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DECODING THE SUSPENSE: AN EXPLORATION OF BARTHESIAN CODES IN PAULA HAWKINS'S PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER, *THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN*

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Abstract: What makes a psychological thriller impossible to put down? Is it the twists, the suspense, or the way it mirrors our deepest fears? Roland Barthes's theory of narrative codes offers a compelling lens to explore these questions. This study relies on his five codes—hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural—to unpack the workings of the psychological thriller genre. Renowned for their tangled plots, psychological thrillers demand active reader engagement. Yet, despite their popularity, systematic research applying Barthesian semiotics to explore their immersive qualities remains limited. Through a qualitative analysis of Paula Hawkins'

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The Girl on the Train (2015), this study examines how Barthes's codes shape the genre's construction of mystery, thematic depth, symbolic undertones, and socio-cultural connotations. It uncovers the mechanisms through which psychological thrillers engage readers on multiple levels, offering a new perspective on their narrative caliber and universal appeal. The interplay between the genre's structures and readers' engagement with them reveals how these texts, far from mere entertainment, are multi-layered, with Barthes's codes acting as distinct voices in an open dialogue with the reader.

Keywords: Five narrative codes, Paula Hawkins, Psychological thrillers, Roland Barthes, Semiotics.

GERİLİMİN ÇÖZÜMLENMESİ: PAULA HAWKINS'İN PSİKOLOJİK GERİLİM ROMANI *TRENDEKİ KIZ'DA* BARTHESÇİ KODLARA BİR İNCELEME

Öz: Bir psikolojik gerilim romanını sürükleyici hâle getiren nedir? Beklenmedik dönemeçler mi, gerilim mi, yoksa en derin korkularımızı yansıtma biçim mi? Roland Barthes'in anlatı kodları teorisi, bu soruları incelemek için güçlü bir mercek sunar. Bu çalışma, psikolojik gerilim türünün işleyişini çözümlemek amacıyla Barthes'in beş anlatı kodunu—hermeneutik, proairetik, semantik, sembolik ve kültürel—kullanmaktadır. Dolaşık kurgularıyla tanınan psikolojik gerilimler, okurun aktif katılımını gerektirir. Ancak popülerliklerine rağmen, psikolojik gerilimlerin etkileyiciliğini çalışma Barthes'in barthesçi göstergibilimle inceleyen sistematik araştırmalar sınırlıdır. Paula Hawkins' in *Trendeki Kız* (2015) adlı romanının nitel bir analizi aracılığıyla, bu kodlarının gizem, tematik derinlik, sembolik alt tonlar ve sosyo-kültürel çağrımlar açısından türü nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırmaktadır. Psikolojik gerilimlerin okurları birden fazla düzeye nasıl etkilediğini ve bu etkileşimin ardından anlatısal mekanizmaları ortaya koyarak, bu türün anlatısal yapısı ve evrensel çekiciliği üzerine yeni bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Türün yapıları ile okur etkileşimi arasındaki ilişki, bu metinlerin yalnızca eğlence amaçlı olmadığını; aksine, Barthes'in kodlarının okurla açık bir diyalog kuran farklı sesler olarak işlev gördüğü çok katmanlı yapıları olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beş anlatı kodu, Paula Hawkins, Psikolojik gerilim, Roland Barthes, Göstergibilim.

1. Introduction

Probing into Roland Barthes's thoughts on semiotics, structuralism, and poststructuralism beckons us to a world where texts cease to be static, monolithic objects of passive consumption and become open conversations that transform with each reading. Barthes challenges the long-held assumptions on authorial supremacy and the traditional anchoring of textual interpretation in

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the author's intent. Instead, he reconceives the text as an evolving construct in which meaning is created as much by the reader as by the writer, contending that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (1977, p.184). In his view, texts are engaging compositions intertwined within a larger cultural and literary matrix. They are brimming with signs and symbols and governed by a multitude of codes and voices, each waiting to be decoded through the act of reading.

However, in the realm of storytelling, few genres manage to stand as a particularly potent embodiment of Barthes's ideas and captivate the audience quite like the psychological thriller. Bridging the chasm between the suspense and mystery of the thriller and the deep, often murky waters of psychological fiction, "[m]asters of the genre create disturbing tales of unbalanced minds, and as we readers observe in morbid fascination, we are pulled into their nightmare worlds" (Saricks, 2009, p.230). These psychologically charged narratives, filled with twists and turns, take the reader on enthralling journeys through the darkest recesses of the human psyche. In doing so, they echo Barthes's vision of texts as dynamic spaces—shadowy corridors where readers wander through their underlying structures to confront the disquieting truths of the human condition.

This qualitative study applies Roland Barthes's theoretical concepts to the psychological thriller genre, particularly his five narrative codes: "the hermeneutic, the proairetic, the semantic, the symbolic, and the cultural" (1974). These codes function as "separate signifying systems or frameworks through which texts communicate" (Edgar-Hunt et al., 2010, p.27). As cultural and textual references embedded within texts, they convey underlying meanings and shape our understanding of them. Each code acts as a distinctive lens through which various elements of narratives can be examined to reveal layers of significance. By exploring these codes within psychological thrillers, this study aims to investigate their construction of suspense, narrative pacing, thematic and symbolic depth, and socio-cultural implications. It seeks to reveal how the codes manifest in this riveting genre and contribute to its engaging and immersive nature.

This analysis centers on Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train* (2015), a critically acclaimed psychological thriller that has garnered widespread recognition from readers and critics alike. Hawkins masterfully penned a novel

that has been described as “well-written and ingeniously constructed—perhaps a bit too ingeniously” (Drabelle, 2015). The result is a swirling sea of signs, narrative complexity, and psychological intrigue. Its focus on unreliable narration, twisted characters, and a suspense-driven plot that explores themes of memory, perception, and deceit solidified its status as a landmark in contemporary psychological thrillers. Nearly a decade after its publication, it continues to serve as a prototypical example of the genre, which makes it an ideal text for examining Barthes’s five narrative codes.

2. Barthes’s Semiotic Web

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) initially posited texts as finished systems of signs and symbols underlined by a set of stable structures and universals that require a systematic examination. This structuralist stance is evident in his “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,” where he conceptualizes the narrative as a hierarchical system comprising “functions,” “actions,” and “narration” (1975, p.243). This method reflects Barthes’s effort to analyze literature along linguistic lines, treating meaning as embedded in and generated by the formal architecture of the text. Such a view, however, downplayed the reader’s role in creating the text’s meaning, privileging instead the internal mechanics of the text. Barthes’s early structuralist work sought to reveal how specific linguistic cues build narrative realism, assuming a relatively fixed relationship between signifiers and what they signify. Nevertheless, Barthes began to recognize the instability of meaning and the limitations of closed systems of interpretation and eventually shifted towards the tenets of poststructuralist praxis, gradually embracing a more balanced viewpoint that puts the reader in an active position in the interpretation process. This transition, which culminated in his essay “The Death of the Author” (1967), reflects his departure from the rigid confines of structuralism towards a growing recognition of the interactive nature inherent in the act of reading.

