'nothing is reliable and nobody is trustworthy': Blackouts, uncertainties and event construal in *The Girl on the Train*

1 Introduction

The Girl on the Train (Hawkins, 2015) is a domestic psychological thriller that centres on the disappearance and murder of Megan Hipwell. The novel employs multiple narrators: Megan, Rachel Watson and Anna Watson (now married to Rachel's ex-husband Tom). Although the novel shifts between these three perspectives, the chapters in which Rachel narrates arguably form the most important parts of the developing plot since it is here that Rachel takes on the responsibility of both solving Megan's murder and coming to terms with her continuing emotional attachment to Tom. Rachel's narration, however, is coloured by the fact that she is an alcoholic who suffers regular blackouts that severely impact on her ability to recall and represent narrative events accurately.

The novel has achieved considerable commercial success. It became the most popular book of 2015, spending sixteen weeks (including thirteen consecutively) at the top of the *New York Times* bestsellers' list. It has also been a staple of online book reviewers. At the time of writing (March 2017), the novel had received over eight-five thousand reviews and nearly a million ratings on *Goodreads*, fifty-five thousand reviews on Amazon.com and fourteen-thousand reviews on Amazon.co.uk. A significant part of its success has been its perceived similarity to other psychological thrillers, such as *Gone Girl* (Flynn, 2012) and *Luckiest Girl Alive* (Knoll, 2015) that

rely on plot twists, unreliable narrators and explorations of domestic relationships in their portrayal of 'millennial femininity' (Avanzas Álvarez, 2015).

Despite this success, the novel has met with mixed critical review. Comparing it favourably to *Gone Girl*, Feay (2015) posits that *The Girl on the Train* offers a greater psychological plausibility and praises Hawkins' ability to juggle narrative perspectives to create a believable main protagonist with whom a reader may easily empathise. Alternatively, in her *New York Times* review, Jean Hanff Korelitz (2015) dismisses Rachel's credibility by suggesting that 'Rachel might as well be wearing a sign that reads 'Unreliable Narrator''. This polarised view both of Rachel as a narrator and of the effectiveness of the novel is evident in what largely represent two types of reader response on online fora. In the first type, readers warm to Rachel; her narrative style and the representation of her mind are viewed as integral to the novel's success. For example, one reviewer comments that

> This book was INTOXICATING. I loved every single second of it. While I had gone into this story thinking it was going to be packed with suspenseful scenes, the mystery was really in the storytelling. It was unexpected but executed SOOOO well. A+ use of an unreliable narrator that propelled the story way beyond what I had originally anticipated. Not only was it extremely thrilling and kept me intrigued the entire time, but I seriously appreciated how accurate the representation of alcoholism was. (Giordano, 2016)

Negative responses, however, tend to focus on how the representation of Rachel is implausible: many readers simply don't like her, as in this review.

I hated this book. I really did. It was a complete struggle to get through. The biggest problem I had was with the MC [main character]. She was a weak, obscenely dumb, pitying fool. (Kyle, 2015)

In this article I examine the characterisation of Rachel by providing a cognitive stylistic account of the representation of Rachel's mind style (Fowler, 1977), a term used to identify the specific ways in which a character's world-view is presented in literary fiction. The linguistic representation of Rachel's mind is particularly interesting to examine since she is an alcoholic who exhibits idiosyncratic cognitive habits in her framing and retelling of events in the novel. In my analysis, I draw on Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1991, 2008) and specifically the notions of nominal grounding and reference points. This paper thus draws on and extends emerging scholarship in the area of mind style that has utilised Cognitive Grammar to provide a nuanced analysis of the way in which a particular world-view is encoded in a main character (Nuttall, 2015; Harrison, 2017, in press).

This article is organised as follows. In the next section, I provide an overview of the phenomenon of the alcoholic blackout and sketch out more broadly some of the defining cognitive habits displayed by Rachel. In section 3, I set out the parameters for my analysis, providing an overview of Cognitive Grammar and in particular its four dimensions of construal. Sections 4 and 5 provide stylistic applications of the model: in the first, I draw on nominal grounding to show how Hawkins presents Rachel's inability to accurately recall events and, by consequence, her unreliability; in the second I demonstrate how Rachel's cognitive habit of accessing past experiences with Tom are stylistically realised and can be examined using the Cognitive Grammar notion of reference point relationships. It is Rachel's eventual ability to remember her

encounters with Tom that allows her to solve the mystery of Megan's murder and to reconcile her own personal problems.

