

**The Female's Superiority:
A Cultural Feminist Reading
in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl***

Prof. Azhar Noori Fejer, Ph.D (supervisor)

Azhar.noori@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Suheir Hameem Mohammed (M. A. Student)

Sohair.Saleh2107m@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Abstract

This paper examines the theme of female superior qualities in Gillian Flynn's novel *Gone Girl*. Through a close reading of the text, the paper argues that the novel challenges patriarchal norms by presenting a strong and powerful female protagonist who subverts traditional gender roles. Using cultural feminist literary theory, the paper analyzes the ways in which the novel explores gender identity and relations, revealing the ways in which women can be powerful agents in society. This paper argue that the protagonist Amy Elliott Dunne is a kind and caring woman whose power is in her kindness and she only turns aggressive when the other party fails her. This runs contrary to the theory that women are wicked and dangerous by nature; rather, according to cultural feminism, they are kind and companionate but are too oppressed to show such qualities.

Keywords: cultural feminism, Gillian Flynn, feminine nature, *Gone Girl*

تفوق الأنثى: قراءة ثقافية نسوية في رواية جيليان فليين فتاة مفقودة

سهير هميم محمد و أ.د. ازهار نوري فجر

المستخلص

تبحث هذه الورقة في موضوع الصفات المتفوقة للإناث في رواية "فتاة مفقودة" للمؤلفة جيليان فليين. من خلال قراءة النص عن كثب ، تجادل الورقة بأن الرواية تتحدى الأعراف الأبوية من خلال تقديم بطلنة شجاعة وقوية تعمل على تخريب الأدوار التقليدية للجنسين. باستخدام النظرية الأدبية النسوية الثقافية ، تحلل الورقة الطرق التي تستكشف بها الرواية الهوية والعلاقات بين الجنسين ، وتكشف عن الطرق التي يمكن أن تكون بها النساء عوامل قوية في المجتمع. تجادل هذه الورقة بأن بطلنة الرواية آيمي إليوت دن هي امرأة لطيفة ومهتمة قوتها في لطفها وتتحول إلى عدوانية فقط عندما يخذلها الطرف الآخر. يتعارض هذا مع النظرية القائلة بأن المرأة شريرة وخطيرة بطبيعتها. بدلا من ذلك ، وفقا للنسوية الثقافية ، النساء لطيفات وعطوفات لكنهم مضطهدات للغاية لإظهار مثل هذه الصفات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية الثقافية ، جيليان فليين ، الطبيعة الأنثوية ، فتاة مفقودة

1.1. Cultural Feminism

According to Latina feminist philosopher Linda Martn Alcoff (2006), Cultural Feminism means the idea behind a female nature or female essence that feminists themselves have adopted in an effort to revalidate underappreciated female qualities. Cultural feminists believe that male nature and, in some cases, masculinity itself are the true enemies of women, not just in a social structure, but also in economic structure (pp. 407-408). In general, cultural feminism can be understood to mean a variety of feminist ideas that stress the fundamental distinctions between men and women especially the biological differences in reproductive process. Accordingly, cultural feminism is keen to show the distinguished and superior virtues in women. Women, in this sense, would share sense of sisterhood, strength and identity (Bingham et al., 2009, p. 3).

Cultural feminism is distinctive in that it places more emphasis on examining and even praising the societal worth of women's particular ways of being, or the ways in which women vary from males. This strategy has made it possible for cultural feminism to avoid issues raised by the essentialist argument. Male patriarchal rhetoric was the first to utilize the essentialist defense of immutable gender differences against women, arguing that women were naturally inferior to males and that this inferiority justify their social subjugation. However, among First Wave feminists that have developed a philosophy of cultural feminism, which espouses the good qualities of what is perceived as 'the female character' or 'the feminine personality,' reversed that argument. Theorists like Margaret Fuller, Frances Willard, Jane Addams, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman supported a cultural feminism that said society needs women's values like collaboration, care, pacifism, and nonviolence in the resolution of conflicts (Ritzer, 2011, p. 462).