In his seminal work *S/Z* (published in French in 1970 and translated to English in 1974), Roland Barthes analyzes Honoré de Balzac’s short story *Sarrasine* by dividing it into what he terms “lexias,” or “units of reading” (1974, p.13), which he then interprets through his narrative codes. Rather than envisioning a universal structure for textual interpretation, Barthes advocates for an approach that foregrounds the intrinsic “plurality” of texts (1974, p. 6).

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He likens the text, in its entirety, to a *ciel étoilé* (starry sky), referring to it as a “starred text” (1974, p.13), and argues against over-structuring or using a univocal interpretation that reduces it to a single meaning. For him, the optimal text is ‘polysemous’ and ‘multivalent,’ and he encourages the reader to derive diverse meanings from the same linguistic elements. “[E]ach text is in some sort its own model,” he asserts, and it “must be treated in its difference” (as cited in Culler 2002, p.283).

Within the same work, Barthes vehemently elevates what he terms ‘writerly’ (*scriptible*) text, which, in allowing multiple readings and interpretations, transforms the reader into a “producer of the text” rather than a “consumer” (1974, p.4). In stark contrast, he condemns ‘readerly’ (*lisible*) texts for demanding passive engagement and denying readers “the pleasure of writing,” leaving them “with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text” (1974, p.4). This dichotomy between writerly and readerly further highlights his overarching argument regarding the interplay among the text, its interpretation, and the reader’s agency.

Moreover, Barthes urges readers to move beyond linear plots and genre constraints in order to unlock the full potential of meaning. He thus proposes the notion of the five narrative codes—hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural—that serve as analytical tools for dissecting different elements within a text, ultimately shaping its meaning. By breaking down a narrative into these codes, readers uncover various layers of signification and connotations as their focus extends beyond the mere sequentiality of events to encompass different aspects of the text, such as character motivations, narrative lexicality, symbols, and cultural references.

3. Unraveling the Narrative:

Barthes's Five Codes in Psychological Thrillers

Psychological thrillers stand as a genre towards which contemporary readers gravitate the most. They are gripping narratives that pulse with an ever-mounting tension and focus on the psychological dimensions of morally ambiguous, often dark characters with destabilized realities. They aim to engage readers through complex, suspense-laden storylines that build steadily towards a climactic resolution. This immersive storytelling style delivers a visceral and emotionally charged experience for audiences, which explains the enduring popularity of this genre over the years, as reflected in the astounding

success of works like *Gone Girl* (2012) by Gillian Flynn and *The Silent Patient* (2019) by Alex Michaelides.

The interactive quality of these texts, rooted in the deliberate use of ambiguity, unreliable narrators, gaps, and open-ended questions, leaves ample room for readers' speculation and introspection. We, as readers, "either add layer upon layer of information to discover the truth of the disturbing situation, or we peel these layers away as we delve deeper and deeper into the story" (Saricks 2009, p.231). This reading mode positions the readers as an integral part of the storytelling process by drawing them in through mystery and moral complexity. In this way, psychological thrillers fit closely with Barthes's concept of writerly texts, as they transcend passive readership to promote intellectual engagement. Here, interpretation becomes a collaboration between the narrative's structure and the reader's insights and analysis. This interplay is further deepened by Barthes's five codes, which offer a multi-dimensional framework through which to approach such texts.

Before unpacking what each code entails, and how it's evoked by the genre, it is crucial to note that Barthes believes that the codes a text deploys extend indefinitely, and their indeterminacy—rooted in the boundless nature of language—is akin to the unpredictability of "throwing dice" (1974, p.6). These codes collectively form a 'network' of meanings that coexist and interact, none of which holds an authoritative status (1974, pp.5-6). Hence, his decision to delineate them into just five aims is in no way a concession of the text's meaning but rather an assertion of its plurality.

Among Barthes's codes, the hermeneutic code (HER) is particularly central to psychological thrillers, as it embodies the element of suspense or enigma that impels curious readers to uncover implicit meanings within narratives. This code lies at the very core of the genre, functioning as a key narrative strategy. It is realized through the intentional proliferation of delays in providing answers to the enigma—a pattern that persists throughout these stories until the truth is finally unveiled. These delays, according to Barthes, appear in the form of:

[T]he snare (a kind of deliberate evasion of the truth), the *equivocation* (a mixture of truth and snare which frequently, while focusing on the enigma, helps to thicken it), the *partial answer* (which only exacerbates the expectation of the truth), the *suspended answer* (an aphasic stoppage of the disclosure), and *jamming* (acknowledgment of insolubility). (1974, pp. 75-76)

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The artful combination of these techniques enhances the narrative's enigmatic quality and entices the readers by fueling their desire for resolution. As they work through the web of deception, evasion of truth, and ambiguity, the narrative constructs a compelling journey toward closure.

Barthes originally associates the hermeneutic code with detective stories and emphasizes its archetypal role in plot construction, where fundamental questions revolve around *who* and *why*. This association can be further extended to psychological thrillers, given that solving the enigma—often presented as a *whodunit*—is the quintessence of this genre, and probing into character psychology and motives mirrors the detective's quest in traditional mysteries. Psychological thrillers, however, deepen this exploration, as they focus not just on external events but also on the innermost psychological states of the characters. Writers of psychological thrillers thus draw heavily on the hermeneutic code to sustain the suspense and create an enduring sense of anticipation throughout the story. They “deliberately set puzzles, pose problems, hint at secrets to be divulged, [and] mysteries to be unravelled” (Edgar-Hunt et al. 2010, p.28). In doing so, they deftly harness the hermeneutic code to ensnare their audience in a perpetual cycle of speculation and second-guessing. Their prolonged delay in revealing the truth until the final revelation—essential to the hermeneutic code—guarantees the enthralling journey these texts promise their readers.¹

In addition to the hermeneutic code, psychological thrillers also draw heavily on the proairetic code (ACT), which governs the syntagmatic unfolding of the narrative. This code generates suspense through a series of escalating actions, each functioning as a causal catalyst that propels the story forward. In these texts, every external movement triggers consequences that intensify the reader's anticipation of what is to come. However, as Edgar-Hunt et al. note, “inner events must be signalled by outer ones if the story is to have human depth” (2010, p.28), reinforcing the centrality of psychological states in driving visible actions. Here, the thriller's momentum is sustained not just by what is concealed (as in the hermeneutic code) but by what is enacted.

