DECEPTION IN FLYNN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER *GONE GIRL* (2012): A PRAGMA-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Most of readers' comprehension of verbal deception descends from social psychology and cognitive perspectives, particularly from political, advertising and forensic discourse. One discoursal domain that has been hitherto largely neglected is literary discourse, particularly crime fiction. To date, this article is the first study that presents some of the many strategies which a psychopathic and non-psychopathic character/first-person narrator use to invite deception in readers and amongst characters from a pragma-stylistic perspective. This study focuses on the deceptive strategies exploited in Flynn's popular American novel Gone Girl (2012) which is situated within the hybrid sub-genre of crime fiction: psychological thriller/whodunit. The study of the stylistic idiosyncrasies of the couple antagonists, Amy and Nick, is carried out by an eclectic pragmatic approach to expose their deceptive strategies for the fulfilment of their egoistic and/or selfish ends. The research undertaken will develop an eclectic conceptual framework which comprises the deceptive principle, speech act theory, (im)politeness, presupposition, certain rhetorical devices, and relevance theory, along with the stylistic effects achieved via the manipulation of such linguistic tools, to explore the two levels of discourse (viz., character-character level and narrator-reader level) proposed by Black (2006). More specifically, the present study is set for three main objectives: firstly, to explore the unreliable narrators' deceptive strategies and compare the findings to the lower level of discourse, that is, character-character level. Secondly, to compare the deceptive strategies which occur on the pre- and during/post-dénouncement stage. Thirdly, investigate the language of gender differences. It has been evinced that Amy is a serial liar who employs a plethora of deceptive strategies whilst Nick is a deceiver who principally relies on indirect strategies. As for the deceptive strategies exploited on the two levels and stages are neither quantitively nor qualitatively mirror-symmetrical. It has also been found that the fashion via which Amy and Nick deceive exhibit linguistic gender differences—most of which challenge the observations on the language of women and men put forth by Lakoff (1973).

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1. Introduction

The concept of verbal deception has been under scrutiny since the beginnings of the 20th century from different fields of study, such as forensics (e.g., Picornell, 2013), social psychology (e.g., Weber, 2017), politics (e.g., Al-Hindawi & Al-Aadili, 2017)—particularly, and such like. The literature reveals that the focus has been predominantly centred on discoursal markers and personal pronouns as linguistic means to detect deception. Having said that, it seems that one area of study that has been given noticeably scant attention is literary discourse, particularly the (sub)genre(s) of crime fiction. After surveying the literature, the researchers have come to the realisation that deception has not been yet investigated from a pragma-stylistic standpoint. As a matter of fact, literary discourse has not been given much attention, broadly speaking, with respect to deception from the perspective of linguistics.

Moreover, the phenomenon of psychopathy in relation to deception has always been under scrutiny in the spheres of science and literature[ii], yet, the researchers have not found a study that explores the manner through which a psychopathic literary character deceives from a linguistic—particularly from a pragmatic and/or pragma-stylistic viewpoint. The reason for choosing such a phenomenon (i.e., psychopathy) to be the focus of this study is attributed to the fact that psychopaths, according to Hare Checklist - Revised, are notorious for being deceivers and manipulators. As such, Flynn's *Gone Girl* has been selected for it depicts one of the most controversial female psychopathic characters in this decade. Many scholars and clinicians (e.g., Niemiec, 2014; Pratiwi, 2019) have advanced articles to confirm that Amy, one of the antagonists in *Gone Girl*, has the condition of being a psychopath. This novel appears to be a feasible in terms of the objectives of the present study since the author depicts a married couple (i.e., Amy and Nick) as two alternative first-person unreliable narrators. From this token, it has been decided that it would be interesting to bridge this gap in the literature.

The main objective is restricted to investigate the deceptive strategies that a psychopathic (Amy) and non-psychopathic (Nick) narrator/character exploit. The sub objectives revolve around establishing a comparison in respect to the employment of the deceptive strategies between (i) the two levels of discourse: character-character level (hereafter C-CL) and narrator-reader level (hereafter N-RL) and (ii) pre- and during/post-dénouncement stages[iii]. It should be mentioned that the second sub strategy is restricted to Amy's discourse since, firstly, she is the culprit and, secondly, Nick does practice deception in the second stage. (iii) The final sub objective is to investigate gender differences in respect to the stylistics of deception.

[ii] It is noteworthy to mention that *American Psycho* has been analysed by Mannila (2013) from a narratological standpoint by drawing on Nunning's model. There is a misconception that this novel represents a psychopath. However, the antagonist is closer to be psychotic rather than psychopathic since he suffers from mental breaks and delusions which eliminates intentionality hence deception since intention is the main parameter of the process of deceiving (see Section 2.2).

[iii] The dénouncement in crime fiction is the segment of the story in which the protagonist or any other character unravels all the mysteries/secrets pertained to the murder. It sets the finale of the story for readers and other characters. Simply put, it is "as much a 'tying up' of the action as an untying" (Wales, 2011, p. 107).

It is hoped that this study will be of benefit to crime fiction writers to develop an in-depth understanding about the concept under argument. Moreover, it is also hoped that it will enrich the fields of literature and particular fields of linguistics, namely, stylistics, pragmatics, rhetoric, sociolinguistics and the like.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pragma-Stylistics

Traditional or formal stylistics focused mainly on the analysis of grammatical forms, phonological features, and propositional meanings, and other formal linguistic elements. The eclectic or interdisciplinary nature of stylistics means that it is quick to annex pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches to its analytical toolkit (Jeffries & Mclntyre, 2010). Hickey (1993) coined the term "*pragma-stylistics,*" which, since then, came to be a focal approach to text analysis. According to Black (2006), pragma-stylistics is concerned with showing the extent to which pragmatics contributes to the study of literature; it looks at the usefulness of pragmatic theories to the interpretation of literary texts. For further profoundness, pragma-stylistics offers more complete explanations for many unexplained phenomena than stylistics or pragmatics can do alone. It is a branch of stylistics, which applies ideas and concepts from linguistic pragmatics to the analysis of literary texts and their interpretation (Busse *et al.*, 2010). The contemporary definition of stylistics, nevertheless, states that the focus is no longer restricted to literary texts since it is possible to stylistically investigate non-literary texts and speeches as well (Burke, 2014). Hickey (1993, p. 584), on a final note, demonstrates the dissimilarities between stylistics, pragmatics, and pragma-stylistics via the following questions: Linguists ask: "*what do you say or what aspects of language are used?*" Stylisticians ask: "*How do you say what you say?*" Pragmatists ask: "*What do you do with what you say*?" And pragma-stylisticians ask: "*How do you do, what do you do?*"

2.2 Definitions of Deception

There is a plethora of definitions concerning deception proposed by philosophers, ethicists, psychologists, and linguists, *inter alia*, yet there is no one universally noncontroversial or agreed upon definition. It should be mentioned that intentionality is a vital component in the process of deceiving and there is a consensus by the majority of scholars upon this matter, howbeit few philosophers (e.g., Demons, 1960; Chisholm & Feehan, 1977; Adler, 1997) disagree, that is, they argue that deception is not necessarily intentional.

Bok (1978, p.13) maintains that "*when we undertake to deceive others intentionally, we communicate messages meant to mislead, meant to make them believe what we ourselves do not believe,*" and this can be achieved "*through gestures, through disguise, by means of action, or inaction, even through silence.*" Stated differently, Bok, unlike many scholars, did not specify whether the communicated belief is false or true. This, thereby, refers to communicating a belief, regardless of its true proposition, in another provided that the sender believes that the message inserted in the target is false.

Mahon (2007), on the other hand, conceptualises deception as follows: "*to intentionally cause another person to have or continue to have a false belief that is known or truly believed to be false by*

bringing about evidence on the basis of which the person has or continues to have a false belief" (pp. 189-190). The problem, howbeit, is that Mahon specified the deceivee or the target as necessarily singular, not plural. Intuitively speaking, A can, via a gesture or a statement, deceives B, C, etc. simultaneously. For this reason, Mahon's definition is also rejected. Carson (2010) agrees with Mahon (2007) in that the process of deception should necessarily involve inserting a false item of information in another person, where the information itself is false. He, nonetheless, disagrees with Mahon in that the information can be truly or "partly" believed to be false by the sender.

All the above-mentioned definitions, particularly those of Bok (1987), Mahon (2007), and Carson (2010), have been modified into one synthesised or eclectic definition that will be regarded for this study: A person S_1 [iv]deceives another person (+[v]) S_2 iff S_1 intentionally causes (+) S_2 to believe X (or persist in believing X), where (1) X is (-[vi]) false and S_1 necessarily believes that X is false, or (2) X is (-) false and S_1 does not believe that X is true.

2.3 Hybrid Classification of Deception Taxonomy

Based on the linguistic nature of the collected data, the researchers have adopted withholding information, equivocation, red herring, and lying as deceptive macro strategies for this study.