2 Blackouts, unreliability and cognitive habits

An alcohol-induced blackout is an anterograde form of amnesia that may occur following moderate to excessive drinking of alcohol (Rose and Grant, 2010). In such an instance, an individual may struggle to accurately recall and reflect on events that took place within a particular window of time. The term' blackout' does not refer to any passing out or loss of consciousness but instead captures the effects of alcohol on an individual's memory (Rose and Grant, 2010). There are effectively two kinds of blackout that have been identified by researchers: en bloc blackouts that typically result in a sense of lost time and total inability to recall; and fragmentary blackouts that result in only partial memory loss and where the experiencer is able to recall some information but may be unsure as to its veracity. In this latter instance, recalls may occur through the cueing of others or else spontaneously (see also Goodwin, 1971).

In an interview about her writing, Paula Hawkins explains that she researched the nature and effect of alcoholic blackouts and that she considers them to be an important aspect of her characterisation of Rachel and her attempt to capture a distinctive narrative voice (Baker, 2015). Rachel suffers from fragmentary blackouts, which affect her ability to construe parts of her experience, most notably elements of her past with Tom (which are later revealed to be important in revealing central parts of their relationship) and the night of Saturday 13th July, the date that Megan went missing and, we later find out, was killed. Indeed Rachel's blackouts are frequently

referred to and Rachel is acutely aware of how she is unable to successfully recall some crucial events of the past: 'Blackouts happen […] Total black; hours lost, never to be retrieved' (Hawkins, 2015: 97).

The effects of Rachel's blackouts can be viewed as part of Rachel's 'characteristic cognitive habits, abilities and limitations' (Semino, 2002: 97). Although Rachel is not the only character whose credibility is questioned during the novel, the direct and explicit nature of her blackouts distinguishes her from the unreliability displayed by Anna and Megan, her co-narrators, and by other characters. Indeed the complexity of Rachel's characterisation is evident in the fact that she fulfils the criteria for both a 'fallible' and an 'untrustworthy' narrator (Olsen, 2003) in that at times her unreliability is due to her blackouts but on other occasions she admits that she deliberately lies. For example, her description of 'Jason' (Scott, Megan's husband) and 'Jess' (Megan) at the beginning of the novel complete with comprehensive details of their jobs and their relationship is revealed in a matter-of-fact way as being simply a fantasy and she admits to lying when giving evidence to the police about her encounter with the mysterious red-haired man at the station on the night that Megan disappeared. Her predisposition to unreliability can be summarised in her own explanation following her first meeting with Scott: 'What I know from my own observations, I don't really know' (Hawkins, 2015: 147). Indeed throughout the novel, Rachel has a tendency to undermine herself and her own presentation of events, either directly or through the tentative language that she uses. This can be observed by looking at Extract 1, which occurs at a point in the novel just under a week after Megan's disappearance (the 'Saturday night' referred to in the extract).

Extract 1

I spent yesterday evening sitting on the sofa in jogging bottoms and a T-shirt,
making lists of things to do, possible strategies. For example, I could hang
around Witney station at rush hour, wait until I see the red-haired man from
Saturday night again. I could invite him for a drink and see where it leads,
whether he saw anything, what he knows about the night. The danger is that I
might see Anna or Tom, they would report me and I would get into trouble
(more trouble) with the police. The other danger is that I might make myself
more vulnerable. I still have the trace of an argument in my head – I may have
the physical evidence of it on my scalp and lip. What if this is the man who
hurt me? The fact that he smiled and waved doesn't mean anything, he could
be a psychopath for all I know. But I can't see him as a psychopath. I can't
explain it, but I warm to him. (2015: 135)

In this extract, an indicative picture of how Rachel constructs her conceptualisation of
reality emerges. Her narration is mediated through strong emphasis on self with the
sustained use of first person pronoun 'I' to emphasise thought and agency. It is also
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. Her narrative shifts in terms of specificity: she is able to
remember and frame her own spatio-temporal parameters in 'Witney station',
'Saturday night' but is limited in her ability simply to remember anything beyond one
physical feature of the man she saw there, evident in her use of 'red-haired' as a
single pre-modifier. Equally, her switches between time frames in the clauses 'I could
invite him for a drink and see where it leads', 'whether he saw anything, 'what he

knows about the night' and between indefiniteness and definiteness in the noun phrases 'an argument', 'the physical evidence', 'my scalp and lip', 'a psychopath' suggest that her experience of events is constructed in a way that is largely incoherent and heavily uncertain.