1. As Alfred Hitchcock famously said, “There is no terror in a bang, only in the anticipation of it.” Psychological thrillers are structured around this principle, where the true fear emerges not from the revelation, but from the audience's constant anticipation of what is to come.

The proairetic sequences operate through rhetorical structures such as metonymy—which establishes causality, where an action leads to another, and synecdoche—which emphasizes inclusions, where actions are broken down into smaller parts (Rice and Schofer, 1982, pp. 21–22). These rhetorical devices support a chain of action that appears logically sequenced, prompting readers to anticipate outcomes based on the linear progression of the story. However, psychological thrillers frequently subvert this expected linearity. Through nonlinear storytelling devices—flashbacks, foreshadowing, fragmented timelines, and shifting perspectives—these narratives complicate the proairetic flow, requiring readers to reconstruct the causal logic from disordered pieces. They are compelled to piece together disparate narrative threads that are not always chronologically connected to understand the unfolding actions, the motives driving them, and their aftermath. In doing so, the thrillers challenge the conventional forward-driving function of the code, ingeniously transforming the story into a dynamic space where the reading process is a captivating and intellectually stimulating experience.

Barthes notes that the “tonal unity” of a narrative—akin to the structure of classical music—depends on the interplay of two sequential codes: “the revelation of truth and the coordination of the actions represented” (1974, p.30). In psychological thrillers, this tonal unity arises from the hermeneutic code’s interpretive demands and the proairetic code’s action-based logic. The former injects depth by posing unresolved questions, while the latter ensures narrative cohesion through structured progression. These two codes unfold, as Barthes explains, in an “irreversible order” governed by a “logico-temporal sequence” (1974, p.30), meaning that once the sequence of events is set in motion, it becomes an immutable element of the story’s development. While the symbolic, semic, and cultural codes may function outside time and in a reversible fashion, the hermeneutic and proairetic codes assert a temporal and logical grip on the text. Thus, in psychological thrillers, the interweaving of these sequential codes deepens the reader’s engagement. The hermeneutic code sustains suspense by withholding truth, while the proairetic code activates it through actions that demand explanation. The genre relies on this tension between concealment and consequence—an interplay that turns narrative progression into a psychologically charged puzzle that readers must both follow and solve.

Since they thrive on manipulating readers and challenging their perception

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and interpretation, psychological thrillers find an ally in the semic code, also referred to as the semantic code (SEM), which entails the exploration of connotative meanings—those layers that transcend the literal sense of words and symbols. Barthes identifies such connotative elements as *semes*, describing them as “units of signifier” (1974, p.17), comparable to “motes of dust, flickers of meaning” (1974, p.19): transient, dispersed, and often elusive, yet essential to the texture of the narrative. These semes may appear scattered and subtle, but their cumulative effect gives shape to the reader’s interpretive experience. While they tap into subjective, cultural, and emotional registers of language—eliciting diverse associations depending on the reader—they are not wholly arbitrary. As Barthes explains, a connotation is “a correlation immanent in the text... an association made by the text-as-subject within its own system” (1974, p.8). That is, these connotative meanings are not imposed externally but arise from the internal structure of the text itself.

With its emphasis on connotations, this code enables an artful deployment of language as an amalgam of hidden meanings, which writers use to construct narratives laden with inference and subtext. These inferences, as Edgar-Hunt et al. explain, “can be complex and subtle,” prompting readers to “note certain connotations...which [they] then organise into themes” (2010, p.28). In this sense, the language of psychological thrillers not only adds a layer of significance but also reinforces the thematic undercurrents of the story and enhances aspects of it, inviting readers to engage with meanings that are neither fixed nor overtly declared. Thus, in this genre, the semic code activates a web of associations that complicate straightforward reading, enabling a richer, more layered interpretive process where the boundaries between what is said and what is meant remain deliberately unstable.

In a similar vein, the symbolic code (SYM) assumes a vital role in shaping the narrative structures of psychological thrillers. This code, albeit elusive, defiant to a clear-cut definition, and indistinguishable from the semantic code, evidently holds a distinctive significance among the five codes (despite Barthes’s reluctance to establish a hierarchical classification). Like the semantic code, it involves the examination of connotations or semes, recognizing the capacity of certain elements to evoke specific associations that often extend beyond their immediate meaning. However, while the semic code relies on dispersed semes—fleeting, often isolated units of meaning—the symbolic

code operates “on a grandiose, perhaps even archetypal, scale” (Whitehead, 1992, p.48), and it depends on reader-established syntagmatic associations. As Donald Rice and Peter Schofer explain, symbols tend to gain significance through frequency, emphasis, or narrative function, often emerging from their recurrence or strategic placement (1982, p.26). Barthes’s preference for the term *champ symbolique* rather than simply *code* underlines this distinction. The code can thus be construed as the field of symbols within a text, encompassing extensive and universally recognized patterns.²

Drawn to the darker facets of human psychology and the instability of perception, the genre employs the symbolic code to imbue its narratives with a sense of foreboding and psychological depth. Through a system of recurring symbols, this code elevates the story from a mere recounting of external events into an exploration of internal struggles and interpersonal conflicts. These symbolic structures are activated through metaphor, opposition, and juxtaposition, staging what Barthes calls “the province of antithesis” (1974, p.17). They introduce an additional layer of meaning that is often archetypal or universal in scope, which anchors the individual narrative within a broader symbolic framework. The use of such binary oppositions (light/dark, sanity/ madness, order/chaos), upon which the symbolic code is established, helps generate the tension and thematic undercurrents central to these narratives’ progression and essential to the genre’s impact. “[I]t is only through this patterning of contrasts that the audience can ‘read’ the text conceptually, know what it ‘means’, over and above what merely ‘happens’” (Edgar-Hunt et al., 2010, p.29). Yet, psychological thrillers opt for blurred portrayals of people and reality instead of using antitheses as clear demarcations of right/wrong, hero/villain, or moral/immoral. This creates “the literature of our greys, of the in-between places, where the notion of a Morally Perfect Hero is as absurd on the page as it is in reality” (Ripley, 2019). For instance, the characters are usually ambiguous, exhibiting both good and bad traits; their motivations are not always easily defined or categorized, and their actions are often depicted in shades of grey. This ambiguity forces readers to question their judgments

2. This is reminiscent of Barthes’s claim in *Elements of Semiology* that “large fragments of the denoted discourse... constitute a single unit of the connoted system” (1967, p.91), where multiple denotative signs coalesce to form broader symbolic meanings.