2.3.1 Withholding Information

Dynel (2018, p. 299) maintains that withholding information can be employed strategically to invite a false belief in the target, that is, as a form or a source of deception per se. She averts that it is the relevance of the concealed information, compulsorily coupled with the intention to invite a false belief in the targeted hearer that can architect the jointly sufficient criteria for withholding information. As for the micro strategies of withholding information, they can be systemised into two strategies: (i) **half-truths** which can be conceptualised as providing relevant "true" information, yet intentionally fail to deliver the entire truth (Marrelli and Castelfranchi, 1981), (ii) s**ilence** which is defined as the absence of talk. It is a non-verbal communication that transmits a plethora of meanings. According to Ephratt (2008), silence has an illocutionary force to perform a speech act (hereafter SA) that appears to exist universally. Dynel (2018) maintains that withholding information can be boiled down to silence. She further argues that it can be realised by hyperbole, presupposition, and the maxim of quantity, to name but three.

2.3.2 Equivocation

Marrelli and Castelfranchi (1981, p. 764) argue that the deceptive strategy of equivocation frequently utilises "*manipulative language*," which involves the employments of euphemism and dysphemism, for instance, in order to obscure the intended meaning. Many scholars have recognised the deceptive nature of the phenomenon of equivocation which leads to the violation of the maxim of manner (McCornack, 1992), that is, "*avoid ambiguity*" (Grice, 1975, p. 27). Marrelli and Castelfranchi state that equivocation is a type of deception whereby an utterance elicits two (or more) alternative interpretations, the covert one which is "true", whilst the overt one, the

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[iv] The letter "S" refers to a speaker/sender.
[v] The symbol "+" refers to the notion of pluralism/multiplicity, that is, one or more than one person being deceived.
[vi] The symbol "-" refers to the notion of nonentity, that is, X does not have to be false.

favorable one, is "false." The pragma-stylistic realizations of equivocation involve presupposition, relevance theory, and the deceptive maxim of manner.

2.3.3 Red herring

Since the two strategies evasion and distraction share many similarities, it would be less redundant to include them both under one macro strategy which the researchers will label as 'red herring'. Evasion, as it is introduced by Galasiński (2000, p. 55), is "*a means of avoiding the truth, or, in other words, withholding a piece of truthful and relevant information.*" In the light of this description, evasion necessarily results from the violation of the two maxims: relevance and quantity, respectively. As for the second strategy, that is, distraction, Schröter (2013) argues that to divert from the topic under scrutiny, the deceiver may attack the opponent to achieve that goal. Attacking the opponent, the interviewer, or the rival group, Bull (2003) (as cited in Schröter, 2013) adds, can be ways of evading answering questions. Within the realm of crime fiction, the opponent might be the detective, the sleuth, or any other interrogator. Based upon this argument, the strategy of diverting attention or distraction can be realised through impoliteness, self-impoliteness strategies, and the maxim of relevance and/or quantity. This entails that the emergence of red herring always entails the emergence of the macro strategy of withholding information.

2.3.4 Lying

According to many scholars (e.g., Bradac, 1983; Hopper & Bell, 1984; Miller *et al.*, 1986), lying is one of many types of deception. Following Fallis (2009), lying and the notion of assertion are inseparable. A successful lie must involve the speaker's attempt to assert what they believe to be false in the target. The phenomenon of lying, accordingly, can be analysed in terms of the violation of the maxim of quality for which one should say only what they believe not to be true. As such, one definition of lying is following the maxim of quality of the deceptive principle (see Section 2.5).

The relevant literature reveals different shades of lies: white, red, and blue lies, to name a few. Intuitively speaking, lying is not always perceived as benevolent or prosocial. As a matter of fact, it is essentially connoted with negative meanings. Philosophers have condemned its effects and consequences, much less that some of them did not view white lies as white at all. For this reason, the most archetypal lie, that is, malicious, is labelled hereafter as a black lie. A blue lie, antithetically, is a lie told to benefit a group or a collective, thus, albeit it is typified as deceptive, it can be simultaneously viewed as a prosocial lie (Fu *et al.*, 2008). The term predominately refers to the use of false statements by police, spies, particularly, or any group or a small society as a way to control the subject, elicit confession, protect the force, or simply to bring forth justice. In short, it is a benign kind of lie.

At the other extreme, Granhag and Strömwall (2004) explicate that fabrication involves the act of lying, but it takes a further step in constructing additional layers of false details. Fabricators apt to produce more (visual, spatial, temporal, and auditory) details than liars do. The act of fabrication demands more cognitive effort than lying does. This strategy can be redefined by the researchers as an "*extended or hyperbolised lie*", resultant from malicious intention. In other words, fabrication necessarily results from appealing to hyperbole, metaphor,

and the deceptive maxims of quantity and quality, in addition to one or more categories of SAs. Every time a character employs the strategy of fabrication, they simultaneously employ the strategy of lying. Following the argument grounded on this premise, and in order to avoid excessive overlapping, fabrication will be regarded as a micro strategy for lying. This strategy will be hereafter labelled as a dark lie. Accordingly, the present study will be limited to three micro strategies of lying: dark, black, and blue lies since they are applicable to the selected data.

2.4 Unreliable Narration
Albeit it has been since the 18th century that fiction writers designed an unconventional literary device known as "unreliable narration", the term was first coined by Booth (1960) in his famous *Rhetoric in Fiction* which shaped and prospered the notion of narratology into a discipline. Heyd (2006, p. 225) summarises the concept of unreliable narration in few but efficient words: "*A narrator is unreliable if he violates the CP without intending an implicature.*" It can be said, in simple terms, that one of the salient techniques of unreliable narration is the deviation from pragmatic theories. However, the researchers in this study will propose an argument that a new principle should be designed and followed when deceiving.

2.5 The Deceptive Principle (DP)
In 1967, Grice coined the term cooperative principle[vii] (hereafter CP), which revolves around the idea that when communicating with each other, interlocutors expect certain rules and cultural conventions to be abided by and to govern the conversation. Communicators, as a matter of fact, follow this principle unconsciously. And these rules, of course, vary across cultures. The vital underlying assumption of this principle is that speakers/interlocutors cooperate when they are in the process of conversing so that the communication is seen as successful. Grice (1991, p. 26) narrated his CP in the following way: "*Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle.*" The CP seems to be the central method to demonstrate the manner through which deception has taken place; a person may ignore—or violate, to be more specific, the CP for personal benefit (Galasiński, 2000). It seems that to deceive, a speaker needs to do the exact opposite of what the CP demands.

By drawing on the CP, the researchers will compose a new principle that interlocutors need to respect to achieve a deceptive communication: Make your conversational contribution not as is required, at the stage as you make it occur, by the purpose of direction of the talk exchange in which you evade, ambiguate, and/or vague, whilst withholding your real intentions so as not to be honest or accountable for what you say. One might label this the Deceptive Principle (hereafter DP).

[vii] The four maxims of Grice (1991) can be presented as follows: (i) The maxim of quantity: (a) Make your contribution as informative as is required. (b). Do not make your contribution more informative than as required. (ii). The maxim of quality: (a). Do not say what you believe to be false. (b) Do not say that which you lack adequate evidence. (iii). The maxim of relevance: Be relevant. (iv). The maxim of manner: (a) Avoid obscurity of expression. (b) Avoid ambiguity. (c). Be brief. (d). Be orderly.

A. **The Maxim of Quantity**
1. Do make your contribution as (un)informative (i.e., more or less than is required) as you need to achieve fostering a false belief in the target. Withhold information if needed.
2. Do make your contribution more/less informative than is required. Distort (hyperbolise or downsize) reality if need be.

B. **The Maxim of Quality**
1. Do not hesitate to falsify/fabricate/lie if it serves your argument better.
2. Do not hesitate to plant seeds of doubt, or spread rumours you have no evidence to be true.

C. **The Maxim of Relevance**
Be irrelevant. Do not hesitate to plant red herrings for the purpose of irrelevancy. To achieve this:
1. Evade addressing the heart of the matter or answering questions.
2. Practice self-/other-face threatening act to distract the target's attention.

D. **The Maxim of Manner**
1. Be unclear and indirect. Assign (false) responsibility to others via implying, presupposing, or insinuating.
2. Be ambiguous or vague if you needed to mislead or hide something of truth/relevance.

Figure 1: The four maxims forming the Deceptive Principle (DP)

The deceptive maxims stated in Figure (1) reveals that the nature of the DP is actually parasitic on the CP. On the surface, they must appear cooperative for the act of deceiving cannot be affective without the parameter of covertness. This is precisely what McCornack's (1992) Information Manipulation Theory has concluded: The speaker pretends to adhere to the CP—they are careful not to make their violation apparent to the target for the deception lies in the target thinking the speaker is conforming to the CP whilst, in fact, they are not.