3 Mind style: A Cognitive Grammar approach

The remainder of this article develops the preliminary discussion of Rachel's cognitive habits to examine a series of extracts in the novel by drawing on Cognitive Grammar as a method for literary analysis [1]. As previously discussed, there is a growing body of work that has utilised Cognitive Grammar in the service of literary criticism (see Harrison et al., 2014 for a recent introduction and overview), and specifically to examine characterisation (Harrison, 2017), to explore how the mind style of a character afflicted by memory loss is represented (Harrison, in press), and how authors may manipulate how readers construct characters' minds (Nuttall, 2015), or what Stockwell (2009) terms the process of mind-modelling. It is argued that an approach drawing on Cognitive Grammar is methodologically sound as its grounding in cognitive linguistic principles provides a strong psychological plausibility whilst its text-driven nature allows for a close analysis of language (Harrison, 2017).

A key concept in Cognitive Grammar is that of 'construal' (Langacker, 2008: 55). The central premise advocated by Cognitive Grammar is that meaning derives not simply from conceptual content but also from the way that content is presented. In other words, grammatical configurations rather than being random are in themselves principled, goal-driven and therefore inherently meaningful [2]. An exploration informed by Cognitive Grammar can therefore interrogate the ways in

which a fictional mind is represented as construing scenes and events. Since Cognitive Grammar offers an approach to mind style analysis that naturally synthesises theories of cognition and descriptive linguistics (see also Semino, 2002: 98), the model allows the stylistician to systematically explore 'the construction and expression in language of the conceptualisation of reality in a particular mind' (Bockting, 1994: 159).

Langacker uses a visual metaphor of 'viewing a scene' to describe the following four 'construal phenomena' (2008: 55-89):

1. Specificity: the level of precision and detail at which conceptual content is characterised, in either high or low resolution.

2. Focusing: the portion of conceptual content selected to look at and its arrangement into foregrounded and backgrounded material.

3. Prominence: how attention is focused on specific aspects of conceptual content in relation to the whole.

4. Perspective: the overall relationship between the viewers (or conceptualisers) and the conceptual content including the viewing arrangement and vantage point.

A construal may also be subjective in so far as the conceptualiser draws attention to their own involvement in or stance towards the construed content, or objective in that prominence is given to the object of conceptualisation (Langacker, 2008: 77; see also Verhagen, 2010). Returning to Extract 1, we can see how Rachel's narration is a largely subjective construal since the narrative voice continually asserts her presence through the sustained use of the first person pronoun and through modalised constructions that emphasise both her mediation of events and her overall disorientation.

4 Nominal grounding

In Cognitive Grammar, the 'ground' refers to 'the speech events, its participants [speaker and hearer], their interaction, and the immediate circumstances' (Langacker, 2008: 259). In a communicative event, a speaker or writer uses grounding elements to make content mentally accessible to a hearer or reader in the current discourse, either by directing their attention to a particular and intended referent or by positioning an event within the some conception of reality. In the former instance, nominal grounding elements identify a particular instance, actual or fictive, of a more general type; in the latter, clausal grounding elements position actions, events and states relative to the speaker or writer's conception of knowledge in the world (Langacker, 2008: 259). In this section, I focus on the use of nominal grounding elements, arguing that the distinctive ways in which Rachel grounds nominals form a key aspect of her cognitive habits.

Cognitive Grammar recognises different types of nominal grounding strategies. An overt grounding strategy singles out a referent explicitly and with a varying degree of specificity. In this instance, elements function grammatically as definite or indefinite determiners such as definite and indefinite articles, distal and proximal demonstratives and quantifiers. Nominal grounding may, however, occur in other ways. For example, 'We met up for coffee' omits any overt grounding element, indicating no specificity in terms of how much coffee was drunk. Instead the grounding is covert and in zero-form (usually shown using the symbol Ø), and typically diverts attention to the conceptual content of the referent itself (the social event of meeting up with someone). Other forms operate in different ways. Proper nouns and pronouns function intrinsically since their greater inherent specificity

allows for a more straightforward identification of their referent, while possessives ground in an indirect manner by acting as a point of access for the referent of a noun to be understood. For example, in 'John's coffee', 'coffee' is related specifically to the possessor rather than directly to the ground itself (Langacker, 2008: 272-73).