Cultural feminism is the newest breed of radical feminism. It focuses on the liberation of women, as well as the development and preservation of feminine counterculture. Early in 1975, when the Jean Albert Circle of Support was made, cultural feminism started to differ from radical feminism. According to cultural feminism, patriarchy has ruined mother-daughter relationships, and by extension, all connections between women, so they need to restore that (Echols, 1983, pp. 38-39). The emergence of cultural feminism in the women's movement is rooted in the belief that women are fundamentally different. The most well-known critic of cultural feminism, Alice Echols, says that Redstockings member, Brooke Williams, has come up with the term 'cultural feminism' in (1975) to describe how radical feminism had become less political. Generally, cultural feminism has been widely criticized since its early emergence. Radical and socialist feminists, black feminists, postmodern feminists, and those who think cultural feminism is a betrayal of their early ideas have all said that it erases and rehabilitates their struggle as women (Verta & Rupp, 1993, p. 32).

Cultural feminists have made many notable and influential contributions to society through women-only places. These are places where caring, nurturing and empathy are valued. It is a place where women can feel safe from men, the male gaze, and patriarchal obligations. Cultural Feminism argues that women, in general, have attributes that are unique. Cultural Feminists suggests that new, inclusive work, life, and family structures are required to enable women to easily integrate. Bromley highlights that the contributions of women as decision makers are often overlooked which further perpetuate gender bias and masculine hegemony (Bromley, 2012, p. 83).

Nadine Mccrea and Lisa Ehrich define feminine values as cultural values that have historically been associated with women, such as concern

for others, caring, and cooperation. Feminine traits are important everywhere because they are a way to fight against the patriarchal ways of running things. Cultural Feminism seeks to introduce feminine qualities to the society as well as to celebrate and estimate feminine strength. Cultural feminism can help reform the existing (male-dominated) structures. For instance, it can help to reshape the organizations of employment, education, and politics in a manner that makes room for women's skills at negotiating and resolving conflicts. The qualities of femininity are necessary to make it easier for people to care for their families or coworkers, whether at home or at work (2000, pp. 1-2). This study applies the notions of cultural feminism to the analysis of Amy's Character in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*

1.2. Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*

Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* (2012), is written in special circumstances. Laci Peterson's disappearance in California in 2002 and Flynn's loss of her work as a journalist and had immensely inspired the creation of the book. The novel tells the story of Amy Elliott Dunne, who disappears on her fifth wedding anniversary leaving blood stains and signs of a struggle to accuse her husband, Nick Dunne, of her murder (Abduelredhah, 2020, p. 66). Flynn uses first person narrator, so Nick and Amy take turns telling the story from their points of view.

The novel investigate how women are uniquely skilled in creating relationships and breaking them according to their best interests. This is a result of women's inherent traits and capacities and need for security and affirmation (Assi & Fraq, 2019, p.74). *Gone Girl* has a specific aura that sets it within the genre of contemporary gothic novels. However, it is significantly different from classic gothic fiction like Charlotte Bronte's

Jane Eyre (1847). Jane explains saying: "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will" (p. 269). However, Jane and traditional gothic women have limited freedom and options unlike women today. This fact is reflected in *Gone Girl*, with her heroine's struggle for freedom and vengeance. Woman's individuality and the desire to be appreciated is the core idea of Flynn's *Gone Girl*.

1.2.1. Amy's Struggle for Existence

Generosity is one of Amy's qualities that bring people closer to her. She does not hesitate to offer what she can to others. Amy says that she always treats Nick's family with kindness. For instance, she did charity walks, cooked casseroles for his father, and helped sell tickets for raffles. Moreover, Amy 'tapped the last of [her] money to give to Nick and Go so they could buy the bar they've always wanted, and [she] even put the check inside a card shaped like a mug of beer" (Flynn, 2012, p. 175). This shows that Amy is counting the times and things where she has helped her husband, as a perfect compliant wife. As the novel progresses, readers realize that this is exhausting and boring to the core because she is always giving without receiving anything. If she has done all this, what has he done for her in return? As a female who respect her right of empowerment; Amy gives a lesson of ethics through her financial help to Nick as she tells Maureen: "I used to have more than a little cash of my own, but I gave it to your son" (Flynn, 2012, p. 223). Amy has a complete devotion to her husband.