2.6 Searle's Classification of Speech Acts (SAs)

The principal concept of SAs centres on the idea that utterances, either oral or written, are manipulated to achieve communicative intentions or functions. It has been asserted by Austin (1962) that every utterance carries three different kinds of acts: locutionary (the literal meaning), illocutionary (the pragmatic meaning), and perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the actions/thoughts of the hearer). Based on Searle (1969) taxonomy, SAs are of five types (viz., representatives, commissives, directives, declaratives, and expressives). The limitation of this study is bounded by three types: representatives (e.g., asserting and suggesting), expressives (e.g., thanking and apologising), and commissives (e.g., promising and threatening).

2.7 Politeness Theory

According to the view espoused by Brown and Levinson (1987, p.1), politeness is "*a complex system of softening face threats*." Their definition is based on the concept of "face[viii]" whose origin is stemmed from Goffman (1967). Eelen (2001), along similar lines, proposes an unintricate

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[viii] Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61-62) defined "face" as "the public self-image" that must be abided by interlocutors in communication. They, furthermore, dichotomise the concept of face into "negative" and "positive" face. Whilst the former refers to the individual's desires to preserve their independence, the latter denotes the individual's wants to be needed, desired, and liked by others.

definition which revolves around the act of behaving appropriately and according to the H's desires or expectations.

Since Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is well-renowned for its exhaustivity, universality, and feasibility with reference to fiction and non-fiction discourse, it will be adopted for this study. They designed four politeness strategies for conversational communication whereby participants are expected to adhere to them. Only one strategy (i.e., positive politeness) will be taken into consideration for its applicability to the study undertaken.

Positive politeness strategies: the S, through this strategy, directs their speech towards the H's positive face. The strategies are as follows:

a. Claim common ground which includes the following micro strategies
   - Strategy 1: notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods).
   - Strategy 2: exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H.
b. Convey that S and H are cooperators
   - Strategy 1: assert or presuppose S's knowledge and concern for H's wants; offer, promise; be optimistic; include both S and H in the activity; give (or ask for) reasons; assume or reciprocity.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory has focused exclusively on other-oriented politeness whilst no interest has been shown to the fact that speakers evenly need to save their own faces as well.

To fill the gap in their (1987) theory, another model of significance will be added. Chen (2001) provided the notion of self-face, which basically means politeness directed to the self. He argues that self-politeness or self-face refers to cases in communication where the need to shield and enhance one's own face influences the style and the content of what one says. By drawing on Brown and Levinson's model, Chen (2001, p. 96) proposes similar strategies for his model. However, only two strategies are applicable to the selected data of this study:

1) **Withhold the self-face threatening act**: which can be boiled down to being silent altogether. It should be mentioned that this strategy is not discussed in the model that is designed for other-face.
2) **Off record:** This strategy is manipulated when much is at stake. It is realised by the four maxims of the DP.

2.8 Impoliteness

Given that deception is generally proscribed as ethically and morally reprehensible, it is by no means surprising to find deception discussed within a realm that studies manners which cause face-aggravating in specific situations, that is, impoliteness. Deception and all its forms alike have immoral connotations (Saul, 2012), can be perceived as insulting (Williams, 2002), and hence as indicative of impoliteness (Dynel, 2015). Pragmalinguistically, Culpeper (1996) defines impoliteness as an activity that is rendered by a communicative behaviour by the speaker with the intention of insulting someone's face. The concept of face-attack, additionally, is a third element that seems to be mutualised by the two.

The relationship between deception and impoliteness is manifested via Culpeper's (1996) model, whose applicability to fiction was successfully argued, and one strategy of Kaul de Marlangeon and Alba-juez's (2012) model which was essentially developed for a cross-culture

study. Intuitively speaking, both of these models are concerned with the phenomenon of impoliteness. The researchers, however, has neglected the rest of the seven strategies that Marlangeon and Alba-juez have designed because some of them are not feasible with respect to the selected data and the others are already inherited within Culpeper's model.

The next two paragraphs manifest the hybrid taxonomy of impoliteness strategies to be included as part of the eclectic framework for the study in question. The list hereunder demonstrates the two super strategies of Culpeper's (1996) model, followed by their sub-strategies:

i. **Positive impoliteness** – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants. Some of the realisations/output of this strategy are as follows:
   a. *Ignore, snub the other*—deliberately not acknowledging the presence of others, for instance.
   b. *Use taboo words (swear),* or use abusive or profane language.
   c. *Call the other names*—use derogatory nominations.
   d. *Dissociate from the other.*

ii. **Withhold politeness** – the lack of politeness behaviour when it is expected. The output strategies include being unthankful/silent in particular situations.

As for Marlangeon and Alba-juez's (2012) model, the selected super strategy is **self-impoliteness** act which can be described as the participant's use of rudeness or impoliteness towards themself (e.g., I am bloody stupid!). It should be mentioned that there are two aspects relevant to this strategy which are either artificial or authentic. Needless to say, this study is concerned with the artificial aspect. The speaker strategically manipulates their message with the intention of encouraging a face-flattering or saving act which is elicited from the hearer.

This strategy, as a matter of fact, can easily be related to deceptive strategies, particularly those of silence and red herring. Characters can refrain from answering an issue via blaming themselves or shifting the focus to their faults (or to others' faults, for that matter, via positive impoliteness) in order to heighten the attention on a minor or irrelevant issue whilst the major issue (e.g., the deceptive behaviour) goes unnoticed, hence deceiving the target. Hence, a false belief will be encouraged in the target or they will continue to have a false belief. Taboo words, hyperbole, and the expressive SA of blaming and/or criticising are the manifestations of this substrategy.

2.9 Rhetorical Figures of Speech

Stylistic or rhetorical devices, according to the traditional division advanced by Leech (1969), are divided into tropes (foregrounded irregularities of content) and schemes (foregrounded repetition of expression). To put it differently, the former has meanings that are deviated from their forms, whilst the latter operates with the surface level, syntax, sounds, and word order in lieu of the meaning of word/sentence. This study, therefore, confines itself to the stylistic devices which are related to the level of pragmatics only, that is rhetorical tropes. All the following devices cause pragmatic deviation from the linguistic code.

2.9.1 Metaphor

Leech (1969) conceptualises metaphor as having three main parts: tenor (the literal part which is under discussion), vehicle (the image or analogue in terms of which tenor is represented), and the ground (the commonness between the vehicle and the tenor). For further illustration, it can be said that every metaphor is implicitly of the form X is like Y in respect of Z, where X is the tenor, Y is the vehicle, and Z the ground. Metaphor, in these terms, Leech (1969, p. 151) further adds, "*may be seen as a pretence—making believe that tenor and vehicle are identical.*"

2.9.2 Hyperbole

The main function of hyperbole is to emphasise an idea. However, it is also used to compare two entities, for ironic, metaphoric, or metonymic effect. This indicates that these literary devices can overlap with each other. In terms of pragmatics, hyperbole is centred on the deceptive maxim of quantity and quality for it misrepresents the truth by overstating (Leech, 1969).

2.10 Presuppositions

According to Levinson (1983), presupposition is what the speaker(s) believes is true and its referent is known by the hearer(s). In other words, it involves creating an utterance which would require certain conditions in order to be appropriately valid. However, not all conditions of presuppositions are true. Marrelli and Castelfranchi (1981, p. 763) conceptualise untruthful presuppositions as a type of pretending, "*or behaving as-if.*" This strategy is of important relevance to the concept of deception and, thus, needs to be included as part of the analytical framework for analysing the data under study.

Levinson (1983) offered a list of presupposition triggers. For this research, only the ones that are applicable to the data are going to be included. They are as follows: (i) factive verbs. For further orderliness, Huang (2006) divides this category into epistemic/cognitive verbs (e.g., know) and emotive factives (e.g., regret). (ii) counterfactual conditionals.

Levinson (1983), however, neglected an important presupposition trigger (i.e., lexical). The following one is proposed by Yule (2011): (iv) Lexical (verbs, adverbs, adjectives) presuppositions, such as "*again,*" "*managed,*" etc. Lyons (1977), moreover, avers that there are cases, albeit manifest presupposition, they do not have distinctive triggers. In such cases, what is presupposed should be inferred from the context of situation only.

2.11 Relevance theory

Relevance theory was developed by Sperber and Wilson (1995). It is a cognitive theory which has risen from their dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of Grice's CP. Their prime criticism centres on the many interpretations that any utterance can render with no explanation of what simulates a hearer to choose one interpretation amongst many. As a reaction, Sperber and Wilson developed a cognitive theory which is thoroughly based on the maxim of relation. They (1995, p. 270) state that "*the ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences.*"

Deception, in relevance theory, is considered as a double cognitive constraint taking advantage of the intrinsic fallibility of information processing devices. In other words, it performs cognitive constraints to verify that certain logical inputs are better processed than

other ones. The meeting point between deception and relevance theory is perceptible when a specific true piece of information or logical input is made epistemically weaker and less accessible whilst the favourable information is presented to be epistemically stronger and more accessible relevance theory and presupposition work hand-in-hand to expose deceptive strategies, particularly that of equivocation (Oswald, 2014, as cited in Kuzio, 2018).