One of Rachel's most distinctive cognitive habits in the novel is her inability to recall events. This proves to be a constant source of frustration for her and leads other characters to constantly doubt her accounts of the night that Megan disappeared. In the following extract, Rachel awakens the morning after Megan's disappearance and struggles to recollect her own movements during an evening where she had been drinking heavily.

Extract 2

> Something happened, something bad. There was an argument. Voices were raised. Fists? I don't know, I don't remember. I went to the pub, I got on the train, I was at the station, I was on the street. Blenheim Road. I went to Bleinheim Road. (2015: 61)

Rachel's construal of the event begins with the repetition of the indefinite pronoun 'something', which foregrounds her loss of memory. The nominals in the reminder of the extract are as follows:

an argument

Ø voices

Ø fists

the pub

the train

the station

the street

Blenheim Road

Rachel's construal here can be traced through a series of elements that move from initial overt indefinite grounding to zero-form grounding to overt definite grounding to final intrinsic grounding. Her initial use of the indefinite article 'an' rather then the definite 'the' signals that there was an argument but that she is at present unable to distinguish it from other potential altercations that may have taken place; in other words, Rachel construes the event as simply a possible instance. In Cognitive Grammar, the distinction between the use of a definite and indefinite article emphasises that the former offers one eligible candidate (in this example only one possible argument) as referent, whilst the latter merely selects from a larger set (Langacker, 2008: 287). The nominal 'an argument' therefore operates to select a frame within which the sense of an altercation is more broadly understood rather than an initially precise recollection of a particular instance of an argument.

This inability to be precise is a significant cognitive habit that Rachel displays as she strives to recollect the events of the night of Megan's disappearance. Thus Hawkins represents a mind that attempts to construct a version of reality but is undermined by the blackouts that she suffers from. The reader relies on Rachel and the other narrators to present and make sense of the narrative events, and Rachel's inability to consistently remember these can be both a source of frustration and annoyance. Equally, as Rachel's narration maps out her thought processes, we often see the linguistic evidence of signs of remembering. This representation of cognitive

action that occurs as Rachel's construal of the events continues is realised in the form of a gradual chaining action as her mind begins to recall more specific details. This action can be identified through a movement across different types of grounding element. The two zero-form nominals 'Voices' and 'Fists' that follow the use of the indefinite article act to emphasise the conceptual content of the two nouns that metonymically present loud and aggressive fighting rather than pinpoint exact examples of these. The grammatical structure here mirrors a mind that is attempting to make sense of an event and receiving some degree of incoming information about that event but crucially is unable to be more precise about actual instances of the voices or fists. In the reminder of the chain, however, the pattern shifts. Rachel is now able to recall more specific information about the events of the night before; a run of four nominals grounded by the definite article 'the' singles out a unique instance that Rachel now remembers. The grounding strategy signals that only one instance of each noun is eligible; a mental connection to the referent is made on the basis that in the present discourse context (i.e. the reading of the novel) those referents are identifiable. The extract ends with the strongest type of awareness on Rachel's part since the intrinsically grounded 'Blenheim Road' offers the strongest kind of mental connection, since it delimits (Langacker, 2007) the scope of possible referents. In this instance, Rachel's construal of events has moved systematically from memory loss to spontaneous and chained recall and this is replicated in the grounding pattern that occurs in the extract.

The pattern of nominal grounding represents a mind that is struggling with the effects of a blackout, yet through cueing seems able to reconstruct some memory of events. In this extract, however, Rachel's recollection is incomplete and indeed one of her further cognitive characteristics is that she has to later re-construe events having

discovered that her initial understanding of events was misinformed. In these instances the chaining reveals a logic in Rachel's thought process which is then later undermined. This can be seen in Extract 3 where, following news that a body has been found, Rachel retraces her journey of the night that Megan disappeared in the hope that she can recall the memory of what she saw.