Victoria Bromley, a feminist critic, thinks that feminists today have entered a new era of thinking about and doing feminism. On the one hand, she urges women to struggle and succeed. On the other hand, she assures that females are still committed to ending oppression and advancing social

justice. Bromley (2012) argues that feminists need to continue asking questions and developing new strategies to meet their goals (p. 173). These qualities are there in Amy's actions since she asks, argues, thinks, and acts. These are the required strategies that show women's empowerment. Amy loves writing and writers' parties because she feels she belongs to them. She believes that writing in the journal is beneficial to her to "get better: to hone [her] skills, to collect details and observations" (Flynn, 2012, p. 24). In addition, she thinks that being in places like these will enable her to meet genuine talented writers who are employed at high-profile newspapers.

Amy's observation here may include a light envy because she is a writer too but she is not employed by a respected newspaper or magazine like them. She is left outside this community because of her marriage. Intellectually, it is evident that Amy has a broad imagination, she is well-educated, and ambitious. Amy enjoys surrounding herself with upbeat, ambitious individuals who share her passion for personal growth and improvement. She is a woman who loves adventure and going through complicated and challenging confrontations because she is not satisfied with only being a test writer, which she sees as a simple profession. Nevertheless, she seeks something more valuable that matches her unique mentality and her university degree, because she has a master's degree in psychology (similar to Flynn). Additionally, Amy skillfully speaks more than one language and is an ambitious writer. She is a woman who does a little of everything all the time. Nick describes her saying:

she'd made an intense study of French cooking, displaying hyper-quick knife skills. Amy can cook French cuisine and speak fluent Spanish and garden and knit and run marathons and day-trade stocks and fly a plane and look like a runway model doing it. She needed to be *Amazing Amy*; all the time... my

competitive wife. She has a lot of hobbies. (Flynn, 2012 , p. 71)

Socially, Amy is a tactful speaker and an extrovert, loving person. She has many distinguished, varied, and creative opinions in various fields, such as literature, science, and the arts. Amy also believes that women should have a critical view of society. She argues that women should "take pride in [their] accomplishments" (Flynn, 2012 , p.24). Amy further explains that she "write personality quizzes using the knowledge gleaned from [her] master's degree in psychology" (Flynn, 2012, p. 24). She is also the inspiration for a beloved children's-book series that is composed by her parents.

On the family level, Amy draws an imagination of married life based on her parents' lives. Her idea of marriage revolves around her parents and their famous story *Amazing Amy* .So she wishes to fulfill some of their dreams, for example, to live a happy marital life. Amy describes her parents saying "like my parents: happy-happy ...Yes, my parents are soul mates" (Flynn, 2012 , pp. 45, 47). Amy adds “Yes, I would like that for myself one day...The few happy ones are like my parents”(Flynn, 2012, pp. 48-49). Women are raised culturally to look after the family. From this quote, it becomes evident that the difference between Amy and her husband is that she is a family-oriented woman that wants a happy home. At the same time, her man is more interested in financially-oriented life, whether with family or not. He says that the bar makes him happy and proud; which shows how each one is interested in something different. There is a similarity between Amy and the fictitious character in her parents' novel since both bear the same name. However, fictitious Amy is submissive to her husband. While real Amy has a strong personality and refuses to be submissive or even dependent: “Amy, ‘my dear fiancé’ sure is a grouch-monster when he doesn’t get his way. That is an actual quote. The whole book made me want

to punch Amy. Some are just fiction. I think the series is a classic.” (Flynn, 2012 , p. 45)