2.12 The Linguistic Characteristics of Gender and Interaction

Academically, the noun "gender" refers to socially constructed identity rather than a biological category. The noun "gender" is exploited in discussions of cultural or social understandings of the differences between males and females (Herk, 2012). Lakoff (1973), whose work has a major influence in the field of sociolinguistics, authored a book *Language and Women's Place* (1973) in which she exhaustively demonstrated that women's language is different from that of men. The study undertaken is limited to four aspects of Lakoff's observations:

1) Women use extremely polite terms and avoid strong swear words in comparison to men.
2) Women tend to employ intensifiers more than men.
3) Women are less direct (more hesitant) than men.
4) Women do not express their emotions as freely as men do.

2.13 Psychological Thriller: Flynn's *Gone Girl* (2012)

Psychological thriller has a long history, which originates in the Newgate sensation novels and Gothic genre. According to Mecholsky (2014), what ultimately prompted the rise of psychological thriller was the three historical trends which took place in the last two centuries: "*Gothic fiction, Freudian psychoanalysis and psychological realism in fiction, and mass-market publishing*" (2014, p. 3). To identify this sub-genre of crime fiction, Mecholsky provides a list of characteristics which includes (i) unreliable narrators, (ii) serial killers, (iii) revenge plots, (iv) unexpected plot twists, (v) psychotic or psychopathic protagonists/antagonists, (investigators), and (vi) graphic scenes which depict ruthlessness and psychological torture, etc. The last characteristic is differently expounded by the argument which claims that stylistic features, such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, etc. are psychological thriller-specific, compared to the classic detective fiction (Howard & Todorov, 1977). Mecholsky further avers that the above-listed patterns and themes have become most perceptible in America in the 21th century. Following the premise grounded on these characteristics, it seems that the sub-genre psychological thriller is feasible to accomplish the objectives of the present study.

Flynn's *Gone Girl* (2012) is situated within contemporary literature, under the category of psychological thriller/whodunnit. Briefly speaking, *Gone Girl* depicts a story of a married couple: Amy who works as a writer and has a master's degree in psychology, and Nick who is also a writer. The underlying theme is that relationships or people are not what they seem/appear to be, which is regarded as of utmost importance/value to the concept of deception. On the morning of the fifth wedding anniversary, Amy disappears from home. After investigating the house yet in vein, Nick calls the police to solve the mystery of his wife's disappearance. The police reach to the conclusion that all the clues and evidence direct them to accuse Nick of being the murderer. When discovering the hidden fact that Nick has a mistress and was about to file for divorce, it has been settled that the cloud of suspicion is supported by a motive. It turns out that,

in later pages, that Amy is neither murdered nor kidnapped. She confesses to readers that she has spent two years plotting for her "seemingly" murder and frame Nick as a killer. After having a closer look at Amy's behaviour and her previous life, Nick and readers become exposed to a new aspect of her that was unnoticed, which is that Amy is a psychopath. When she discovers her husband's infidelity, she begins to scheme committing self-murder in Mississippi, since the law there legislates a death penalty for committing a first-degree murder, and frame it on Nick. To accomplish her mission, she has invented and fictionalised many evidences, such writing a diary and inserting many false events to distort Nick's image. In one of the entries, she has written "*'This man might kill me,*" (Flynn, 2012, p. 380) and "*Domestic Abuser*" (Flynn, 2012, p. 196) in a reference to Nick—as two examples. Although Nick is selfish and unfaithful, he has never physically abused her. Amy changes her plan, at the end of the novel, murders an innocent person (her friend Desi) in order to support her new fabricated story, and returns home. She resumes to practice deception on the two levels of discourse (viz., N-RL and C-CL) unceasingly even after her confession of framing Nick and murdering Desi to readers and her husband.

2.14 Psychopathy

Based on a recent study published by the psychologist Johnson (2019), the phenomenon of psychopathy was first conceptualised by Checkley and refined by Hare *et al.* (1989). It is, on their view, an antisocial personality disorder. They have proposed a tool to measure the idiosyncratic behaviour of a psychopathic personality. This tool is labelled as Hare Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (hereafter PCL - R) which is referred to as the gold standard for assessing psychopathy. Hare's PCL - R offers twenty items that are supported by a solid ground of empirical studies. Most of these items can be listed below:

1) Pathological liars and manipulators.
2) Minimal if any sense of remorse.
3) Not bonding with anyone, though manipulation and cunning may give the opposite impression.
4) Tendency to be aggressive and violent.
5) Charming, charismatic, and conning.
6) Too arrogant and self-centric.
7) Showing criminal behaviour.
8) Showing no intimate emotion.

Following Hare's *et al.* (1989) PCL - R, readers can easily identify Amy, the antagonist from *Gone Girl* (2012), as a psychopathic character. As a matter of fact, many clinicians, as have been shown in Section (1) have argued that Amy has the condition of being a psychopath. During the discussion of the analysis, that is, Section (5) the researchers will resort to Hare's PCL – R to advance a more well-presented argument, hence a better conclusion.

3. Methodology

In order to design this article in a succinct manner as much as possible, there is no need to repeat what has already been discussed. Based on a pilot study that the researchers have conducted, all the pragma-stylistic tools that have been proposed in the previous Section constitute the

eclectic conceptual framework for analysing the data undertaken. To differently phrase this in synopsis, the analytical framework includes the following linguistic tools:

1) The DP which is modelled on Grice's (1969) CP.
2) Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory.
3) Chen's (2001) self-politeness.
4) Culpepper's (1996) impoliteness.
5) Marlangeon and Alba-juez's (2012) self-impoliteness.
6) Levinson's (1983) and Yule's (2012) presupposition.
7) Searle's (1969) taxonomy of SAs.
8) Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory.
9) Leech's (1969) metaphor and hyperbole.

Due to the imperfections of other taxonomies, the researchers decided to develop an eclectic taxonomy of deception, as it is apparent in the Section of literature review, that is feasible for the selected data. The hybrid taxonomy of deception includes the following four macro and micro strategies: lying (dark, black and blue lies), withholding information, red herring (evasion and distraction), and equivocation.

Since the data is in the form of words, the research design is a qualitative one. Having said that, the Section of discussion the findings will be initiated by a table supported by statistics for the sake of intensifying clarity and systematicity.

The process of searching for a workable data has been very laborious because of the vagueness of the literary term "*unreliable narrator*." The majority of contemporary psychological thrillers, based on the researchers' observation, depict unreliable narrators that are categorised as narrators who suffer from delusions, alcoholism, insomnia, psychotic breaks, etc. who do not represent conscious deceivers since the argument espoused in this study is based on the premise that intentionality is a parameter of deception. None of foregoing narrators have consciousness, ergo they are not deceivers. Accordingly, since *Gone Girl* (2012) is one of the few novels that depict a sufficient number of deceptive utterances on C-CL and N-RL, and because it is narrated by two alternative unreliable narrators, it has been selected to be the data for this study.

Flynn (1971-), who is a journalist, crime fiction writer, and a scriptwriter, is renowned for employing a pattern of themes in her novels: physical and psychological abuse, lies and secrets, violence, unreliable narrators, the falsely "*innately good*" women. These reasons prompted the researchers to investigate her works. After reading her popular novels, viz., *Sharp Objects* (2006) and *Dark Places* (2009), and after conducting a pilot analysis, it seems that her most popular *Gone Girl* is, in actual fact, the most suitable novel to be selected for the present study.

This Section is finalised by two important notes concerning the procedures of analysis so as not to develop confusion on the part of readers whilst going through the Section of analysis.

1) The symbol >> equals/represents "presuppose."
2) Each utterance or related utterances, according to the researchers' interpretation, will be given numbers in superscript format in order to refer to them as representations of the utterances in question instead of re-writing pieces of the extract whenever needed, hence save space.
3) Square brackets are used to enclose material such as symbols, explanation, or addition that the researchers have inserted in a quotation.

4. Data Analysis

This Section is specified for analyzing the selected data by drawing on the eclectic framework that has been discussed in the previous Sections.

Extract -1-: C-CL: During/Post-Dénouncement Stage

Yes, I fucking yelled [N. 1]. I am a complete coward [N. 2]. And if I'd known that, every night for the next month, Desi was going to rape me, then snuggle in next to me with a martini and a sleeping pill so he wouldn't be awakened by my *sobbing* [N.3a], and that the police were going to actually interview him and *still* not have a clue, still sit around with their thumps up their asses [N.3b], I might have yelled harder [N. 3c]. Yes, I might have [N.4] (Flynn, 2012, p. 380).

Contextualisation of Extract -1-

Amy, in the above-cited extract, is being interrogated in the hospital by detective Boney concerning who, how, and why she was kidnapped, etc. The time of the event is after Amy's arrival and pretence that she had been kidnapped and raped by Desi. The detective asks Amy if she has yelled when and after she was held captive so that people can hear her, hence offer help or call the police. Amy, at this point, responds aggressively.

