

***This Girl with an Explanation for Everything: Locating Unreliable  
Narration in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl****

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**Abstract**

Narrative strategies in literary texts present to readers interesting viewpoints into the characters' minds and through them into the writer's process of writing and creation of the character. These insights give to the readers not just an outlook into the story, hence enhancing it further but also provide them the ability to enrich the literary text at hand. American psychological thriller novelist brings to her readers, women protagonists motivated by vengeance and betrayal in their dysfunctional families as they seek to correct the wrongs done to them in enigmatic ways. The researcher wishes to study Flynn's *Gone Girl* as it presents a vengeful protagonist expertly narrating her story using various techniques as she manipulates not simply the characters in the narrative but also the readers.

**Keywords:** Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl*, narration

American novelist Gillian Flynn's psychological thriller novels present characters in complex situations as they weave their stories in a passionate narrative of deceit and revenge. Flynn's female characters showcase extreme scenarios of betrayal, hate, unhappy marriages and dysfunctional families that prompt them to behave in enigmatic ways thereby exhibiting to the audiences their chaotic yet organised emotional and mental health. Flynn's protagonists are referred to as psychopaths and sociopaths as they choose mysterious methods of retaliation in their stories.

'Sharp Objects' presents the story of Camille Preaker, a journalist who goes back to her hometown in order to understand the mysterious crimes taking place there and also at a personal level, to improve her relation with her family members. But as she starts digging deeper into the stories of these young girls, she

realises that the serial killer is someone in her family who motivated by jealousy decides to take the lives of these unsuspecting girls. Camille's mother and sister are convicted of numerous crimes, thus once again taking a huge emotional toll on Camille, as she struggles to locate her identity and find stability in uncertain circumstances.

'Dark Places' another novel by Gillian Flynn, brings to the audiences the story of Libby Day, who witness murder and the death of her mother and sister at a very young age. Her accusation of her brother being the killer leads to his imprisonment and their estranged relationship. After the 'Kill Club' members prod her to rethink the past, through a series of flashbacks, we notice the real story of gore and contract killings gone wrong.

'Gone Girl' is a 2012 psychological thriller mystery novel by Gillian Flynn which presents Amy Dunne, a young

woman who goes missing on the eve of the fifth wedding anniversary. The detectives blame her husband Nick based on the evidences left behind by Amy. As the plot moves forward, the readers are made aware of Amy's motive behind leaving her family, framing her husband and ultimately playing the victim in the story. This novel by Flynn is considered one of her best as it the narrative techniques used by Gillian Flynn augment the situations as the characters and the readers are baffled by the evidences presented in quick succession.

Nick Dunne is initially presented as the narrator and the voice of reason in the chaos one notices in the story. But after as the detectives arrive, they notice the scene of mayhem and distress in the Dunne household and believe him to be the perpetrator of the crime involving Amy's disappearance. Soon the people join in and start supporting Amy as they search for her and simultaneously the truth as well. Amy does not simply leave behind a trail of evidences but also her cleverly crafted diary as she narrates her dysfunctional life with her husband. As Amy's diary is the sole voice of Amy for the authorities involved, they trust her lies, thereby showcasing the importance of confessional writing and its importance in the location of truth according to law.

Confessional writing which emerged as a form of writing in 1950's after the second world war in America, highlighted the importance of truthful narratives which remove the mask that characters adorn as a way of hiding their true selves from other characters and the readers. As the form evolved, the modern structure of diary or journal writing has undergone a significant change. For instance, 'Bridget Jones'

Diary' showcases a troubled young woman who wishes to evoke change in herself as she writes her diary. This process becomes more self-disciplining rather than simply narrative.

But Flynn's characters tend to do both, as they remove the mask but simultaneously display different personalities. Amy and Nick, both manipulate the other with deftness and ingenuity. They present their lives as the epitome of a happy married couple but in reality, they try to outdo the other with wit, skill and persuasion. Tara French, a bestselling New York Times author praises the book as one of the best yet also the most frightening books of psychopathy.

Nick Dunne, initially begins his narration by telling the readers, "I always think about her head" (Gone Girl 1). This declaration informs the readers to similarly, bring an enquiry towards Amy and the enigmatic ways in which her mind works. Another statement made by Nick, early in the novel is "I knew I liked her then, really liked her, this girl with an explanation for everything." (Gone Girl 7). This quality of Amy's allows her to manipulate truth in unimaginable circumstances and thus makes her character unique. The quality that Nick fell in love with, ultimately leads to his downfall.

According to Amy's narration, things do not go as planned in their marriage and Nick keeps on telling her that he has to work hard in life, always had to whereas Amy leads a considerably easy life. But these differences in their social positions, also affects their marriage and eventually leads to their emotional separation. Nick begins to cheat on Amy by dating a

considerably young woman and once Amy finds out the truth, she plans her revenge by accusing Nick of her disappearance.

Amy's real narrative begins quite late in the novel when she informs the readers of her motivation for revenge. When on one hand, Nick's narration is self-criticising, on the other hand, Amy makes the readers believe that whatever she did was correct. She says, "I'd like you to know me first. Not Diary Amy, who is a work of fiction...I hope you liked Diary Amy. She was meant to be likeable. Meant for someone like you to like her... all the while leading the reader (in this case, the cops, I am so eager for them to find it)... so many clues to unpack, so many surprises ahead!" (Gone Girl 248)

These lines coerce the readers to rethink the victim-identity formation taking place in the story. Amy is well-aware that as a woman whose husband has gone astray, society would support her and listen to her discourse. But, as she presents her own narration in person, the readers are made aware of her anger and scorn towards Nick and a deep desire to rewrite her own happy ending. Several times in the novel, Amy questions aloud, what Nick might be thinking just as he tries to understand her mind. He says "in truth, I wanted her to read my mind so I didn't have to stoop to the womanly art of articulation. I was sometimes as guilty of playing the figure-me-out game as Amy was. I've left that bit of information out too. I'm a big fan of the lie of omission." (Gone Girl 150).

The most interesting aspect about the narration is that she creates this whole fan-girl, happy-go-lucky girl, the-girl-next-door image. But, as the plot progresses, we understand that this is just a façade. For

instance, she says '(Note to self: Rent *the Sure Thing*)' – that makes this diary entry all the more believable. She points out the minute incidents from the party. And she writes the narration in such a way that gives us a glimpse of not just who she is but also who Nick is as a person. She gives the readers proper conversations and then very subtly comments on each. So that we know the story and we know what she feels about it.

Amy, in her diary, addresses the readers, she says that her marriage is facing problems and the right people to talk to would be her parents but "they are soul mates, remember?" (Gone Girl 211). Amy coerces the readers to remember. From the very first two narratives of Nick and Amy, we realise two divergent contradictory characterisations of people. Amy who sees everything rosy-eyed and Nick who sees everything black-and-white.

Amy states that their marriage is "collapsing on itself" (Gone Girl 253). Nick says that he could not keep up with her expectations and started seeking simple uncomplicated lifestyle and Amy hated Nick for not loving her 'real' self. And they hate themselves for the pretence and they hate the other for not liking their real selves. But they themselves hate their true selves. They both have been pretending for so long that they have accepted that as their 'real' nature. and this leads to unreliable narration. They both contribute to the narrative in damaging ways.

Gillian Flynn's 'Gone Girl' showcases distinct narratives styles that enhance the complex plot woven together by the narrators in the novel. The polyphonic voices in the story combined with

evidences, diary entries and first-person narratives enrich the discourse and makes

it one of the most read and highly acclaimed novels by Gillian Flynn.

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