Amy is dissatisfied with her parents' novel classic heroine because she believes that "women [are] powerful, fabulous " (Flynn, 2012, p.48). She is looking for a strong, dedicated, loving partner, not a passive or treacherous person, to be qualified to her. Her responses to the press upon the release of her parents' book, *Amazing Amy*, provide clues to a number of themes about her. For instance, she may describe the qualities of the ideal man in her eyes, the one she hopes maybe someday to marry, or the steps she plans to take to ensure a happy marriage. Amy is unwavering in her commitment to her values however; she is in need of a fostering environment where she can thrive. In every part of the novel, much evidence shows Amy's superiority over Nick which makes her dissatisfied with their ‘unequal’ marriage.

Since it is a Gothic novel, it includes characteristics of the genre. For instance, secrets and mysterious people keep appearing throughout the novel. Amy's inner monologue hints of an impending disaster, like an earthquake in her connection with Nick. Later, Amy finds out that Nick has an affair with another woman, a young woman at college. Amy stops caring and plots a vengeance. She gave up everything to make their marriage work but he betrays her. Amy's over-interest in making the family happy gives Nick every reason to take things for granted, and then leave her for another woman. She says:

Nick shuffled his hands in his pockets and promised to take care of me. He promised to take care of me, and yet I feel afraid. I feel like something is going wrong, very wrong, and that it will get even worse. I don't feel like Nick's wife. I don't feel like a person at all: I am something to be loaded and unloaded, like a sofa or a cuckoo clock. I am something to be tossed into a

junkyard, thrown into the river, if necessary. I don't feel real anymore. I feel like I could disappear. (Flynn, 2012, p. 149)

Carelessness about tiny affairs increases the likelihood of carelessness in larger concerns. Amy plays a treasure game with Nick, through which she is able to reveal his innermost secrets. On the other hand, Amy reveals her cunning. These hints can tell the extent of harm in their relationship "Amy was using the treasure hunt to steer us back to each other. ... I couldn't handle another compliment, another kind word from my wife, another olive branch" (Flynn, 2012, p.159). Nick seems to have grown bored with her kindness and caring, it seems that Nick was beginning to find his life intolerably perfect.

After finding out about his cheating, Amy finds a reason to unleash her hellish anger on him. Amy's reaction is due to many reasons, for instance, loneliness, sadness, and deception, Nick's actions, and his unjustified neglect and betrayal. However, Amy's intelligence and wickedness allow her to switch roles. Nick practices physical isolation on Amy because he puts her in a state of loneliness or being cut off from people: "the situation is mostly bad because my husband, who brought me here, who uprooted me to be closer to his ailing parents, seems to have lost all interest" (Flynn, 2011, p. 200). Nick uproots Amy from her home town to another house where only the cuckoo clock alarm could be heard in that deep silence, isolation, and loneliness. Amy's vengeance represents the storm caused by the unstable and hurtful marital climate. She "woke up in this strange new captivity. The cuckoo (watch) is also having a tough time adjusting" (Flynn, 2012, p. 171). This marriage puts Amy's peaceful feminine nature to test.

Amy is a different contemporary Gothic heroine in her attitude because she is strong, which is different from old version of female gothic

characters like Mr. Rochester's wife in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha. Amy has a voice, but "Bertha does not have her own voice" (Törntorp, 2018, p. 18). This is the difference between classical and contemporary female characters. Amy's reaction is clever yet risky. Nevertheless, her intellectual strength and superiority in all aspects enable her to control all the threads easily in her favor.

Nick is the personification of patriarchal culture through his poor treatment to his wife. Amy does her best to settle into the new house next to Nick's family home, but still there is an aura of strangeness; the reason behind this oddity is Maureen and her friends' actions. Maureen introduces Amy to all her friends the same way she would show off a slightly dangerous new pet, and "Maureen's friend from the shoe store Barb tells Amy: I wouldn't really hang you" (Flynn, 2012, p. 174). Amy was so embarrassed that everybody thought she was afraid of them.