Analysis of Extract -1-

Amy is inserting a taboo word in the form of expletive attributive (i.e., "fucking") between two slots (i.e., "I […] yelled"). To be more specific, it is a padding word that attributes no meaning to the sentence but to display more intensification or aggravation, hence hyperbole [N.1]. Although she has answered the question, notwithstanding falsely, Amy uses this strategy to divert readers' attention [N.1]. Through the representative SA, she "insincerely" asserts that she has "yelled," which leads to the deceptive strategy of "lying"—a "dark lie" particularly since she is trying to evoke a false belief which is coupled with the effect of hyperbole in the hearer for malicious purposes [N.1]. Moreover, the formation of the dark lie is based on following the deceptive maxim of quality [N.1].

Amy resumes to produce another utterance whereby she endeavours to divert the hearer's attention (i.e., detective Boney and the police) [N.2]. This is achieved via appealing to self-impoliteness; she is deliberately describing herself as "coward" to arise hearers' emotions of pity, thus morphing their suspicion into sympathy [N.2]. By adding the adjective "complete" as an intensifier, she is introducing a "dark lie" because she never thought of herself as a being "complete" nor semi "coward" for that matter. In fact, Amy repeatedly shows on the two levels of discourse: N-RL and C-CL—specifically to her husband that she admires her cunning self and the entire scheme she has devised, particularly in the scene where she privately and proudly confesses to Nick the mechanism via which she has fabricated everything and murdered Desi: "You have to admit, it's pretty brilliant […] I mean you have to admit it just a little" (Flynn, 2012, p.). As such, she is, again, employing an insincere SA of insulting and appealing to the maxim of quality [N.2].

Here, Amy heavily exploits the pragma-stylistic tool of presupposition in a complicated manner to evoke in the receiver a series of false beliefs [N.3a; N.3b; N.3c]. The first presupposition is triggered by the counterfactual conditional as it is evident below:

[I]f I'd known that, every night for the next month, Desi was going to rape me, then snuggle in next to me with a martini and a sleeping pill so he wouldn't be awakened by my *sobbing*, and that the police were going to actually interview him and *still* not have a clue, still sit around with their thumps up their asses, I might have yelled harder.

>> I did not know that…Desi was going to rape me…. [= X^{ix}]

Secondly, following the presupposition mentioned above, she incorporates another presupposition within the first one which will be referred to as X. The former, that is, X, is triggered by the cognitive verb "know":

X >> Desi raped me, then snuggle in next to me with a martini and a sleeping pill so he wouldn't be awakened by my *sobbing*…

Because Desi never "raped" her, this is a false/deceptive presupposition which leads to lying which, in turn, follows the maxim of quality [N.3a; N.3b; N.3c].

The third presupposition is triggered by the comparative (lexical) adjective "harder":

"[i]f I'd known that […] I might have yelled harder."

>> I yelled (hard).

Since Amy has never "yelled," she is actually producing a black lie, thence appealing to the first maxim of quality [N.3c].

Finally, she re-employs the same trigger, that is, the comparative (lexical) adjective "harder," to evoke another untruthful presupposition:

[N.4] = "Yes, I might have [yelled harder]."

>> I yelled (hard); I yelled but not hard enough.

Because she repeats the same clause "I might have" along two utterances, she deceives the receiver through a hyperbolised lie (i.e., a dark lie) which centres on appealing to the first maxim of quality [N.4].

In [3.b], Amy is repeating the same adverb "still" twice for emphasis, which provokes the emergence of the PRT hyperbole. She also exploits the positive impoliteness strategy by attacking the positive face of the detective and the police via the output taboo words and profane language which are represented by the sequence of words "their thumps up their asses." This tool brings about the violation of the sincerity condition of the expressive SA of blaming, and the appeal to the deceptive maxims of quality and relevance since she is defocusing the relevant argument via focusing on irrelevant matters that hold no truth as a strategy to divert the opponent's attention. All the just-mentioned pragma-stylistic tools arise the micro deceptive strategy a "dark lie."

Extract -2-: N-RL: Pre-Dénouncement Stage

I won't get an abortion [N. 1a] and I won't divorce Nick, not yet [N. 1b], […] and I'd think, *I am so lucky, this is my husband, this man will be the father of my children* [N. 2]. *We'll all be so happy* [N. 3]. But I may be wrong, I may be very wrong [N. 4]. Because sometimes, the way he looks at me? [N. 5a] That

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ix To avoid excessive repetition, the researchers decided to use the letter X to refer to the already-mentioned presupposition with regard to the utterance under discussion.

sweet boy from the beach, man of my dreams, father of my child? [N. 5b] I catch him looking at me [N.6a] with those watchful eyes [N.6b], the eyes of an insect [N.6c], pure calculation [N.6d], and I think: *This man might kill me* [N.6e]. So if you find this and I'm dead, well … [N.7] (Flynn, 2012, p. 205)

Contextualisation of Extract -2-

Amy, in the aforementioned lines, is foreshadowing to readers the themes of pregnancy and abortion. She claims that Nick will demand her to abort the baby once he discovers she is pregnant because he abhors having children. She also insinuates that her husband is plotting a method to murder her. All of her claims, nevertheless, are false.

Analysis of Extract -2-

The opening of this extract starts with a first-person pronoun + future modal verb + negation which function, in conjunction with the context, as triggers for a presupposition:
[N.a1] = "I won't get an abortion."
>> I am pregnant and there is an external force that threatens me to abort my child.

For more elaboration, the future modal verb "will" falsely >> that she is pregnant at the moment, and the negation "not" also falsely >> that she refuses to abort the child. The "refusal," moreover, as Amy claims, is resultant from her husband's dissatisfaction with having children. However, as it is revealed later, Nick wanted to have children and it was Amy who refused to. Following this train of thought, Amy is practicing deception via producing a black lie which appeals to the deceptive maxim of quality and the hybrid representative-commissive SA of assertion-refusal since there is a violation of the sincerity condition [N.1a]. The perlocutionary effect is to get the readers to believe that she is not resentful towards Nick nor is she mad at him even after she has erected a negative image of him in her diary. Rather, albeit hesitant, she is trying her best to think of him positively.

In [N.2] and [N.3], Amy expresses her gratitude and happiness in a direct SA when she describes—or rather praises—her husband from her memory. She feels elated because he is a great husband and will equally be a great father—as it is claimed in the passage. The truth is Amy does not find herself "so lucky" for, in her opinion, he is not a better equal of her. Accordingly, [N.2] commences with a violation of the sincerity condition of the representative SA of asserting and reporting since this event did not happen in the past. Following this train of thought, there is also a commission of the micro strategy dark lie which is based on the second sub strategy (exaggerate) of the first mechanism (claim common ground) of positive politeness, the violation of the sincerity condition of the expressive SA of gratitude, and the appeal to the deceptive maxim of quality. The second sub strategy of positive politeness is realised by the PRT of hyperbole which is manifested by the intensifier "so."

On the same line, the utterance "[T]his man will be the father of my children" falsely >> that Amy is willing to have children. This issues a black lie which is centred on the deceptive maxim of quality, the violation of the sincerity condition of representative SA, along with presupposition. Having said that, she begins [N.5] with a "but" which shows a contrast. In [N.4], she repeats the clause "I may be wrong" twice for emphasis and in the second time, she adds the intensifier "very" for extra hyperbolic effect.

Similarly, in [N.5b], Amy exploits the adjective "sweet" to foreground a positive description of her husband via appealing to violating the sincerity condition of the expressive SA of praising, appealing to the first strategy, that is, attend to the hearer's needs and goods of the first mechanism (claim common ground) of positive politeness, and finally, appealing to the deceptive maxim of quality. During writing the diary, Amy was ignited with anger and did not have room in her heart to compliment Nick. One interpretation of this could be that Amy wants readers to know that she innocently loves him, yet all the question marks at the end of utterances suggest a growing feeling of uncertainty towards Nick. Her aim is to deceptively make readers aware of the new fearful Nick.

In [N.6b; N.6c; N.6d], Amy is flouting the maxim of quality in order to generate a deceptive implicature, namely, metaphor. In most cases, the vision of insects and that of mammals are extremely poles apart. The former has large compound eyes located on either side of their head. Instead of having one eye, they have thousands of tiny light detectors packed closely together. Having innumerable mini-eyes allow them to possess a very large view angle and a better ability to detect fast and meticulous movement. Upon the light of this fact, the tenor is Nick's eyes, the vehicle is "the eyes of insect" and the ground is the acute and the penetrative way of seeing or watching the target or the prey or Amy—in this case. She is evincing via the metaphor that her husband is calculating her moves, studying her, and is ready to be a threat and prey on her life any time soon. The metaphor is based on appealing to the deceptive maxim of quality. In brief, in the sequence of [N.5a; N.5b; N.6a; N.6b; N.6c; N.6e], Amy is violating the sincerity condition by producing the representative SA of justifying-describing whilst justifying the claim she has brought forth with regard to the danger that Nick is allegedly creating. In these utterances, Amy is also fabricating facts by describing Nick's recent behaviour towards her. Thence, Amy is producing a dark lie.