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when the narrative refuses to settle into conventional moral dichotomies, which makes for a compelling and thought-provoking experience.

Finally, the fifth code that psychological thrillers invoke is the cultural code (REF)³, which involves “references to a science or a body of knowledge,” be it “physical, physiological, medical, psychological, literary, historical, etc.” (Barthes, 1974, p.20). The significance of this code draws upon the presence of references to the external, shared bodies of knowledge, or “acquired wisdom” (1974, p.171) that ground the text in the real world and anchor it in a specific context that readers can recognize. This code, therefore, assumes a requisite level of cultural literacy from readers; it expects them to recognize and understand these references without explicit explanation and be familiar with the cultural milieu in which the story is situated. Much like intertextuality, these references can take the form of allusions to literary works, specific locations, historical events, famous figures, customs, societal norms, and political ideologies—all of which help create a recognizable and credible world within the fiction. Barthes also identifies the *gnomic code* as part of the broader category of referential codes. Originating from the Greek word *gnōmē*, which means maxim or sentence, the term encompasses cultural expressions or aphoristic statements. They carry a proverbial or general truth quality, echoing shared knowledge and ordinary human experience. For instance, the well-known aphorism ‘actions speak louder than words’ evokes the gnomic code since it conveys the universal truth about the importance of actions over mere verbal promises.

Just like in other narratives, the primary purpose of cultural codes within psychological thrillers is to embed the texts in the real world, imbuing them with a sense of realism and believability. Writers often incorporate real-life references in their stories to make them more familiar and relatable. However, within this genre, such references do more than merely enhance plausibility; they function as entry points into the uncharted territories of human behavior. Through dark characters—or ordinary ones facing moral quandaries—readers are forced to confront uncomfortable truths about human nature and the com

3. Also referred to by Barthes as referential codes, addressing them in the plural form and a general sense to emphasize that all codes are inherently cultural.

plex, often irrational forces that govern it. As Nathan Ripley puts it, the “acceptance of human complexity and the ability to lock into and illustrate its illogic defines the psychological thriller writing” (2019). With the boundary between fact and fiction blurred, and with readers reminded that these horrors are not confined to the book’s pages, the experience becomes all the more harrowing—hence the discomfort, unease, or even revulsion such texts may evoke. Thus, this genre is not a mere form of escapism but a powerful medium for readers to engage deeply unsettling realities through the eyes of characters who may be predators, psychologically disturbed, or even ruthless serial killers—all from the safety of fiction.

By exploring the five codes in these narratives, the reader is invited to appreciate them as open, pluralistic entities combined by the converging forces of empiricism, personal perspectives, cultural truths, and symbolism. Together, they “create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)” (Barthes, 1974, p.20). Their interconnectedness, interdependence, and multivalence reinforce the structuration that characterizes the challenging art of storytelling. In the case of psychological thrillers, this structure becomes especially significant: the codes support a layered narrative architecture that mirrors the genre’s core preoccupations—uncertainty, moral ambiguity, and the fractured nature of perception. However, it is necessary to note that the five codes do not seek to impose a single, definitive interpretation upon the text, for engaging with each code is akin to “the hearing of one the voices of the text” (1974, p.15), and each voice may resonate differently with different ears—much like the unsettling echoes left by psychological thriller stories.

4. Deciphering the Journey:

***The Girl on the Train* through a Barthesian Lens**

The Girl on the Train quickly rose to prominence upon its publication in 2015. The gripping novel, which was adapted into a movie in 2016, earned its British author, Paula Hawkins, widespread acclaim for her genius as a psychological thriller writer and for her ability to construct a riveting plotline about the complexities of human nature. The story is told through the perspectives of three morally ambiguous women, Rachel Watson, Anna Watson, and Megan Hipwell. As their lives become inextricably intertwined through a web of lies, secrets, and deception, each grapples with her internal struggles, moral dilemmas, and the lingering aftermath of her past traumas and actions.

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The central protagonist, Rachel, is a deeply flawed character. She succumbs to alcoholism as she fails to come to terms with the end of her marriage. Using her daily train commute as an escape from her tumultuous life, she develops a habit of watching strangers in their homes through her carriage window. However, as the train passes by the residences of her ex-husband with his new wife, Anna, and the seemingly perfect couple, Megan and Scott Hipwell, Rachel becomes obsessively fascinated with their lives. The story takes a pivotal turn when Megan disappears, and Rachel is potentially involved with her murder (being a witness or a suspect), leading to a crescendo of shocking revelations and hidden truths. In the following section, we will examine Hawkins's novel through the prism of the five codes to demonstrate how deftly she composes a tale that captivates readers and exemplifies a contemporary application of Barthes's seminal theory.

4.1. The Hermeneutic Code

The enigma code, emblematic of this genre, is not merely a narrative device but the cornerstone that defines the very essence of these tales. The novel is about the disappearance and murder of a woman, with the whole plot revolving around solving the mystery. Megan's vanishing serves as a catalyst that sets the narrative in motion, as figuring out what befell her becomes the focal point of ambiguity that maintains the suspenseful atmosphere throughout the novel. This code is thus invoked as characters and readers alike embark on an unrelenting quest to piece together the events leading up to her disappearance by following trails of breadcrumbs of clues, motives, and potential suspects. The truth behind Megan's fate is intentionally deferred until late in the novel, ensuring that this code of mystery maintains its grip on the narrative as it reaches its full potential.

In addition to that, Hawkins amplifies the hermeneutic intrigue through her ingenious reliance on unreliable narrators. Right from the start, Rachel admits: "My mother used to tell me that I had an overactive imagination. Tom said that, too" (Hawkins, 2015, p.10). This admission immediately makes the reader question her narrative reliability, given that two significant figures in her life expressed such sentiment. Moreover, navigating events through her perception—marred by alcoholism, memory lapses, and emotional distress—proves to be challenging. She becomes entangled with the investigation,

having been nearby the night Megan vanished. However, in her intoxicated state, she witnessed something disturbing that she cannot remember. As fragments of her repressed memories resurface, they offer incomplete glimpses of events tinged with half, uncertain truths:

Last night. Something happened...I wait for the memory to come. Sometimes it takes a while. Sometimes it's there in front of my eyes in seconds. Sometimes it doesn't come at all. Something happened, something bad. There was an argument. Voices were raised. Fists? I don't know, I don't remember... It comes over me like a wave: black dread. (2015, p.43)

This passage illustrates Rachel's fragile grasp of reality. Each disjointed detail she recalls casts doubt on her account while also taunting readers to know what had transpired. Her unreliability, both as a 'fallible' and 'untrustworthy narrator'⁴ (Olsen, 2003), thus allows for a series of what Barthes calls snares, equivocations, and partial and suspended answers.⁵ These elements lead readers down deceptive paths and offer small revelations without answering the central mystery, keeping the narrative tension taut and maintaining readers' intrigue. As a result, Rachel's mental state becomes both a complicating force and an integral part of resolving the mystery.