1.2.2. Amy's Vengeance

Nick and his father represent the patriarchal ideology of society that shows the destructive effects of toxic masculinity. On the other hand, Amy exemplifies what it means to be an empowered woman who can defend her dignity to the extent that she might kill. *Gone Girl* is a satirical reaction to patriarchal media simulations that encourage violence against women. Amy defies the pressures created by America's commercial culture and egotistical demands, which smother marital relationships. Amy's defiance is therefore a reaction to a patriarchal societal framework that encourages gendered delusions of self-actualization while allowing masculine entitlement to go unquestioned (Osborne, 2017, p. 4).

According to Mary Daly (1990), men in positions of authority -the patriarchy's authoritative leaders-waging an endless struggle against the

very existence of life. As a result of the fact that female energy is fundamentally biophilic, the prime target in this ongoing war of assault against life is the feminine spirit and body (p. 355). Both Amy and Nick have unique characteristics. These distinctions cannot be changed; instead, they are an innate component of a man or woman. These differences stem from cultural norms as well as biological and genetic factors. Whether the traits are products of nature, i.e., her nature as a female, or in terms of culture. Throughout the novel, Amy appears as superior to Nick's attributes as a man. Bromley (2012) states the structure of patriarchy as a whole is accountable for women's subjugation (pp. 82–83).

Amy crafts a very clever and wicked plan to disappear and pretend to be murdered and leave evidence accusing her husband of her murder. She leaves a diary to be found by the police, in which she describes how bright she made their marriage and how terribly did her husband respond. On the fourth day of her disappearance, police and the searching group discover some clues. Lonnie, an addict, says that Amy "had come to the mall to buy a gun on Valentine's Day, [and] she was a little abashed, a little nervous. She was scared" (Flynn, 2012, p. 180).

The theme of isolation becomes clearer when Nick decides to take Amy to live in a house next to his parent's home. Nick puts his wife in a place where there is no connection to the outside world. This is an element of Gothic fiction when the female is imprisoned by the villain character. This reflects woman subjugation by stripping away her very existence and power.

A mistreated woman is one of the classic topics in Gothic literature; a lovely young lady, a vile husband, and a dreadful secret that will bring everything to a disastrous end when it is revealed to the wife. Numerous works of Gothic literature employ this framework, often with minor adjustments. For example the wife character from *Bluebeard* (1697) by

Charles Perrault, Hippolita from *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole, and *Rebecca* (1938) by Daphne du Maurier. But here Flynn shows the woman's response to be different from what was previously presented in the classic Gothic novels. Amy's ambitions and aspiration for great life and career and happy marriage faded as her husband starts to show very little interest in their life together: "I just wish it felt more equal. My brain is so busy with Nick thoughts; it's a swarm inside my head. I just wish he thought about me as much as I do him. Is that wrong?" (Flynn, 2012 , p. 204)

According to Linda Alcoff (2006), cultural feminists fought against the physical isolation and disengagement from patriarchal institutions (p.409). The disappearance is Amy's way to escape Nick's abuse and his neglect of her feelings as a wife. Amy believes in herself, and is inwardly satisfied with her own thoughts. She realizes even on the rare times she feels lonely as a temporary lapse in her happiness. She defends her dignity as a female by showing her intelligence, strength, and creativity in planning her revenge.

Amy is ingenious in creating circumstances that would put Nick and his mistress in constant anxiety and terror. Whether it is in the mystery of her disappearance or unveiling Nick's relationship with his girlfriend Andie to the police, actually, Amy's confidence goes beyond Andie admitting that she would go crazy if Nick stopped contacting her. Amy's intelligence pushes both Nick and Andy to the brink of collapse. Nick asks Andie to be careful because Amy is missing, and he tells Andie that no matter what happens, they will "be together but only if [they]'re careful" (Flynn, 2012 , p. 220). His mistress is so freaked out, and asks him to keep calling her or "[she] will go crazy" (Flynn, 2012, p. 220).