In [N.6e], Amy's punctilious choice of the noun "man" can be interpreted as vaguing her husband's identity. The purpose of this choice of word is to psychologically estrange and distance Nick as a close person and a husband from her. This, in fact, is an output (distance from the other) of the super strategy positive impoliteness. She resumes finishing the sentence "might kill me," which is a black lie based on violating the sincerity condition of the representative SA of attributing and claiming and following the deceptive maxim of quality.

Her incomplete utterance in [N.7] displays a string of presuppositions which are triggered by (i) the connector "so" which demonstrates that what is about to say is based on the previous statements, particularly [N.6e]; (ii) the zero conditional "if" which is based on the equation "if p is true, then a particular q is *definitely* true" and (iii) the pragmatic interpretation of the interjection along with the subsequent pause "well [+] …":

The utterance "So if you find this and I'm dead, well …"

>> Three connected possibilities:

   i.   you might find the diary;
   ii. and that I am dead when you find it;
   iii. and most importantly, if you found the diary and I am dead, you should know that it was my husband who killed me.

Albeit the first two presuppositions are true since her initial plan was to murder herself, the third one is the false belief that she has attempted to insert in the receiver. Accordingly, Amy

is communicating a black lie which is centred on appealing to the deceptive maxim of quality and violating the sincerity condition of the representative SA of concluding. The perlocutionary effect is to insinuate a false belief in readers that if they have found her dead, then they should know that the culprit is her husband.

Extract -3-: N-RL + C-CL

'Have you ever hurt Amy, has Amy ever mentioned you threatening her? [N.1]' Marybeth ticked off [N.2]. 'Are you a womanizer, has Amy ever mentioned you cheating on her? [N.3] Because that sounds like Amy, right [N.4]? I told them we didn't raise a doormat [N.5].'

Rand put a hand on my shoulder [N.6]. 'Nick, what we should have said, first of all, is: We know you would never, ever hurt Amy [N.7]. I even told the police, told them the story about you saving the mouse at the beach house, saving it from the glue trap [N.8].' He looked over at Marybeth as if she didn't know the story, and Marybeth obliged with her rapt attention [N.9]. 'Spent an hour trying to corner the damn thing, and then literally drove the little rat bastard out of town [N.10]. Does that sound like a guy who would hurt his wife [N.11]? I felt a burst of intense guilt, self-loathing [N.12]. I thought for a second I might cry, finally [N.13]. (Flynn, 2012, p. 79)

Contextualisation of Extract -3-

In the above-cited extract, Amy's parents are questioning Nick if he has ever committed adultery. Nick, at this point, keeps silent and leaves their suspicion unanswered. Immediately thereafter, they, that is, Amy's parents, particularly Rand, started to indirectly apologise to Nick about the implicit and explicit accusations. Nick, in three more instances, chooses not to respond.

Analysis of Extract -3-

Albeit the above extract does not exhibit many deceptive strategies—relatively speaking, it represents two important ones, which depict the style Nick frequently resorts to in order to practice deception. When Marybeth asks him if he has ever cheated on their daughter, he responds with silence. She asks the same question (i.e., have you ever hurt or cheated on our daughter) several times, yet keeps paraphrasing it every time. The interrogative utterances in [N.1; N.3; N.4: N.5] demand declarative utterances on Nick's part. Since there are no apparent pauses between Marybeth's questions, it seems that Nick did not have the opportunity to answer her. However, it is also apparent that after the interrogative utterance [N.5], Nick did have the opportunity to address her question honestly, yet he decided to verbally ignore her. Following this train of thought, by deliberately not acknowledging or addressing Marybeth's questions, he practices the micro deceptive strategy of silence which is realised by the strategy of positive impoliteness, which, in turn, is triggered by the first output: "ignore, sub the other."

Amy's parents move from accusing Nick to showing that they truly trust him and they are incapable of thinking in a fashion that makes him appear as a suspect since he has never revealed to them and to Amy anything but kindness and deference [N.7; N. 8; N.10; N.11]. For the second time, Nick keeps silent. What they have inferred from his silence is that he is honest and faithful. Later, it appears that he indeed has a mistress, which leads to construe the act of silence as a micro deceptive strategy that is used to withhold important and relevant

information. Pragma-stylistically, this is realised by presupposition since the act of silence >> two interpretations:

1) By drawing on truth bias[x], the other characters (i.e., Amy's parents) take everything Nick utters at face value unless he clearly states the opposite. Put differently, taking into consideration their background knowledge concerning Nick's faithfulness and noble characteristics, they interpret the act of silence as a refutation of the explicit accusation. In short, the first interpretation implicates the premise which states that Nick is faithful in his marriage. Hence, the apparent illocutionary force that silence holds here functions as a representative SA of approval/agreement [N.8; N.11].

2) After revealing the truth in later pages, it is confirmed that a second interpretation of Nick's silence means that he is guilty of adultery with his student, Andie. This truth, nevertheless, holds a weakly implicated conclusion. As such, the true unfavourable (i.e., deliberately hidden) illocutionary force of silence from a SAT viewpoint is expressing guilt/self-disgrace [N.8; N.11].

Based on these grounds, it can be deduced that Nick has been practicing deception via the macro strategy of equivocation and the act of silence which is a realization of withholding information. In other words, the micro strategy of silence is pragma-stylistically realised by appealing to the presupposition, relevance theory, self-politeness which is realised by withholding the face threatening self-face, and finally, the deceptive maxims of manner and quantity.

The deceptive strategy of equivocation is realised by the relevance theory and the deceptive maxim of manner. The first interpretation, albeit untruthful, is the most relevant one. The second interpretation, which is the truthful one, is the informative intention. However, because the second one is considered as weak in terms of relevancy, it is abandoned by the hearers, that is, Amy's parents.

As for N-RL, Nick, in [N.2; N.6; N.9] is reporting true events, but his conduct is not compatible with a reliable narrator since he decided to put forth an utterance that is irrelevant to the argument "in comparison" to sharing with readers that he has a mistress indeed. It is a covert type of evasion since, albeit he semantically failed to provide answers to readers, Nick simultaneously manipulated his utterances to make them sound as cooperative, yet they are implicitly evasive. Accordingly, Nick is appealing to the deceptive maxims of quantity and relevance, which bring forth the micro strategies half-truth and evasion.

In producing the utterances [N.7; N.8: N.10; N.11], Rand is communicating the SA of praising. He has shown to Nick that they (Amy's parents) have trust and faith in him. After the utterances [N.8; N.9], Nick has had two opportunities to take a turn in the conversation in order to communicate the SA of expressing thanks and appreciation. He, however, decides to act against the expectations and show the absence of a politeness work by being utterly silent on C-CL. This, as a matter of fact, is a deceptive micro strategy of distraction which is pragma-

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[x] Truth bias is a jargon that is used in the deception literature. Following Buller and Burgoon (2006), it simply refers to the unconscious predisposition to judge people's statements as honest, clear, direct, complete, and relevant even if the other party is deceiving them. It is assumed that the targets or deceivees usually make decisions based upon the least cognitive work after receiving the interpersonal message. It is also argued that the closer the interlocutors are—as in the case of Nick and Amy's parents, the more they unconsciously grow truth-biased.

stylistically realised by appealing to the super strategy of withholding politeness, and the deceptive maxims relevance and quantity.

In the last two lines, Nick switches to communicate deception on N-RL. What he says in [N.12; N.13] is true, yet by not revealing the entire truth, he has intentionally led readers to develop a false interpretation. As a matter of fact, Nick, here, is practicing deception by drawing on more than one deceptive strategy. Firstly, the two lines [N.12; N.13] >> two interpretations, and one of them is false:

1) Since Nick's infidelity was not revealed until page 142 to both readers and characters, except for Amy as she knew from the beginning of the novel, and the current page of the above-cited extract is 79, this disallows readers to accuse Nick as an adulterer—or at least disables them to reach to the level of certainty that he actually is an adulterer. By drawing on the context, background knowledge, and truth-bias, it seems that the most optimal, relevant, and less effort-demanding interpretation for readers is as follows: Nick is experiencing "self-loathing" and "guilt" because he could not protect his wife. He was not around when the mystery of her disappearance took place.

2) After realizing the truth, that is, Nick is an adulterer, readers can finally realise that the two lines [N.12; N.13] has a second true unfavourable interpretation: Nick is experiencing "self-loathing" and "guilt" because he is an adulterer indeed. Albeit true, this is the least implicated conclusion for the same reasons mentioned in the first interpretation.

Based on the cognitive principle, for readers, it is the first false interpretation that is most relevant. Nick purposely transfers his communicative intention via the first interpretation and veils the second interpretation which is the informative or the real intention. He is not ready to confess the truth because he is afraid of others' reaction towards him. As such, Nick is communicating deception on N-RL by exploiting the macro strategies of equivocation and withholding information. The former is realised by presupposition, relevance theory, the deceptive maxim of manner, and self-politeness. The latter is triggered by the super strategy off-record which, in turn, is realised by the deceptive maxim of manner.