Extract 3

> Pressing my palms to my eye sockets, I concentrate. I'm trying to get it back, to see what I just saw. I curse myself for drinking. If only my head was straight…but there it is. It's dark, and there's a man walking away from me. A woman walking away from me? A woman, wearing a blue dress. It's Anna. (2015: 233)

In this extract Rachel makes the leap from singling out instances in a string of nominals that are grounded by the indefinite article, 'a man', 'A woman', 'A woman', 'a blue dress', to a fully identifying and intrinsically grounding proper noun 'Anna'. In this instance her grounding path operates through the successive cueing of several frames of reference into her own narrative. However, a final and important aspect of her recall is wrong as we later find out that the woman Rachel had seen getting into the car was Megan. In fact, the possibility of error is recognised by Rachel herself as she admits that 'I don't know whether what I'm seeing, feeling is real or not, imagination or memory' (Hawkins, 2015: 233). When the recollection comes one hundred and fifty pages later towards the end of the novel, Rachel is able to solve the mystery and re-construe this episode with Megan wearing jeans and a red t-shirt. It is this final recollection which reveals Tom to be Megan's killer.

5 Reference points, world-switches and mental access

The second distinctive feature of Rachel's mind style that this article addresses relates to how she frequently draws on specific phenomena in order to access the aspects of the past and in turn develop her own understanding both of her marriage to Tom and of the events of the night that Megan disappeared. In doing so she makes connections between the current time zone in which she narrates and prior time frames in order to provide access to memories from the latter that give understanding to the former. In the following sections, I argue that this cognitive habit can be traced and understood by drawing on the Cognitive Grammar notion of reference points.

A reference point is a type of scanning that allows mental access to a particular entity through invoking the conception of another. As Langacker explains:

> We often direct attention to a perceptually salient entity as a point of reference to help find some other entity which would otherwise be hard to locate. (2008: 83)

As with the Cognitive Grammar framework more broadly, the reference point model is underpinned by the premise that other general cognitive operations function in this way. For example, when we wish to describe the location of a place, we will often do so by accessing it through an already familiar reference point that acts as an anchor for the understanding of new material (see also Littlemore and Taylor, 2014: 8). In Cognitive Grammar terms, the entity first evoked in an expression or phrase acts as the reference point and has any number of potential targets that can be

subsequently accessed from it. These targets form part of a larger dominion, which represents the entire scope of knowledge readily associated with and mentally accessible via the initial reference point (Langacker, 2008: 509). Once attention moves to the target, the original reference point, following the principle of figure-ground configuration, moves into the background. The original target now has its own dominion and may be invoked as a reference point in its own right by a conceptualiser in order to provide further mental access within this new dominion (see Langacker, 2007: 172). Although Langacker typically uses the model to undertake clause-level analysis, the reference point model has been used at a more conceptual level (Stockwell, 2009, 2010; Giovanelli 2014), and scaled-up to examine discourse-level phenomena (Van Hoek, 2003; Van Vliet, 2009) and broader features of style (Harrison 2017, in press).

In Extract 4, occurring in the latter half of the novel, Rachel has met up with Tom.

Extract 4

Tom arrived just before nine. I went downstairs and there he was, leaning on his car, wearing jeans and an old grey t-shirt – old enough that I can remember how the fabric felt against my cheek when I lay across his chest. (2015: 289)

This extract is typical of a number of instances in the novel where Rachel is afforded access to a previous state of affairs related to her ex-husband, which in turn she narrates to the reader. In this extract, Tom and Rachel function as initial clausal subjects and therefore reference points. One of the targets in Tom's dominion, the t-shirt, is invoked as a new reference point through the prominence afforded to it as the

head noun pre-modified by two adjectives. The addition of extended and specific information within the noun phrase thus increases the likelihood of its having strong discourse salience (Langacker, 2008: 509). As a new reference point, the t-shirt now has its own dominion of associated concepts and knowledge, one of which is Rachel's experience of the same t-shirt within a different set of temporal parameters. The target within this dominion that is lexically realised is its fabric, which is now highlighted as being experienced in a different time and place with earlier versions, or enactors (Gavins, 2007), of Rachel and Tom. The t-shirt therefore represents a salient object that is responsible for activating some aspect of Rachel's experiential knowledge that, as conceptualiser, she construes as part of a distinctive past narrative event.

In her discussion of the reference point model in the representation of episodic memory, Harrison (in press) synthesises Cognitive Grammar and Text World Theory (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007) to argue that a reference point acts as textual trigger that initiates a world-switch from an originating text-world. In her analysis, Harrison demonstrates that cross-world connections are established that foreground both the importance of the initial reference point as a primary motif and the relationship between that reference point and its related targets within a dominion.