The revelation of plan in the novel can make readers accuse Amy of starting the war and causing mischief for Nick. With this fake character,

Nick manages to deceive Amy and infiltrates her life to become, after a while, her husband's so that the cloud would dissipate and his genuine character would appear. In her *Gyn/ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism*, Daly (1990) asserts this idea clearly:

Women possessed in this way by the mystique of romantic love are tamed, used. Dulled into Sleeping Death, they know, yet do not know, the identity of The Enemy... Even novice Furies are accused of thinking or saying that ...women are the initiators of enmity, blaming the victims for The War. Its deceptive power is derived from the fact that the Fury in every woman does fight back against males and male institutions that target her as The Enemy. (pp. 364-365)

To show that there is a great deal of scope for violence, Amy creates a perfect crime scene filled with blood spots and writes her diaries to have it read by the police after her disappearance (Abd & Fejer, 2022, p. 611). These things prove that Gothic genre, is a fertile field for the contemporary female to prove her strength. Amy is not the one who starts this war but Nick is. Daly continues her words stating that the idea is that women do not start the war; rather, they find themselves in a situation where fighting is vital for survival (1990, p. 365).

Daly also argues that women possess an amazing female intellect (1990, p. 368). Amy's mind resembles this ax and the symbolism it holds. Flynn uses Daly's word "Labyrs" implicitly to match Amy's brilliant mind. Once again, Flynn explicitly mentions the word butterfly in the context of the novel as in "picture of a butterfly" (Flynn, 2012, p. 40). The presence of comparable butterfly patterns in *Gone Girl*, in particular, indicates the influence of Phrygian civilization. In actuality, the butterfly should be linked to metamorphosis, which includes seasonal change, transformation,

agriculture, and fertility, particularly in Mother Goddess-related stories (Erdan & Barış, 2020, pp. 71, 78).

Women are always expected to compromise their happiness to make men comfortable. They have to be calm and non-argumental and attractive, seductive, and compassionate. Social structures and the family require Amy to perform specific roles since she is a female. However, Amy successfully performs it as a model daughter and wife. But this does not prevent her parents and Nick from hurting her. This pushes Amy to correct the course according to what she sees as the right solution. Amy is the worst enemy Nick can make or confront, at the same time she is the best lover he can find. Through her soliloquy, Amy shows her happiness since she finally reveals her mental abilities, cleverness, cunning, and revenge. Several things are there. For example, Amy admits her knowledge of Nick's betrayal: "At one point this morning, I realized my face felt strange, different, [and] my smug husband lounging around his sticky bar as mayhem dangled on a thin piano wire just above his shitty, oblivious head" (Flynn, 2012, p. 307). Amy reveals another truth that Nick underestimates her skills and her writings. So, she began to evaluate her own skills and abilities.

Amy's sense of imperfection is due to her mother's actions who is preoccupied with the fetuses she had aborted. So, Marybeth, Amy's mother, does not pay much care to her. Amy is persecuted since her childhood because her parents did not let her feel that she is a real human being, but just a doll that should match the fictional character of their novel. She should be kind, creative, intelligent, and also happy. Her parents treat her like a pawn to be moved whenever and wherever they see fit, therefore they pay little attention to her wishes, and needs. Amy says that she "never really felt like a person, because I was always a product. Rand and Marybeth... never taught me how to be happy. I remember always being baffled by

other children" (Flynn, 2012, p.314). Amy was only a trade project for them.

Amy experienced a boring life for almost thirty years in her family's house. Till the appearance of Nick in her life. She does her best to do what her society, family, and even Nick want from her in order to get their approval:

I was pretending, the way I often did, pretending to have a personality. I can't help it, it's what I've always done: The way some women change fashion regularly, I change personalities. What persona feels good, what's coveted, what's au courant? (Flynn, 2011 , p. 311)

Amy sees that society, in general, and men, in particular, have a specific image for the "Cool Girl"; the kind of girl who is simply a doll, without sense, mind or opinion. Amy pretends under these circumstances to be that cool girl. Deep inside, Amy believes that all men do not admit the truth about women's uniqueness. Deliberately, men act blindly concerning women because they do not want to see women's superiority. However, there are women like Amy, who ultimately decide to forgo pretense in favor of celebrating their individuality and femininity.