Extract -4-: C-CL

'What would you say to your wife, if she is possible out there, able to see and hear you tonight [N.1]?' 'I'd say: Amy, I love you [N.2]. You are the best woman I have ever known [N.3]. You are more than I deserve [N.4], and if you come back, I will spend the rest of my life making it up to you [N.5]. We will find a way to pull all this horror behind us [N.6], and I will be the best man in the world to you [N.7]. Please come home to me, Amy [N.8].' (Flynn, 2012, p. 351)

Contextualisation of Extract -4-

After being kidnapped, the story of Amy has been virally spread over the media since she is a famous person. Because all the evidence steers the guilt and suspicion towards Nick, the police and the people of America started to hate him and wanted him to be behind bars. His sister and his lawyer, who are the only people Nick has confided in, decided to make a plan to convince Amy to show up, ergo save Nick whose life is in jeopardy. The plan was teaching Nick how to choose effective words and preparing him to be interviewed by a powerful figure, Sharon, on the most famous show in America to grab Amy's and the audience's attention. The aim is to

persuade Amy that he is obedient and to calm the people's wrath down. As such, the above extract is not an improvised speech. Rather, it is a very well pre-prepared one.

Analysis of Extract -4-

In [N.2], Nick exploits the hybrid SA of expressive and representative. By seemingly expressing his state of emotion towards Amy and simultaneously asserting it, he violates the sincerity condition since he has developed feelings of hatred towards her, especially after discovering the entire scheme she has cunningly plotted; hence, the SA, in this case, is considered as abuse. The perlocutionary effect is to practice deception on more than one character, but the main focus is on Amy. She, as a matter of fact, does not care if he is incompletely honest as long as he is behaving in a manner that she likes. Amy needs him to be the obedient husband who acts in accordance to her demands. However, the utterance [N.2] is successful in terms of persuading Amy to alter her original plan and decide to get back home. The same utterance [N.2], moreover, appeals to the deceptive maxim of quality. Accordingly, the hybrid SA of expressive-representative and the appeal to the deceptive maxim of quality bring forth the macro strategy of lying. It should be taken into consideration that, in the extract in question, Nick's attempt of communicating deception is out of other- and, particularly, self-protection. He is fully aware that his life is in jeopardy if she does not reveal herself. Nick is seeking for justice in this instance. Following this train of thought, the micro strategy of lying is a blue lie since it is based on benign intention and the need of protection from a criminal psychopath.

The following utterances [N.3; N.4] also represent blue lies which are realised by appealing to the deceptive maxim of quality and the violation of the sincerity condition of the expressive SA of praising. In addition, there is an apparent appeal to the super strategy of positive politeness which is triggered by the second sub strategy of exaggerating. The latter is manifested by the PRT hyperbole which is, in turn, triggered by the intensifying modifier "best" and the comparative adjective "more", respectively.

In a similar vein, [N.5] evinces deception via the micro strategy of a blue lie. This is manifested by appealing to the deceptive maxim of quality and the second mechanism of positive politeness which is "convey that speakers and hearers are cooperators." The output, however, is violating the sincerity condition of the commissive SA of promising: "if [..] I will spend the rest of my life making it up to you." Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 125) maintain that "[o]ffers and promises are the natural outcome of choosing this strategy [of positive politeness]; even if they are *false* [emphasis added]."

Similarly, the utterances [N.6; N.7] appeal to the deceptive maxim of quality, and the second mechanism of positive politeness which is triggered by the violation of the sincerity condition of commissive SA of promising since he has no intention to commit to his promises. Rather, he is trying to persuade her in a deceptive fashion to spare him and reveal herself. Utterance [N.7] is different from the [N.6] in that there is also an appeal to the first mechanism of positive politeness which is manifested by the second sub strategy, that is, exaggerating. The PRT hyperbole is exhibited by the clause "the best man in the world" as an output. All the pragma-stylistic tools previously mentioned bring forth the micro deceptive strategy of blue lie.

As for the final utterance [N.8], it is rather complex to interpret for it evokes prolific deceptive strategies and pragma-linguistic tools. Firstly, Nick is communicating deception via

the macro strategy of withholding information which is put forth by the deceptive maxim of quantity. Nick is telling the truth in as much he wants Amy to get back home, yet he is not showing his real intention or reason behind his request. Secondly, [N.8] >> two interpretations:

1) "Please come home to me, Amy [because I love you and care about you.]"
2) "Please come home to me, Amy [so as to save myself from death penalty and try to reveal your psychopathic self to the police.]"

According to the cognitive principle, the first, not the second, interpretation is the one that is inferred by hearers (the interviewer and the audience) and Amy because, by drawing on context, it is the most optimal interpretation albeit false. Any other interpretation would require more cognitive labour. Because it holds no truth, the first interpretation is considered as a blue lie based on the deceptive maxim of quality.

5. Discussion of the Findings

It is worth to note at this point that many terms pertained to the tools employed in the foregoing Section will be abbreviated in order to fit into Table (2). After inserting the tables, which illustrate the frequencies of the deceptive strategies and the pragma-stylistic tools, the abbreviated terms will be expounded into their original forms. The list of abbreviations includes the following terms:

- Maxim of quality $\Rightarrow$ qual.
- Maxim of quantity $\Rightarrow$ quan.
- Maxim of relevance $\Rightarrow$ R
- Maxim of manner $\Rightarrow$ M
- Politeness theory $\Rightarrow$ PT
- Positive Politeness $\Rightarrow$ + P
- Withhold-self face threatening act $\Rightarrow$ W-SFTA
- Untruthful presupposition $\Rightarrow$ UP
- Relevance theory $\Rightarrow$ RT
- Impoliteness $\Rightarrow$ IMP
- Positive impoliteness $\Rightarrow$ + IMP
- Representative SA $\Rightarrow$ Rep.
- Commissive SA $\Rightarrow$ Com.
- Expressive SA $\Rightarrow$ Exp.
- Directive SA $\Rightarrow$ Dir.

Table 1: Macro and Micro Deceptive Strategies in the Selected Extracts

			Amy		Nick	
			N-RL	C-CL	N-RL	C-CL
			Pre-dénouncement	During/Post-dénouncement		
Macro and Micro Deceptive Strategies	Lying	Blue Lie	0	0	0	7
		Black Lie	5	8	0	0
		Dark Lie	5	9	0	0
	Withholding Information	Silence	0	0	0	4
		Half-truths	0	0	5	0
	Red Herring	Distraction	0	2	0	2
		Evasion	0	0	2	0
	Equivocation		0	0	2	4
	Total		10	19	11	15

Table 2: Pragma-Stylistic Tools of the Selected Extracts

			Amy		Nick	
			N-RL	C-CL	N-RL	C-CL
			Pre-dénouncement	During/post-dénouncement		
Pragma-Stylistic Tools	PRTs	Hyperbole	2	4	0	4
		Metaphor	1	0	0	0
	DP	R	0	3	2	0
		M	0	0	1	2
		Quan.	0	2	5	2
		Qual.	12	7	0	6
	SAT	Com.	1	0	0	3
		Exp.	1	3	0	3
		Rep.	7	2	0	7
	Self-IMP		0	1	0	0
	IMP	W-P	0	0	0	1
		+IMP	0	3	0	1
	Self-Politeness	W-SFTA	0	0	0	2
		Off record	0	0	3	0
	PT	+P	2	0	0	5
	RT		0	0	1	5
	UP		5	4	1	3

The pragma-stylistic tools of DP, SAs, PRTs, politeness, impoliteness, etc. have been, generally speaking, employed by both characters. Nevertheless, some of these tools (e.g., politeness and impoliteness) have been employed in some of the selected extracts and unemployed in other extracts. Table (2) demonstrates that the most frequent macro deceptive strategy in the case of Amy is lying. As for the micro strategies of lying, it seems that black lies score the highest frequency, immediately followed by dark lies. This can denote a very important aspect of Amy's personality: she deceives both on N-RL and C-CL in the following manner:

1) Unhesitatingly since lying is the most blatant and straightforward manner to deceive.
2) Creatively via producing dark lies since, in these utterances, she is providing extra visual vividness and stronger stylistic effect on the reader via PRTs.

The deceptiveness of Amy's style reflects her psychopathic personality as, according to Hare *et al.* (1989), psychopaths practice deception pathologically and intelligently with no sign of guilt or hesitation. This can be regarded as a first explanation for Amy's constant resort to deception as a means to reach her ends. It seems that black and dark lies have been exploited on the C-CL and during/post-dénouncement stage more than on the N-RL and the pre-dénouncement stage. There is, however, no appearance of blue lies in Amy's discourse. This is justified by her constant malicious intention. She is the culprit in the novel, ergo it is expected from other characters to exploit blue lies in order to unveil her secrets and/or bring forth justice. For this reason, Nick has resorted to this micro strategy, leaving black and dark lies unemployed. He needs to protect himself and persuading/deceiving his wife via blue lies seems to be the only salvage.