What adds even more complexity to the novel is Hawkins's employment of multi-perspectivity and fragmented timelines. The story unfolds through the perspectives of Rachel, Megan, and Anna—different personalities haunted by emotions like hate, deception, and shame. Each perspective is distinctive and offers biases that have to be reconciled by readers to construct a full understanding of the story. Hawkins also eschews a linear narrative structure, opting instead for a fragmented timeline that jumps back and forth between the past and present, which creates a complex exercise for readers to piece together this temporal puzzle. In addition to that, the narrative is replete with red herrings that are misleading elements used to divert readers' attention from the truth. Scattered throughout the story like a trail of deceptive clues, their

4. Rachel's fallibility as a narrator arises from her flawed perception. Simultaneously, her untrustworthiness is due to her intentional self-deception and her tendency to distort events to fit her desired narrative.

5. Jamming (the acceptance of the mystery's insolubility) is not used in the novel, as Hawkins ultimately provides all answers by the end (something that avid psychological-thriller readers tend to appreciate).

validity is to be questioned by the astute reader. For example, Hawkins's portrayal of characters like Tom Watson (Rachel's ex-husband), Scott Hipwell (Megan's husband), and Dr. Abdi (Megan's therapist) either casts suspicion over them or discounts them as suspects in the disappearance of Megan. This builds up the tension and sets the readers up to be surprised when their beliefs about these characters are overturned, as it is revealed that they are far from what they were initially portrayed to be. These red herrings, along with multi-perspectivity and nonlinearity, transform the reading into an active investigative process, where each clue, perspective, and shift in time is a vital component of the overarching mystery.

4.2. The Proairetic Code

While the events of this novel are arranged in a non-syntagmatic fashion (not straightforwardly linear), they still follow a logical progression in terms of the story's development. As mentioned earlier, Hawkins employs interspersing timelines and perspectives, setting Rachel's daily train rides as the starting point for the narrative. When Megan goes missing, her disappearance becomes the stage for the central mystery, with all the actions and events beginning to revolve around it. The story is divided into entries, each with a specific date. The primary timeline follows Rachel as she becomes involved in the investigation and sets out to discover what happened to Megan, which marks the case's causal progression and the unfolding of critical revelations. Her impulsive actions and decisions, influenced by her emotional state, drive much of the plot and create the chain of events that shape the narrative's direction. However, the chronological sequence of her timeline is disrupted by her murky memories, blackouts, and flashbacks, which complicate the temporal thread of the story. As Rachel cognitively shifts from past to present, readers constantly backtrack⁶ to establish the connections between different pieces of information and interpret her recollections in relation to the current timeline.

Another timeline is through Megan's perspective, which covers the year

6. Backtracking (Langacker 2008, 80), in the context of Cognitive Grammar and Text World Theory, refers to the cognitive process by which readers mentally retrace their steps through a narrative to understand the relationships between different elements or events, especially when the story is not told in chronological order or involves complex shifts in time or perspective.

leading up to her murder. It reveals aspects of her life, relationships, and pivotal moments that brought her to her tragic end. It also offers glimpses into her mental state, motives, and past traumas that underlie her psychological complexity and define her as a person. Moreover, Anna's timeline explores her life with Tom and their baby. It exposes her jealousy, insecurity, resentment of Rachel, and guilt over her affair with Tom while he was still married. Her perspective adds an essential layer to the story as it intersects with those of Rachel and Megan and offers a more comprehensive overview of how the characters are interconnected and how their lives and decisions impact one another.

It is worth noting that Hawkins also relies on plot twists and cliffhangers, which are hallmarks of this genre. Plot twists "are layered puzzles, and for many readers, the more complex and intricate the puzzle and the more elegant the execution of the solution, the more satisfying the story" (Saricks, 2009, p.76). In her novel, they play a key role in energizing the proairetic code and infusing the direct evolution of events with surprises, shock, excitement, and constant suspense. The narrative momentum is thus maintained, and readers who "expect the unexpected, the out-of-the-ordinary, and situations that change frequently and in unanticipated directions" (2009, p.76) are kept engaged with the story as their investment is heightened all along.

This was demonstrated in Hawkins's remarkable proficiency in layering her narrative with twists and turns that put everything in reverse and send readers reeling with shock. For instance, one major plot twist in the novel is when Tom's duplicity is exposed. At first, he was portrayed as a caring, understanding ex-husband, especially when dealing with Rachel's alcoholism and her struggle with their divorce. However, this sympathetic character turns out to have a dark, manipulative, and violent side. Not only was he lying to Rachel about her actions throughout their marriage, but he also had an affair with Megan while married to Anna, and the story climaxed with the shocking revelation of his role in her murder. As long as a seasoned reader finds this twist unpredictable, believable, and not far-fetched, its impact is fully realized.

4.3. The Semantic Code

In psychological thrillers, including *The Girl on the Train*, the semantic code is employed as a narrative strategy to enrich the reading experience rather than just a stylistic choice. Hawkins's meticulous choice of words throughout the novel emphasizes a sense of confusion and fragmentation that

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fuels the reader's disorientation. This is evident even from the novel's title; if Rachel is 33 years old, which positions her within womanhood, why would Hawkins opt for the descriptor *girl*? This choice subtly denotes a sense of vulnerability and fragility-traits that correspond to Rachel. This linguistic subtlety not only shapes our perception of her but also reinforces the novel's overarching theme of identity and the frailty of what one might perceive as the truth.

