

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Thriller is “one that thrills; especially: a work of fiction or drama designed to hold the interest by the use of a high degree of intrigue, adventure, or suspense” (“Thriller”). One of recently famous writers in thriller genre is Paula Hawkins. Hawkins is a British writer who has a great success with her debut, *The Girl on the Train* (Flood). Her success is based on her capability of constructing a great plot under this genre that gained her a review by the New York Times itself which is “rare for a first thriller from an unknown British author” (Flood). In 2015, this novel made her the best-selling author in the top of UK bestseller chart. Hawkins also earned herself Goodreads Choice Awards Mystery and Thriller, and Glamour Award for Writer in the same year. The success of this novel was followed by the making of the film adaptation under the same title, starring Emily Blunt as Rachel Watson (“Paula Hawkins Success Story”).

I have chosen to analyze Paula Hawkins’ novel entitled *The Girl on the Train* because this novel is intriguing with its unexpected plot. The novel also

falls under the sub-genre of psychological thriller, “a thriller subgenre that focuses on the unstable emotional or mental states of the characters, often in combination with elements of mystery, suspense . . .” (Sicoe). *The Girl on the Train* (2015) is crafted with the focus on Rachel Watson, an alcoholic, who does not have any recollection when being drunk. This can be seen in the use of limited memories of her. Based on this, the readers are made to doubt the reliability of the central character. The other two characters, Anna Watson, current wife of Rachel’s ex-husband, and Megan Hipwell, the missing woman, also have their parts in building the suspense.

*The Girl on the Train* is said to be “as tautly constructed as *Gone Girl*” (Winik), another hit psychological thriller written by Gillian Flynn. In other words, the novel is well-defined and also concise. *The Girl on the Train* is about Rachel Watson, who rides the train every day while watching over a house with a perfect couple in it and she names them Jess and Jason. This seemingly simple act leads to her obsession over them and makes her entangled in the case of Jess or Megan Watson’s disappearance. Rachel is suspected to have a hand in this case since she is roaming around her old neighborhood where the couple lives while being drunk the night of Megan’s disappearance. Her memories are the key, yet she does not have any recollection because of the blackout; she only feels that she has done something wrong. This makes the readers have a doubt about who to believe and whether Rachel is the suspect or not. The readers are also made wondering about what really happens in the story.

With this, the strongest point in the novel, undoubtedly, is the plot with its unexpected outcomes. Hawkins has great use of elements of plot in the novel. It

can be seen in how she “juggles perspective and timescales with great skill, and considerable suspense builds up . . .” (Feay). In other words, Hawkins makes use both different perspective and dates skillfully to build the suspense. That is why, in my thesis, I would like to analyze the elements of plot in this novel. Elements of plot consist of suspense, surprise, and artistic unity. The plot starts by building up the suspense or “a state of excitement or anxiety about something that is going to happen” (“Suspense”). Then, it is coming up with the element of surprise, “an act or instance . . . that surprises someone; a completely unexpected occurrence, appearance, or statement” (“Surprise”); as to make the readers caught off guard. Both of the suspense and the surprise build the artistic unity or “the condition of a literary piece whereby all its elements . . . successfully work together to achieve its central purpose” (Friedenberg). Therefore, elements of plot is the most fitted for the novel.

The criticism chosen to analyze the novel is formalism. This criticism focuses primarily on the text alone without any other influences. In this novel, the criticism focuses to inquire the elements of plot. Formalism itself is defined as “a style of inquiry that focuses . . . on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical, or intellectual contexts” (“Formalism”).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems I am going to discuss in this thesis are:

1. What are the suspenses in the novel?
2. What are the surprises in the novel?
3. How is the artistic unity presented in the novel?

## **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the above problems, the purposes of the analysis are as follows:

1. To reveal the suspenses in the novel
2. To reveal the surprises in the novel
3. To reveal how the artistic unity is presented in the novel

## **Method of Research**

The method of research that I use is library research. First, I read Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* as the primary text. I also browsed the internet to find references that support my analysis. Then, I analyze the elements of plot in the novel. In the end, I draw the conclusion of my analysis.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of the Elements of Plot in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion and the thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.