In this extract, Rachel's dual role as conceptualiser and narrator produces an interesting effect. As the conceptualiser, she uses the t-shirt as a reference point that initiates a world-switch within which a past set of experiences is anchored and through which Rachel accesses her past relationship with Tom. For the reader following Rachel's narration, however, the mental path is less direct since the world-switch itself is textually triggered by the modal construction 'I can remember'. Thus the reader's understanding of the relationship between reference point and target has to occur at a later stage since according to the original parameters of Text World

Theory, a world-switch is initiated by perceptual, spatial or temporal deictic triggers or by hypotheticals, conditionals or modals (Werth, 1999: 180-188). In this instance, since the noun 't-shirt' carries no inherent deictic quality [3], the cohesive cross-world chain involves a reader acknowledging the modalised world-switch as completing the path where the target is retrospectively recognised as a cross-world entity. In Extract 4, Rachel clearly uses the t-shirt as a reference point to access an earlier memory associated with it and then cues the world-switch through her direct thought so that the reader is able to complete the task of tracing its mental path. The world-switch thus completes the path so that the target is now recognised as an earlier version of the t-shirt. In a discussion of how readers reconceptualise the temporal sequence of events that are narrated in a non-chronological order, Langacker (2008: 80) uses the term 'backtracking' to refer to the specific type of cognitive effort that is required. In this instance, the explicit world-switch equally appears to direct the reader to backtrack in order to identify the reference point-target relationship, trace the mental path and make sense of the cohesive chaining that exists across world boundaries. In turn, I would argue, this leads to a strong retrospective readerly sense of the importance of the t-shirt. The importance of discrete entities as reference points and the way that these are presented can be further examined in Extract 5, which occurs slightly earlier in the novel when Rachel is on a train. She notices that the man she thinks she recognises from the night that Megan disappeared, and whom she simply refers to as the 'red-haired man', is sitting opposite her.

Extract 5

> I'm looking out of the window again, but I can feel his eyes on me and I have
> the oddest urge to turn towards him, to smell the smoke on his clothes and his

breath. I like the smell of cigarette smoke. Tom smoked when we first met. I used to have the odd one with him, when we first were out drinking or after sex. It's erotic to me, that smell; it reminds me of being happy. I graze my teeth over my lower lip, wondering for a moment what he would do if I turned to face him and kissed his mouth. I feel his body move. He's leaning forward, bending down, he picks up the newspaper at my feet. (2015: 231)

Here, the initial two discourse reference points are Rachel as narrator and conceptualiser and 'the man' as the object of conceptualisation. The salience of 'smoke' as a new reference point is signalled through lexical and syntactic repetition, with 'smoke' profiled in two noun phrases 'the smoke' and 'cigarette smoke' and then as a verb process 'smoked'. This establishes a cohesive chain with a dominion of potential targets that allows Rachel access to both her previous memory and various conceptual associations. Again, in Text World Theory terms, it is the shift to the past tense that initiates a temporal world-switch. As with Extract 4, there is a subtle distinction between the representation of Rachel's cognitive characteristic of drawing on some aspect that cues a previous memory of her relationship with Tom and the process that a reader undertakes in backtracking to make sense of the connection.

In this world-switch, Rachel's memory of Tom is marked by increases in definiteness from zero 'cigarette smoke' to overt grounding, 'the odd one', and by the outlining of specific spatial and temporal parameters, 'out drinking', 'after sex'. This fleeting world-switch is followed by the present tense 'It's erotic' that signals a return to the initial text-world. There is, however, an ambiguity over Rachel's use of the pronoun 'he' and possessive determiner 'his'. It seems that Rachel's desire-world (realised through another modalised world-switch) involves an enactor of the red-

haired man rather than Tom but an ambiguity is present largely because it is initially

not clear whether the referent of 'he' remains Tom (second text-world) or the red-

haired man (initial text-world). The ambiguity is finally resolved through the re-

evoking of 'the newspaper at my feet', with the use of the definite article grounding

the newspaper more clearly in the first world.