Furthermore, the language used to describe the bleak settings, the suburban landscapes, Rachel's train journeys, and her episodic blackouts creates an emotional unease and evokes a pervasive, almost claustrophobic, feeling of melancholy and isolation. The initial two pages set this tone for the entire book. The author shows us the mundane and monotonous nature of Rachel's commutes as "[t]he train jolts and scrapes and screeches" (Hawkins, 2015, p.10), and the passengers "shift in their seats, rustle their newspapers" (2015, p.11). When Rachel reflects: "The weekend stretches out ahead of me, forty-eight empty hours to fill. I lift the can to my mouth again, but there is not a drop left" (2015, p.12), one is presented with a passage that implies her deep-seated loneliness and existential anguish. Similarly, the short, fragmented sentences when she tries to remember what happened to her function almost as abrupt, condensed units of meaning that capture her confusion, fractured state of mind, and sense of dread. Her unbidden recollections allow the readers to feel the weight of each recalled fragment and enhance the narrative's emotional undertone of anxiety, uncertainty, and instability.

The narrative potency is also heightened by the adept adaptation of language to each narrator, reflecting their distinct personalities and mental states. Hawkins uses different styles of speech to give each character a unique voice. Rachel's narrative is "heavily modalised, containing an abundance of epistemic and perception forms such as 'I might', 'I could', 'can't see' that draw attention to largely low-level degrees of certainty and understanding" (Giovanelli, 2018, p.41). She has a more introspective and confused narration style, reflecting her inner turmoil⁷ whereas Megan's is more assertive and direct.

7. Giovanni (2018, 48-49) makes an appealing argument about Rachel's narrative shift from uncertainty to assertiveness, marked by stronger perception verbs ("saw," "realize") and emphatic markers ("I do remember"). This change in modality reflects her.

This difference in language helps create depth for the characters and cultivates a mood that is emotionally charged and fraught with tension, which helps maintain the gripping tone that underpins the novel's appeal.

4.4. The Symbolic Code

As the genre inherently gravitates towards complex themes, such as the dark aspects of human psychology and the fragility of reality, the symbolic code in this novel—which is replete with symbols—emerges as a powerful tool. For instance, the recurring motif of the daily train journey is a powerful symbol of Rachel's alienation, emotional entrapment, and disconnectedness from her own life. It represents her stagnation and aimlessness as each day blurs into the next on trips that are, much like her life, unpleasant and fraught with discomfort:

Someone in the seat behind me gives a sigh of helpless irritation; the 8:04 slow train from Ashbury to Euston can test the patience of the most seasoned commuter. The journey is supposed to take fifty-four minutes, but it rarely does: this section of the track is ancient, decrepit, beset with signalling problems and never-ending engineering works. (Hawkins, 2015, p.10)

The train also serves as a window through which she, from the margins of existence, observes (almost like a voyeur) others as they “roll past [her] like a tracking shot in a film” (2015, p.11), imagining their lives in their perfect homes. These homes, in turn, symbolize “the internalization of her need to belong to a heteronormative family structure now that she has lost her status as wife and been expelled from the domestic space that defined her as such” (González, 2017, p.114). Her imagination emphasizes another symbolic element in the novel—the blurred lines between reality and perception, challenging the binary of appearance versus reality. Rachel, for example, idealizes Megan's life, though it is far from perfect, while all characters struggle with their perceived identities and the complexities of their inner realities. The tension between external and underlying truths is a central theme throughout the narrative.

Additionally, each woman in the novel represents a distinct symbolic facet of womanhood. Rachel poignantly observes: “Women are still only really valued for two things — their looks and their role as mothers. I'm not beautiful, and I can't have kids, so what does that make me? Worthless” (Hawkins, 2015, p.82). This showcases the social pressure and narrow standards that women

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face. Burdened by her infertility and the weight of unmet expectations, she feels a deep sense of worthlessness, as she expresses, “failure cloaked me like a mantle, it overwhelmed me, dragged me under, and I gave up hope” (2015, p.81). In another instance, her sense of self-worth is shattered when she notices a man looking at her with contempt: “[H]is glance travels over me...He looks away. There’s something about the set of his mouth which suggests distaste. He finds me distasteful” (2015, p.18). This moment, albeit brief, be-speaks the subtle yet deeply impactful ways in which a male’s gaze reinforces a woman’s feelings of inadequacy—a gaze that serves as a microcosm of the scrutiny she constantly endures from her society.

On the other hand, Megan’s yearning to break free from the confines of being a wife challenges the norm that reduces a woman’s identity to her marital status. She asserts: “I can’t do this, I can’t just be a wife. I don’t understand how anyone does it—there is literally nothing to do but wait. Wait for a man to come home and love you” (2015, p.29). This declaration articulates her quest for a self-defined existence beyond prescribed gender roles. Her rebellious nature and refusal to conform to a life of mere domesticity are evident in her pursuit of multiple affairs, defying the conventional expectations of virtuous femininity. Megan’s character thus becomes a symbol of resistance against the restrictive definitions of womanhood. However, her defiance is met with punishment, as her actions ultimately lead to her death, which reinforces the harsh consequences of transgressing traditional gender expectations.

Like Rachel and Megan, Anna also assumes a symbolic role in the novel’s exploration of womanhood and society. Like Rachel, she is aware of and entrapped by the critical gaze of others: “I could see it on their faces: thinly disguised disapproval...*You must be the worst mother in the world*” (2015, p.190; original emphasis). On the surface, Anna is a content wife and mother, but her internal struggles reveal a completely different truth. She is trying to reconcile her role in unraveling Tom’s marriage to Rachel while also resenting her for her erratic behavior and lingering feelings towards him. She strives to conform to the stereotypical image of domesticity, seeking Tom’s validation and trying to uphold a facade of an ideal life despite knowing that hers is far from perfect. In essence, Anna symbolizes the inner turmoil borne from

attempting to align the pressure norms of marriage with the often-imperfect reality of it. Her efforts eventually falter when she discovers that Tom is cheating on her with Megan—a revelation that shatters her carefully maintained image of domestic bliss.

4.5. The Cultural Code

Hawkins weaves her novel into the cultural fabric of modern urban England to critique the prevailing social norms. Set in London (2012-2013), it reflects suburban life still overshadowed by the enduring effects of the 2008 financial crisis, capturing the palpable economic frustration of the time. Through themes of trauma, violence, and restlessness—stemming from alcoholism, infidelity, and alienation—it mirrors the broader disillusionment that permeates contemporary life while also offering a sharp commentary on modern existence's pressure and gender roles.

