns, adjectives, and phrases to establish and sustain an atmosphere of uncertainty and foreboding. The recurring references to “something” (235 instances) and “nothing” (101 instances) are particularly significant. These indefinite terms serve as placeholders for the unknown, embodying the ambiguity that permeates the protagonist’s perspective. By repetitively using these words, Hawkins mirrors the fragmented and unreliable nature of memory, drawing readers into the narrator’s subjective experience. This creates a sense of unease, as readers are left to fill in the gaps and question the reliability of the narrative.

The imagery of decay and neglect as reflected in phrases like “dustier and more forlorn” or descriptions of a “pile of clothing,” further amplifies the suspense. These phrases not only evoke a sense of physical deterioration but also symbolize the unraveling of certainty and stability.

Hawkins pairs these lexical patterns with adjectives like “dirty white” to juxtapose purity with corruption, reinforcing the novel’s themes of moral ambiguity and hidden truths. The quantitative emphasis on words like “terrible” (27 instances) and frequent references to blood (74 instances) highlights the emotional stakes and foreshadows the violence that underpins the narrative, creating a subconscious anticipation of danger in the reader.

### ***Psychological Intrigue through Figures of Speech***

Hawkins’ use of figures of speech is another cornerstone in the novel’s suspenseful structure. The use of devices such as metaphor, simile and pathetic fallacy bridges the gap between the characters’ internal turmoil and the external narrative environment. For instance, the simile “My heart was fluttering like a trapped bird” viscerally conveys the narrator’s panic and vulnerability, drawing readers into the immediacy of the moment. Similarly, the metaphor “darkness coming” encapsulates the looming threat of revelation and consequences, sustaining the narrative tension.

Pathetic fallacy is effectively employed in passages where the weather mirrors the protagonist’s mental state. For example, descriptions of a “leaden, threatening sky” parallel the protagonist’s sense of impending doom, reinforcing the emotional resonance of the scene. This technique aligns with Noel Carroll’s theory of suspense, which emphasizes the role of anticipation and unresolved tension in engaging the reader. By linking the external environment with the internal conflict, Hawkins crafts a cohesive and immersive experience that keeps readers emotionally invested.

### ***Ambiguity and Reader Engagement***

The findings underscore the importance of ambiguity in maintaining suspense. Hawkins frequently withholds critical information or presents events through a lens of uncertainty, compelling readers to piece together the narrative puzzle. This is evident in the narrator’s fragmented recollections, where vivid sensory details, such as the “metallic tang of blood” or the feel of “matted hair,” contrast with her inability to recall the events leading to her injuries. This juxtaposition between vivid physicality and cognitive gaps heightens the suspense, as readers are drawn into the protagonist’s struggle to reconcile her reality with her memories. Foreshadowing and repetition further contribute to this sense of ambiguity. Phrases like “Blood on my hands. Blood on my hands” and “I’m going to do something I will regret” echo throughout the narrative, reinforcing key themes while creating a rhythm of anticipation. The unresolved nature of these statements invites readers to speculate, fostering a sense of active engagement with the text. Hawkins’ strategic use of open-ended questions, such as “Have they found her?” or “Is her blood in the house?” further blurs the lines between perception and reality, leaving readers in a state of suspenseful curiosity.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that Hawkins’ stylistic and linguistic choices are integral to the construction of suspense in *The Girl on the Train*. By blending Carroll’s theoretical framework with Leech and Short’s stylistic analysis, the study reveals how elements like lexical patterns, figures of speech, and narrative ambiguity work in concert to create a gripping psychological thriller. These techniques not only engage readers on an emotional level but also challenge them to navigate the complexities of an unreliable narrative, ensuring a dynamic and immersive reading experience. This analysis highlights the power of language in shaping tension in the narrative and underscores the significance of stylistic intricacy in modern thriller writing.

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