The gradual accumulation of memories about Tom is also important in terms

of Rachel finally discovering the truth about her ex-husband; in effect, the enactor of

Tom who exists in Rachel's blackout-affected mind is very different to the Tom of the

past. It is through accessing this latter Tom that Rachel is finally able to solve the

mystery. Over the course of the novel, the gradual re-evoking through fleeting world-

switches and reflecting on past experiences of Tom remains a distinctive cognitive

habit that Rachel displays. These fleeting worlds initially provide comforting and

positive yet ultimately unreliable representations of her life with Tom and gradually

accumulate to reveal a more sinister side to him. Towards the end of the novel, two

mysteries are solved: Rachel is able to rediscover her memories and this in turn

reveals Tom to be both an abusive husband and Megan's killer. Extract 6 is an

example of how this double realisation is represented.

Extract 6

> Everything is a lie. I didn't imagine him hitting me. I didn't imagine him
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> walking away from me quickly, his fists clenched. I saw him turn, shout. I saw
>
> him walking down the road with a woman, I saw him getting into the car with
>
> her. I didn't imagine it. And I realize then that it's all very simple. I do
>
> remember, it's just that I had confused two memories. I'd inserted the image
>
> of Anna, walking away from me in her blue dress, into another scenario: Tom

and a woman getting into a car. Because of course that woman wasn't wearing a blue dress, she was wearing jeans and a red t-shirt. She was Megan. (2015: 348)

We are now presented with a very different Rachel. Although her narrative is still subjectively construed, the modality is revised to include stronger perception forms 'saw', 'realize' and emphatic epistemic markers such as the primary auxiliary 'do' in 'I do remember'. Categorical forms, 'Everything is a lie' and syntactic negation 'I didn't imagine' present Rachel's voice as stronger and authoritative. The stylistic realisation of a mind affected by anterograde amnesia is now one that emphasises instead the re-establishing of the past. In the latter part of this extract Rachel is able to radically re-construe her previous narrative concerning the night of Megan's murder. In this later description of events, the clarity of what she saw and what she now realises is emphasised in the movement from 'a woman' (nominal grounded with indefinite article) to 'that woman' (nominal grounded with distal demonstrative) to the fully identifying intrinsically grounding proper noun 'Megan'. This new construal acts as the catalyst for the climax of the novel as Tom is exposed as both an abusive husband and Megan's killer. Indeed the stylistic representation of Rachel's memory recall in this extract strikingly captures how blackout sufferers' recollections of events are revelatory in the ways that they are talked about, often being described as 'like a picture out of focus' and 'remembering a dream' (Goodwin et al., 1969: 1034).

6 Conclusion

In this article I have demonstrated how Hawkins' representation of Rachel's mind is a fundamental thematic and stylistic concern in the novel. *The Girl on the Train* depends to a great extent on Rachel and crucially how she is presented. Her blackouts effectively create the mystery: if she could remember then there would be no puzzle to solve. As with other literary texts that present unusual mind styles, the stylistic presentation of Rachel's mind and the way that this evolves through the novel is of interest to the stylistician, and this article builds on other work that has begun to explore the potential of Cognitive Grammar as a method of analysis in arguing that the model is well-placed to discuss the conceptual as well as the grammatical since its central tenet is that grammar in itself is meaningful.

This article has highlighted how two particular aspects of Cognitive Grammar's treatment of construal, nominal grounding and the reference point model, are useful in explaining the ways by which Hawkins represents a mind with distinctive cognitive habits. It demonstrates how the lexical and grammatical realisations of the underlying mental affordances and limitations of an anterograde amnesiac are significant and give rise to particular ways in which readers are positioned in relation to her narrative. This can account for both the polarised responses of readers towards Rachel and the novel, and the way in which the final revealing of events at the climax is handled. Finally, although this article has focused on construal as a phenomenon, it has only drawn on two aspects, and there is clearly the potential for further work examining the framework more widely in the service of exploring the construction of fictional minds.

Notes

1. The extracts chosen for analysis are selective but largely represent typical examples of how Rachel's mind style is represented in the novel.

2. An oft-quoted example is the distinction between the active and passive voice, which in Cognitive Grammar is viewed as more than just a simple syntactic transformation. Instead, the decision to construe a scene in a way that gives prominence to the agent as clausal subject (active voice) or to downplay, defocus or even delete the agent by placing the patient as clausal subject (passive voice) is one which is motivated by the particular viewing arrangement the conceptualiser wishes to present (see Langacker, 2008: 383-384).

3. I would argue that, unless a noun phrase has been previously mentioned in the discourse and therefore provides access to some previous time frame understood by the reader, such a construction cannot on its own function to trigger a world-switch.

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