

# Feminism Interpretation in *Gone Girl*

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*Gone Girl* begins with a suspense, which has attracted lots of readers. Facing serial mysteries, readers are interested in finding the suspect, but when they know the criminal, they think that gender relation behind the truth is more worthy of consideration, which makes them consider their identity again. From bizarre plots, readers can have an insight into the power relation between male and female and acclaim how Amy grasps her destiny in her brittle marriage. From a feminist perspective, social relations dominated by male still exist in modern society. However, the heroine Amy in *Gone Girl* is a feminist full of wisdom, and she refuses to be the appendage of man or submit to man's authority. She makes use of her wisdom to fight against her husband, getting what she wants and having the initiative in their marriage in the end.

*Keywords:* *Gone Girl*, feminism, equality

## Introduction

*Gone Girl*, published in 2012, is well-known as a thriller by Gillian Flynn. On top of a conventional thriller, *Gone Girl* also gives readers a sharp insight into the marital relationship and female self-identity in modern life.

The heroine Amy Elliott, born in a better-off family, is a writer. She, as a typical woman in new era, is brainy, educated and knows her own mind. In a party, Amy ran into Nick. They clicked. She thought they could keep this relationship: to be known by someone else, to be understood. He got her. She got him. Their lightning marriage was different from others but enjoyable. Amy was confident enough to know that Nick loved her, so she did not need to imitate her friends to make their husbands do endless small surrenders to prove their love. However, as time went by, when passion faded away, Nick felt frustrated because of his subordinate status in their marriage and was tired of managing their marital relationship. He even found a young hot mistress. Knowing that, Amy was unwilling to compromise but decided to rebel. She fabricated a kidnap and manipulated the police and media, aiming to let Nick confess his fault. She did it. To cooperate with the investigation, Nick had to admit his affair and express his affection for his wife in public. Seeing Nick, a frustrated coward who had no job but an affair, expressed his desire for his wife's coming in public, Amy knew that Nick would never dare to cheat on her anymore. She came back with public's sympathy. She proves that in their marriage, she wins at least, as far as she's concerned. As for Nick, he will be the captive in their marriage forever.

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### **Feminism in Literature**

There is no precise definition for feminism. Generally speaking, feminism refers to the Feminist Movement which manifests women's desire for equal right, respect, interest, and issue compared with men. In literature, the feminist movement aims at creating works in which woman is experiential subject, thinking subject, aesthetic subject, and speaking subject, criticizing the traditional one who is submissive, subordinate, passive, and obedient.

Virginia Woolf, a feminist pioneer, published *A Room of One's Own*, with its dictum "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Woolf, 1931, p. 2). As a feminist text, *A Room of One's Own* argues for both a literal and figurative space for woman in a society dominated by man.

This thesis aims at proving Amy, the heroine, as a victorious feminist fighter, has thrown off the shackles of marriage and society upon women.

### **The Rising of Amy's Female Consciousness**

Liberal Feminism thinks women should fight off domesticity, competing with men for the economic and social rewards available through paid work. It argues that the traditional domestic division of labor, where the man is the provider and the woman the homemaker, follows from the fact that the homemaker is more economically dependent on the provider. Liberal Feminism also believes their financial independence plays a significant role in women's legal rights to be equal.

#### **Amy's Individual Image**

Amy has strong personality. Some her friends who were married felt confused about her singleness. To their eye, there must be something wrong with girls like Amy who was pretty and smart and had a nice job and a happy family. But Amy said she was happily single. Her dating life rotated around three types of men: preppy Ivy Leagues; slick Wall Streeters, and sensitive smart boys. They seem like the most eligible men for marriage, but in the view of Amy, the point of marriage is "He gets her and she gets him" (Flynn, 2012, p. 40). She felt that she was not recognized and understood until she met Nick. As their marital status changed, Amy described herself "A happy, busy bumblebee of marital enthusiasm. I positively hum around him fussing and fixing. I have become a strange thing. I have become a wife. I have become a bore" (Flynn, 2012, p. 52). She felt her personality was waning gradually. When she found Nick was cheating on her, she had never been a nag, but fought against her husband's irresponsibility and infidelity. She always has contempt for the idea that men are designed to rule while women are meant to serve them. In her opinion, Nick killed her soul, which should be a crime. She would not let it go, so she began her plan to struggle for her identity.

Amy is the breadwinner in their family. Under the economic crisis, both of Amy and Nick lost their job. They had to live on Amy's trust fund. At the same time, Nick's mother had a cancer and needed chemo; it's Amy who helped to pay for his mother's medical care. Soon after, they left New York for Missouri to look after Nick's mother. In Missouri, Nick and his sister Mago opened a bar at the price of eighty thousand dollars borrowed from Amy. When Nick's tired of family life and stayed out with his friends all night, buying them drinks and taking them to strip clubs, the money he spent was on a credit card linked to Amy's bank account.