Albeit it is mainly a psychological thriller, *Gone Girl* (2012) can also be classified as a semi-epistolary novel, that is, the major part of the novel is written in the form of a diary which allows the narrator, particularly a first-person narrator, to be subjective. This is another explanation of Amy's heavy use of the deceptive strategy of lying. Amy has been deliberately dishonest whilst writing her diary. In fact, this too can explain the emergence of PRTs (i.e., metaphor and hyperbole) on N-RL. She has taken her time to pre-plan and strategically choose particular words to communicate a stronger stylistic effect on readers. As a matter of fact, Amy's educational and occupational background can also be considered as factors that constitute her style of deception. She is a psychologist and a writer, thus writing in a creative manner is not unusual or unexpected from her. This can be taken as a third explanation.

As for the deceptive macro strategy of red herring, it is employed by Amy twice exclusively on the C-CL and during/post-dénouncement stage. This justifies the appearance of the pragma-stylistic tools of impoliteness, self-impoliteness, and the maxim of relevance and quantity since all of them are considered as realizations of the strategy under discussion. For more profoundness, the micro strategy of distraction is perceptible on the C-CL when Amy intends to divert the target's attention, especially when she feels that her fictional story is placed under suspicion. This does not usually happen on the N-RL since readers are merely recipients or receivers and not senders of messages. Accordingly, the micro strategy of distraction is particularly found during/post-dénouncement stage because of the discoursal characteristics of this stage. It is close to being similar to the discourse of interrogation. Question-answer exchanges are regarded as perquisites for interviews or interrogations. In relation to this context, it seems that there is a positive correlation between asking questions or expressing suspicions

and/or accusations on the part of the target (e.g., the detective and the police) and employing the micro strategy of distraction on the part of the sender (i.e., Amy).

The four aspects concerning the language of both genders adopted for this study are pertained to the pragma-stylistic tools of (im)politeness, self-(im)politeness, hyperbole, assertive and expressive SAs. According to Table (2), Amy exploits positive impoliteness and self-impoliteness via producing swear/taboo words. As it has been mentioned earlier, this is done in order to distract attention. The table demonstrates that Nick has never resorted to self-impoliteness strategies. He, however, employs other-impoliteness strategies passively by the act of silence (viz., the sub strategies of withholding politeness and ignore the other). Moreover, Amy's utterances do not show the use of self-politeness. She, however, relies on other-politeness twice. Nick, per contra, heavily relies on other-politeness and self-politeness. As for the PRT of hyperbole, it's used on both levels/stages by Amy whilst Nick uses it on the C-CL only. The numbers, notwithstanding, show an imperceptible difference with regard to the density of employing this strategy by both genders. What has been resulted in this paragraph can be interpreted as follows:

1) Nick's discourse evinces the micro strategy of evasion on N-RL. This occurs because he needs to conceal an important fact about himself (i.e., being an adulterer) by advancing another utterance that is irrelevant, comparatively speaking. He also follows this fashion by using the macro strategies of withholding information and equivocation more than Amy does. The previous line shows that the deceptive strategies that Nick and Amy exploit are, in actuality, poles apart. His utterances are neither informative nor clear. The ambiguity puts forth more than one interpretation. Readers choose the interpretation that demands less cognitive effort. Accordingly, Nick deliberately sets readers to unconsciously choose the most favourable conclusion, that is, the false one. These deceptive strategies are manifested by the pragma-stylistic tools of presupposition, relevance theory, and the deceptive maxims of manner, relevance, and quantity.

2) Insofar as SAs are concerned, it seems that the representative SA scores the highest frequency of Amy's discourse. It is followed by the SAs of commissive and expressive respectively. This can be attributed to Amy's unhesitating style whilst lying. Most of her utterances are assertive, reporting, and attributing due to her self-confidence and compulsive tendency to lie. Paradoxically, Nick exploits the representative SA less than Amy since he does not lie nor deceive dynamically as she does. He furthermore uses the commissive SA more than she does since he issues false ostensible promises. Finally, Amy uses the SA of expression (e.g., blame, gratitude, and praise) more than Nick. This finding lends support to the claim that women use more emotional words than men (e.g., Goldsmidt & Weller, 2000) and contradicts the more recent claim that Turkish and Spanish male EFL learners significantly use more emotional words than female EFL learners do (Babanoglu, 2015). The available linguistic evidence in this and the previous paragraph seems to refute two of Lakoff's (1973) observations: (a) Men's tendency to express their emotions more freely than women do. (b) Women's tendency to behave hesitant more than men do. This observation can be attributed to Amy's personality disorder. Based on PCL-R, psychopaths are too arrogant and self-centric; therefore, being unconfident is regarded as a behavioural deviation from the norm.

3) The nonentity of self-politeness in Amy's discourse shows her fearlessness, self-confidence, and unshamefacedness. This too can be attributed to two of the characteristics of psychopaths, namely, being ego-centric, arrogant, and showing no guilt. Nick, per contra, experiences the feelings of embarrassment and remorse. He is ashamed of confessing his infidelity. As such, there is an employment of the sub strategies of off record (be vague) and withhold-SFTA (be silent) to deceive on both levels of discourse.

4) Table (2) demonstrates that the selected extracts of Nick's discourse show a considerable higher number of using other-politeness strategies than Amy does. The initial impression is that Nick might be more polite than Amy, which contradicts Lakoff's (1973) observation which states that women use polite terms more than men. The context of Nick's C-CL extract reveals that his speech was not improvised. He was taught by his lawyer and sister to talk politely in order to persuade the target. This concludes that, albeit the numbers show one interpretation, the context reveals another. Although the study undertaken is limited to deceptive situations, this does not necessarily mean that Nick uses more polite terms than Amy does in general. In order to verify this aspect, the researchers decided to examine the corpus of the novel only to discover that Nick appeals to positive impoliteness as in producing the word "fucking," which is usually collocated with "bitch" and "whore," as three times as Amy does. It is also worth to note that Nick's utterances are as three times as Amy's. However, inasmuch deception is concerned, it has been observed that Nick resorts to positive politeness as the most second pragma-stylistic tool, whilst Amy employs it as the second least pragma-stylistic tool to build up deception. Amy furthermore has a marked tendency to deceive via using strong swear words (e.g., the particles "fuck" and "ass") in comparison to Nick. This finding contradicts with Lakoff's observation and can be considered as an addition to the sphere of language and gender. It should be mentioned that the selected extracts are very few, ergo the results cannot be generalised. One interpretation of this can be linked to one of the characteristics provided in PCL-R: psychopaths have a tendency to be "aggressive" and violent.

5) As far as Lakoff's (1973) second observation (i.e., women use more intensifiers than men) is concerned, it has been observed that Amy exploits the PRT of hyperbole five times on the two levels (viz., C-CL and N-RL) in unison, whilst Nick employs it four times on C-CL only. Although the results show that Amy's preference to use intensifiers are slightly more than Nick's, it should be noted that he has not been spontaneous in producing the speech. Rather, he was taught to speak in this fashion for persuasive purposes. Put differently, the style of Nick mostly represents the deceptive strategies and pragma-stylistic tools employed in the first selected extract. He mainly resorts to half-truths and silence to deceive the target. As for the PRT of metaphor, it is employed only once on N-RL by Amy. She uses an animal-related metaphor to emphasise and bring forth vivid brutal images of Nick's predistortion to hurt her in the minds of readers. Nick, at the other extreme, never used a metaphor. Accordingly, the present study is in favour of Lakoff's observation with respect to intensifiers.

6. Conclusion

The present study has expanded the scope of knowledge in the area of stylistics, pragmatics, and that of sociolinguistics. The concept of deception has been accessed pragma-stylistically to explore how it is created and to investigate the style of the antagonists Amy and her husband Nick as unreliable first-person narrators and characters. To wit, this study has focused on exploring deception on C-CL and N-RL and in pre- and during/post-dénouncement stage, along with gender differences. It has been concluded that Amy deceives dynamically and compulsively. Nick, per contra, deceives silently, vaguely, and passively. This challenges some of Lakoff's (1973) observations on the language of men and women. It also seems that Amy's stylistic peculiarities correspond to the characteristics that were put forth to detect psychopaths. She predominantly exploits the macro deceptive strategy of lying by appealing to the deceptive maxim of quality, the SA of assertion, presupposition, and politeness, *inter alia*, to invite false belief in the other. As such, this study can be encapsulated in the following two lines: Firstly, Flynn (2012), a crime fiction author, has architected the deceptive style of a psychopathic character, that is, Amy, in a parallel manner to that of a non-fictional psychopathic personality, by drawing on PCL-R, in terms of being a pathological liar, verbally aggressive, ego-centric, and guilt-free. Secondly, based on the findings grounded on the earlier argument advanced in the present article, it can be concluded that only one out of four of Lakoff's (1973) selected observations has been verified in this study.

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