Barthes's concept of "acquired wisdom" manifests in the novel as ideological indoctrination of common-sense beliefs, which ascribe each character her symbolic role. As already discussed, the three women come to understand their lives and relationships through certain social and cultural norms. Rachel's internalized "wisdom" rests on the ideals of a 'good' marriage and the stigma of being a childless alcoholic. She views her failed relationship with Tom as a personal inadequacy, believing that she was not 'enough' for him:

The thing about being barren is that you're not allowed to get away from it. Not when you're in your thirties...I was asked about it all the time...When was it going to be my turn? At some point our childlessness became an acceptable topic of Sunday-lunch conversation, not just between Tom and me, but more generally...I resented the fact that it was always seen as my fault, that I was the one letting the side down...I was wrong to suggest that we should share the blame; it was all down to me. (2015, p.81)

What should remain an intimate struggle becomes a subject of casual conversation, turning her infertility into a shared judgment rather than a private grief. The weight of that judgment reshapes her self-perception, convincing her that she alone is at fault. In this way, the social script of femininity and marriage becomes inseparable from her sense of identity, making her suffering not only personal but culturally imposed. Megan, meanwhile, is deemed 'deviant,' and her behavior is cast as transgressive by social standards even though she has learned that women are expected to be sexually desirable—

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which creates tension in her character. Anna also ties her self-worth to her relationship with Tom, convinced she must embody everything Rachel was not in order to keep him. Across these portrayals, the female identity is shown as precarious. Each woman's behavior reflects a culture influenced by patriarchal norms and sustained by a belief system that places immense pressure on women to conform to specific roles, often defining them in relation to men and enforcing their compliance through blame or punishment.

Hawkins employs real-life allusions to heighten the cultural tensions at play and add resonance to her story. For instance, she uses geographic references, such as the suburbs of Witney, Ashbury, and Blenheim Road, to anchor the story in a recognizable reality and a real-world setting. The novel also incorporates literary, philosophical, and pop culture references and figures like Sylvia Plath, Nancy Drew, Johnny Depp, Princess Diana, and *The X Factor*. Rachel's statement: "He looks too soft, too beautiful to be a killer, but appearances can be deceptive—they say Ted Bundy looked like Cary Grant" (2015, p.142) invokes the gnomic code of the common saying about appearances being deceiving while also referring to the infamous serial killer, Ted Bundy. Hawkins thus blends reality and fiction and invites her readers to draw parallels between the wider world they inhabit and the words on the pages.

Another instance of the evocation of cultural codes occurs in the novel's epigraph, wherein Megan, in her final moments, repeats the lines: "One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl" (2015, p.9), which refer to an old nursery rhyme about magpies. This rhyme, deeply rooted in British folklore and superstition, suggests that the number of magpies one sees can foretell omens or predict the future. This scene, already foreboding and ominous, is embedded with cultural lore that resonates with the reader familiar with this superstition. The cultural impact ingrained in this moment adds a compelling dimension to the narrative and prompts those acquainted with the rhyme to engage with the scene more profoundly.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the magnetic pull psychological thrillers exert on readers—a pull rooted in suspense and sustained by an intricate structure, carefully calibrated to provoke and withhold. It reaffirms the elaborate narrative design of this genre, with Paula Hawkins's novel serving as a quintessential

example. Steeped in mystery, *The Girl on the Train* evokes the hermeneutic code to immerse readers in a continuous state of inquiry. Meanwhile, the proairetic code, heightened by nonlinearity, sustains the novel's suspenseful cadence and unremitting sense of anticipation. The narrative acquires depth and connotative significance through the semantic code, contributing to its thematic undertone. In contrast, the symbolic code reveals the psychological and social underpinnings relevant to contemporary themes. Finally, the cultural code ties the narrative to its broader social and cultural context. It bridges the gap between reality and fiction and exposes how the gritty realities within these stories are not entirely imagined.

The convergence of these codes yields a cohesive and layered narrative that elevates the act of reading into a collaborative journey of interpretation—emblematic of the psychological thriller's lasting impact on its audience. This genre thus stands as a testament to the power of texts to engage the reader in a deeper dialogue and invite them not only to consume the story but also to participate in its unfolding. It validates Barthes's assertion that the text is a pluralistic system, a mosaic of meanings co-created by the reader and the author. In its finest form, a well-crafted narrative, with its multitude of voices, initiates an open conversation with readers—one that lingers in their minds long after the final page is turned.

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Extended Abstract

Aim: This study investigates how Roland Barthes's five narrative codes—the hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural—operate within the narrative design of Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train* (2015), a novel that has become emblematic of the contemporary psychological thriller. While psychological thrillers have attracted significant critical and popular attention, sustained analyses that employ Barthes's semiotic framework remain limited. By applying this lens, the article seeks not only to demonstrate how Hawkins's text exemplifies the genre's layered construction of suspense and meaning but also to show how such narratives resonate with Barthes's conception of the "writerly" text, where interpretation is an active, ongoing process shared between reader and text.

Method: The approach is qualitative and text-centered, drawing on Barthes's *S/Z* (1970) and subsequent theoretical writings. The analysis tracks the deployment of each of the five codes through close readings of Hawkins's novel. Rather than pursuing an exhaustive cataloging of instances, it isolates moments where Barthes's categories—enigmas, action sequences, linguistic connotations, symbolic oppositions, and cultural references—prove especially generative for understanding the text's narrative strategies. Attention is also given to how these strategies complicate the workings of the codes, showing their flexibility in practice.

Findings The findings suggest that *The Girl on the Train* operates through a dense interplay of the five codes, but not without tension. The hermeneutic code, anchored in the mystery of Megan's disappearance, structures the novel's suspense yet does more than simply delay resolution. Hawkins destabilizes closure itself: the fractured narration—marked by Rachel's unreliability, memory lapses, and conflicting perspectives—denies readers reliable access to truth until the very end, compelling them to navigate distortions and ambiguities as part of the interpretive process. The proairetic code shapes the unfolding of events, but Hawkins's use of nonlinear timelines and disordered perspectives undermines linear causality, demanding active reconstruction by readers. On a stylistic level, Hawkins mobilizes the semantic code through subtle lexical choices—the diminutive “girl,” modalized narration, and fragmented syntax—that reinforce vulnerability, uncertainty, and psychological instability. Symbols in the novel accumulate meaning on a broader scale, drawing on the symbolic code's reliance on binary opposition yet never allowing them to settle. What might seem like contrasts dissolve into grey zones where no category holds securely. Finally, the cultural code situates the narrative in contemporary London, embedding it in contexts such as post-financial crisis disillusionment, suburban alienation, and gendered expectations, while folkloric and popular references blur the line between fiction and cultural memory. In doing so, the novel grounds its suspense in recognizable social realities and shared cultural knowledge, which intensifies its unsettling force.