I was playing the girl who was in style, the girl a man like Nick wants: the Cool Girl. Cool Girls never get angry; they only smile in a chagrined, loving manner and let their men do whatever they want. So many women are willing to pretend to be this girl. For a long time Cool Girl offended me. I used to see men – giddy over these awful pretender women (Flynn, 2012 , pp. 312-313).

Amy feels sad about this type of woman who pretends to be what men want because men usually lie by saying that they want and love strong women, but they soon betray her. Amy confirms that when a man says he loves a

strong woman, it means the exact opposite. Intelligent women challenge the social order and refuse to subordinate the dictates of patriarchal society (Ismael & Ali, 2022, p. 4). Amy's refusal to continue doing what Nick, her parents, and society demands causes everyone to reveal their true identity. According to Amy, if a man says that a woman is wonderful, it is only to deceive her or to make her act the way he wants. Nick cannot keep pretending the persona he's trying to be: clever banter, clever games, romance, and flirtation. So, everything collapses. Amy believes that men practice deception to attract women, and if she discovers the truth she will become a loser:

So it had to stop. Committing to Nick, feeling safe with Nick, being happy with Nick, made me realize that there was a Real Amy in there, and she was so much better, more interesting and complicated and challenging, than Cool Amy. Nick wanted Cool Amy anyway. (Flynn, 2012 , p. 316)

Amy comes to the conclusion that she should act according to her nature and not what others want her to be.

Upon meeting her high school friend, Desi, Amy experiences an emotional breakdown for the first time. She is dealing with a marriage that is falling apart, with an unfaithful husband, and she progressively loses her identity in the wider world. Amy does not react the way most women would and file for divorce. On the contrary, she proves a different contemporary female character with her complex and witty ruse. Amy's dramatic response draws attention to how frequently women dismiss these offenses. So for Amy, the plan of vengeance is a remarkable solution. She says that she has to deal with "pure wildness" (Flynn, 2012 , p. 451). She states that for the first time in her life she " tell[s] a Gothic tale of

possessiveness and rage, dominance, of fear and betrayal, parental apathy, isolation" (Flynn, 2012 , p. 451).

Amy's intelligence triumphs in the struggle because she exposes Nick's real identity publicly. She pushes him to the point where he loses his patriarchal bias and power:

Andie had screwed me over, Marybeth had turned against me, Go [his sister] had lost a crucial measure of faith. Boney had trapped me. Amy had destroyed me. Rage in all five senses. Those fucking bitches. (Flynn, 2012, p.496)

Amy demonstrates that she is not the adversary; rather, she is a victim of a patriarchal culture, an exploitative family, and a misogynistic and unfaithful husband. The patriarchal system governs every aspect of the interactions which exist between men and women. Furthermore, the most important argument of the Western patriarchal tradition is based on the version that continues to ascribe human suffering, and guilt to women (Fejer, 2015, p. 133). Everybody, including Nick accuse Amy of being "Dumb bitch, psycho bitch"(Flynn, 2011, p. 548). But she is not for she is just protecting her identity, as well as, proving her cultural, mental empowerment. Ultimately, Amy confirms that she is the woman "who makes you better, Nick...who makes you a man" (Flynn, 2012, p. 548). The Cultural conflicts and moral quandaries of the characters, thus, reflect broader social issues (Khalaf & Diyaiy, 2019, p. 25). The novel sparks several debates concerning its horror themes, the role of feminism in those themes, and the novel's morality.