Amy is well-educated and brilliantly smart. She graduated from Harvard and achieved a master's degree in psychology. On their wedding anniversary, Amy always elaborated a treasure hunt—a game that Amy would write down some clues and Nick could find the place in which the anniversary gift was placed according to

these clues—to make their marriage more colorful. Each clue of the treasure hunt would include an experience of them, which was like the riddle in detective novel because every clue was brief but full of comprehensive meanings.

Realizing Nick's infidelity, she spent one year or so making a perfect plan—a staged kidnap scene—to make the police and public suspect and lash out Nick so that she can achieve national sympathy and support. For example, Amy opened the window and had a fierce argument with Nick about the baby thing near the window on purpose, so their neighbors would know that Amy wanted a baby but Nick did not. Amy had every intention of making friends with her neighbor Noelle Hawthorne, a mother of three and pregnant again. With the help of this so-called friend, Amy began her another trick. She faked herself a friendly people who chatted with Noelle about family every day and told her Nick's laziness and irresponsibility. She made the toilet in their house unflushable deliberately and then invited Noelle for lemonade. After Noelle left, Amy put Noelle's urine in the unflushable toilet into a glass jar. Having had a doctor's appointment, there is a pregnancy on her medical record. After Amy's disappearance, single-minded Noelle told the press Amy is pregnant while Nick is total bastard who is an irresponsible husband and lives off a woman, as was expected by Amy. In this way, in the eyes of the public, Amy is a submissive and eligible wife, and also wants to be a good mother. Nick possibly killed Amy because they could not reach an agreement on the baby issue but he was unwilling to divorce because if they were divorced he would turn into a poor guy with nothing. As a result, on those days when Amy's gone, the media were greatly attacking Nick.

In a patriarchal society, it's established that women should abandon their subjective consciousness and become the second sex that is inferior to men. Men's ideal wives always are those who have no personality or wishes, sacrificing their time and energy and pleasing men without complaining. In the new era, women's condition has greatly improved and many women with feminist consciousness have appeared. Amy is one of them. Firstly, she achieves financial independence. She receives good education and chooses a decent job with her will. Secondly, she achieves emotional independence. She chooses a man she loves to marry without soliciting her parents' opinion or having regret at missing those decent guys. Finally, she achieves personal independence. In their marriage, she is not a family-oriented housewife. She attaches importance to her career and marital relation. She keeps her disposition and does not turn into the cool girl that never gets angry to please the husband. It's more noticeable that their marriage is opposite to the one in patriarchal society. It is the wife Amy who supports the family. And when their marriage is in trouble, it is the husband who suffers from the public blame rather than the wife, which is the achievement of Amy's fight for her identity against Nick. Amy is a feminist from beginning to end.

### **Amy Making Nick a Captive in Their Marriage**

Encountering Nick's disloyalty, Amy did not choose to swallow humiliation silently or suppress her indignation; instead, she chose to fight against her husband. Highly intelligent Amy dominated public opinion, and made Nick admit his disloyalty and confess his irresponsibility and regrets to Amy. With the help of the media, Amy achieves the nation's sympathy while Nick has to turn a blind eye to Amy's conspiracy because he does not know how Amy will fight back and he still remembers the national detestation and attack against him. The only choice for him is to be silent and to be kept a captive in their marriage.

In face of husband's infidelity, Amy does not stay submissive or keep playing a good wife. She refuses to be the second sex in her marriage so she chooses to fight for her identity in an extreme way. During the fight

against her husband, she presents some distinct qualities of feminists. She is courageous, smart, ambitious, and decisive. She is a successful feminist fighter in the struggle against the patriarchal society.

### Conclusion

*Gone Girl* presents a suspenseful story about the aftermath of a gradually sick marriage in modern American society. It portrays that the heroine Amy struggled against her husband's disloyalty by setting traps for her husband, manipulating fickle mass media and singled-minded neighbor and gaining public sympathy, from which, *Gone Girl* gives rise to debates that center on the empowerment of women and the decline of patriarchy. Gillian Flynn affirms her feminist views of woman fighting for initiative and right to speak.

In *Gone Girl*, Amy is a tough feminist fighter, which appeals a great number of female community and acts as a catalyst for shattering the stereotype that female should always keep in a subordinate position in all respects.

With society promoting and people more educated, the majority of women can enjoy equal rights as men, but there is still prejudice against women in some respects. It's believed that marrying a rich man still seems like the most fortunate part of women's life. If the marriage fails, everyone will feel worried about the rest of life of the woman. But for man, there is still a great chance for him to marry someone who is even younger and prettier. Furthermore, woman can only work in a very narrow field. In face of these phenomena, feminism shimmers and develops deeply in mass media and real life. There is an increasing demand for women to be the protagonist telling their stories, and for women to get rid of the confines of men's imagination and domination. *Gone Girl* presents this insightful massage which will arouse sympathy among female community in a long time to come. Gillian Flynn does not encourage women to commit crime by imitating Amy when they suffer from husband's infidelity but expresses another perspective when they deal with the relationship between man and woman in marriage and family. Women should break the situation that man dominates and strive for their initiative.

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