Discussion: In sum, these findings underscore the genre's complexity and its power to work through these codes as much as to exemplify them. Suspense in Hawkins's novel emerges not simply from concealed information or

Narrative twists, but from the way textual strategies disrupt the very codes through which meaning might be stabilized. Nonlinear sequencing places extra interpretive weight on the reader, unreliable narration destabilizes hermeneutic closure, and blurred antitheses undermine symbolic clarity. *The Girl on the Train* thus demonstrates how psychological thrillers, far from being formulaic entertainment, constitute dialogic, multi-layered texts that reveal the precariousness of identity and the cultural pressures that shape it. The narrative becomes a site where social anxieties, questions of gender, and shifting cultural scripts are negotiated, which yields a reading experience that is at once suspenseful, symbolically rich, and culturally resonant.

Conclusion: The study concludes that Barthes's five codes continue to offer a powerful framework for analyzing contemporary popular fiction, even if they are sometimes tested, bent, or reconfigured by the narrative strategies of contemporary psychological thrillers. The study also affirms his assertion that texts are mosaics of meanings and shows how the psychological thriller thrives on precisely such plurality.

Genişletilmiş Özeti

Amaç: Bu çalışma, Roland Barthes'in beş anlatı kodunun—hermenötik, proai-retik, semantik, simgesel ve kültürel—Paula Hawkins'in *Trendeki Kız* (2015) adlı romanının anlatı yapısında nasıl işlediğini incelemektedir. Roman, çağdaş psikolojik gerilim türünün simgesel örneklerinden biri hâline gelmiştir. Psi-kolojik gerilim romanları hem eleştirel hem de popüler ilgi görmüş olsa da, Barthes'in göstergebilimsel çerçevesini kullanan kapsamlı çözümler sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu makale, söz konusu merceği uygulayarak yalnızca Hawkins'in metninin türün çok katmanlı gerilim ve anlam inşasını nasıl örneklediğini değil, aynı zamanda bu tür anlatıların Barthes'in "yazınsal" metin kavramıyla nasıl örtüştüğünü de göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Burada yorumlama, okur ile metin arasında paylaşılan sürekli ve etkin bir süreç olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Yöntem: Yaklaşım niteliksel ve metin merkezlidir; Barthes'in *S/Z* (1970) adlı eserinden ve sonraki kuramsal yazılarından yararlanır. Çözümleme, Hawkins'in romanında beş kodun her birinin nasıl kullanıldığını yakın okuma yoluyla takip etmektedir. Tüm örneklerin ayrıntılı bir kataloğuunu çıkarmak

yerine, Barthes'ın kategorilerinin—bilmece, eylem dizileri, dilsel çağrışımlar, simgesel karşılıklar ve kültürel göndermeler—metnin anlatı stratejilerini anlamada özellikle üretken olduğu anlara odaklanılmıştır. Ayrıca bu stratejilerin kodların işleyişini nasıl karmaşıklığındına ve onların uygulamadaki esnekliğini nasıl ortaya koyduğuna dikkat çekilmiştir.

Bulgular: Bulgular, *Trendeki Kız*'ın beş kodun yoğun bir etkileşimi üzerinden islediğini, fakat bunu gerilim olmaksızın yapmadığını göstermektedir. Megan'ın kayboluşu etrafında örülü hermenötik kod, romanın gerilimini yapılandırmakla kalmaz; aynı zamanda çözümü ertelerken okura güvenilir bir hakikat sunmaz. Rachel'in güvenilmez anlatımı, hafıza boşlukları ve çelişkili bakış açıları, okuru parçalı ipuçlarıyla baş başa bırakır ve son ana kadar kesin bir yanıt engeller. Proairetik kod olayların akışını yönlendirir; ancak Hawkins'ın doğrusal olmayan zaman kullanımı ve dağınık bakış açıları nedenselliği karmaşıklığındır, böylece okurun olayları yeniden kurmasını zorunlu kılar. Üslup düzeyinde, semantik kod küçültücü “kız” sözcüğü, kipli anlatım ve parçalı sözdizimi gibi ince sözcük seçimleri aracılığıyla harekete geçirilir; bu da kırılganlık, belirsizlik ve psikolojik istikrarsızlığı pekiştirir. Romandaki semboller daha geniş ölçekte anlam kazanır; simgesel kodun ikili karşılıklara dayanmasına rağmen bu karşılıklar hiçbir zaman tam olarak yerleşmez. Görünürdeki zıtlıklar gri alanlara çözülür ve hiçbir kategori bütünüyle sağlam kalmaz. Son olarak, kültürel kod anlatırı çağdaş Londra'ya yerleştirir; finansal krizin ardından yaşanan hayal kırıklıkları, banliyö yabancılıması ve toplumsal cinsiyet beklenileri bağlamına oturtur. Halk kültürü ve popüler göndermeler kurmacayla kültürel belleğin sınırını bulanıklaştırır. Böylece roman, gerilimini tanıdık toplumsal gerçekliklere ve paylaşılan kültürel bilgiye dayandırır ve bu da onun yarattığı huzursuzluğu daha doğrudan kılar.

Tartışma: Özette, bu bulgular türün karmaşıklığını ve kodları yalnızca örneklemeyle kalmayıp aynı zamanda onların işleyişini de gösterebilme gütünü ortaya koymaktadır. Hawkins'ın romanında gerilim, yalnızca gizlenmiş bilgiden ya da anlatıldığı anı dönüşlerden değil, aynı zamanda metinsel stratejilerin Barthes'ın kategorilerinin istikrarını sınamasından doğar. Doğrusal olmayan zaman dizimi okura daha fazla yorum yükü getirir, güvenilmez anlatım çözüm arayışını sarsar, ikilikler ise netliğini kaybederek belirsizliğe açılır. Böylece *Trendeki Kız*, psikolojik gerilimlerin basit formüllere dayalı eğlencelik metinler değil; kimliğin kırılganlığını ve kültürel baskıları açığa

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çıkaran çok katmanlı, diyalojik anlatılar olduğunu göstermektedir. Anlatı, toplumsal kaygıların, toplumsal cinsiyet sorularının ve kültürel kalıpların müzakere edildiği bir alan haline gelir; ortaya hem gerilimli hem de simgesel açıdan zengin ve kültürel olarak yankı uyandıran bir okuma deneyimi çıkarır.

Sonuç

Çalışma, Barthes'in beş kodunun çağdaş popüler kurmacayı çözümlemede güçlü bir çerçeve sunmaya devam ettiğini, ancak çağdaş psikolojik gerilimlerin anlatı stratejileriyle bazen sinandığını, esnetildiğini ya da yeniden biçimlendirildiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca metinlerin anımlarının mozaiği olduğunu vurgulayan Barthes'in savını doğrulamakta ve psikolojik gerilimlerin tam da bu çoğulluktan beslendiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

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