As for her parents, she is fully aware of their intentions and interests, so her way to prove her superiority and intelligence to them is that: "I don't care about the rebuilding of their pathetic empire, because every day I get

calls to tell my story. My story: mine, mine, mine. I just need to pick the very best deal and start writing” (Flynn, 2012 , p. 554).

Amy sets herself free from her misogynistic and oppressive surrounding by disappearing and pursuing revenge. She wants them to pay with fear and regret while, for the first time, she lives her life according to her own rules.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has explored the theme of feminist superiority in Gillian Flynn's novel *Gone Girl*, demonstrating how the text challenges patriarchal norms and subverts traditional gender roles. Amy’s attitude and behavior is characterized by nothing but elegance and kindness before her husband’s treason and her parents’ constant demanding. Thus, the novel has showed that women are gentle creatures whose kindness is necessary for life to proceed. However, they can be a fierce and merciless fighters when they are oppressed. Using feminist literary theory, the paper has provided a close analysis of the ways in which the novel explores gender identity and relations, showcasing the power of women as agents in society. The portrayal of the man in the novel reveals weaknesses and flaws as a result of adhering to patriarchal ideals. *Gone Girl* serves as a powerful example of the potential of feminist literature to challenge societal norms and transform cultural attitudes.

References

- Abd, Z.M, & Fejer, A. N. (2022). Indigenous Resistance in Water With Berries. *Alustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences*, 61(1), 599–617.
- Abduelredhah, A. S. (2020). *The Organization and Dynamics of Homicidal Women: A Psychoanalytic Study in Selected Novels By Gillian Flynn* [Master's thesis, Baghdad University]
- Alcoff, L. (2006). *Cultural Feminism versus post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory*. University of Chicago.
- Assi, S.S, & Fraq, A. N. (2019). Margaret Fuller's Early Poetry: Reflection of Cultural Feminism. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 139(1), pp. 63–79.
- Bingham et al. (2009). *Cultural Feminism in South Africa*. Jackson State University: Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad.
- Bromley, V. L. (2012). *Feminisms matter: Debates, theories, activism*. University of Toronto Press.
- Brontë, C.(1992). *Jane Eyre*. Wordsworth Editions.
- Daly, M. (2016). *Gyn/ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism*. Beacon Press.
- Echols, A. (1983). Cultural feminism: feminist capitalism and the anti-pornography movement. *Social Text*, (7), 34-53.
- Erdoğan, E., & Barış, G. Ü. R. (2020). About the Double-Axe (Labrys)/Butterfly Symbols in an Offering Pit in Tisna. *Anadolu Araştırmaları*, (23), 71-89.
- Fejer, A. P. D. A. N. (2015). Witchcraft and women's spaces; a cultural materialism study of John Updike's The witches of Eastwick. *Alustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences*, 215(1), pp. 133-158.

- Ismael, Z.I, & Ali , S.A. Kh.(2022). Shehrazade's Legacy: Femicidal Fears in Angela Carter's Fiction. *Educational & Social Science Journal*. pp.248–257.
- Khalaf, R.J, & Diyaay, S. A. (2019). The Split Identity in Brain Friel's Play Philadelphia, Here I Come! *Alustath Journal for Human and Social Science*, 58(4), pp. 25–32.
- McCrea, N., & Ehrich, L. (2000). Completing an Educational Leadership Picture: Feminine Essentials from an Australian Perspective. *Women As School Executives: The Complete Picture*. Texas Council of Women School Executives, 48-54.
- Osborne, P. (2017). " I'm the Bitch that Makes You a Man": Conditional Love as Female Vengeance in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. In *Gender Forum*. 63, pp. 1-26
- Ritzer, G. (2022). *Contemporary sociological theory and its classical roots: The basics*. McGraw-Hill.
- Taylor, V., & Rupp, L. J. (1993). Women's culture and lesbian feminist activism: A reconsideration of cultural feminism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 19(1), 32-61.
- Törntorp, H. (2018). Mad or Misunderstood? A Study of the Different Portrayals of Mr. Rochester's First Wife in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Diss. Lund University.