

Psychoanalysis of the Protagonist in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*

Dissertation

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that the dissertation titled Psychoanalysis of the protagonist in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of B.A. (Honors) English is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Gazala Khan, and that any work conducted by earlier researchers and referred in this study has been duly acknowledged on the relevant pages of the dissertation. I further declare that the work reported in this dissertation has not been submitted either in part or in full for the award of any other degree or diploma of this University or any other University.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation Psychoanalysis of the protagonist in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* by Tanishka Rana is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of B.A. (Honours) English under the supervision of Dr. Gazala Khan, Department of English, School Of Language, Doon University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

This is an original work and the dissertation fulfills the requirements of this University and meets the standards for submission. The content of this dissertation have not been submitted either in part or in full for the award of any other degree or diploma in this or any other University.

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Abstract

This research work deals with the psychoanalysis given by Sigmund Freud. How a person behaves is explained under this theory. With the help of this theory the protagonist (Amy Dunne) of the novel *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn will be psychoanalyzed. This research will aim at tracing Amy's behaviour and thereby analyzing the reason for such behaviour. The study will also deal with the external causes that lead change in personality. It will be inferred that Amy has personality disorder. How this personality disorder governs Amy's action will be discussed in this research work. This work will primarily use Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis.

Library research is applied in order to find reliable stories in this research work. There are various sources used in this study, the book *Gone Girl* being the primary source, and various theoretical books, journals, articles and websites as the secondary source.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The theory of Psychoanalysis by the father of modern Psychology, Sigmund Freud, elaborates about the working of human mind i.e. its analysis. Moreover, psychoanalysis is not only a theory of human mind but a practice for curing those who are considered mentally ill or disturbed. Freud also explains the working of human behaviour, the dreams, drives and sexual arousals.

Psychoanalytical literary criticism, in layman language would mean critically analyzing any literary text through the lens of Freud's psychoanalysis. Certain literary texts and reviews reveal the repression of the author through some character in the text while some literary texts are projection of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. It can be divided into four kinds: author's relation to the text, work's content, formal construction of the text and the reader's intend. The key concepts used in psychoanalytical literary criticism include the unconscious, repression, id, ego, superego, different stages of growth and fixation.

Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn practically implores to be psychoanalyzed, primarily, the character of Amy Elliot Dunne, the female protagonist of the novel. While reading the novel, there often arise certain questions about Amy's actions- Why is she doing it, what is going on in her mind, what will be her next move or how can she be so inhuman? All these questions find their answers in Freud's theory. Thus a detailed psychoanalytical literary criticism becomes quite important. .

This work will primarily deal with Amy's personality disorder. Amy, the protagonist of the novel shows three types of personality disorders, which include- Narcissist Personality Disorder,

Anti-social Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. They more or less have symptoms. How Amy shows the symptoms of these personalities in the novel would be further discussed. The possible causes and triggers of these personalities would also be looked upon.

Freud in his psychoanalytical theory gave three main psychological apparatus, which are primarily responsible for the conduct of human behaviour: id, ego and superego. While id works on pleasure principle, superego works on reality principle. Id generates a desire, a wish, a demand and selfishly functions brain to work towards its fulfillment. On the other hand superego works to fulfill these demands in a more apt and accepted way. Often our id makes undesirable and unacceptable wishes but our superego moulds it according to the desirable society. Id in Amy seems to be in more power as she does everything motivated by her unfiltered id desires. Whether it is her disappearance, or her make-believe accusation on her husband or even the murder of her childhood friend Desi, Amy's superego is totally missing to perform its duties.

After all these discussions, a crucial question arises, what is the connection between psychoanalysis and literature? To answer this question simply we first need to understand Freud's theory of how individuals aim towards gaining pleasure and avoid pain and the theory of projection where one projects one's belief to another object or person. Thus, people read literature because they find it pleasurable. They at times project their feelings to a particular character. The vastness of literature let people live an alternate fictitious life while reading the text. Thus, it also becomes important to psychoanalyze a text with the reader's point of view.

Amy may look cool, calm and charming girl but within lays chaos, a chaos that need to be psychoanalyzed and thereby explain the actions. With all these views, through my research work I would be answering the question- What has she done?

Gillian Flynn's novel *Gone Girl* came as a shocker with an unexpected protagonist. People were shocked to read how dark this novel gets. Flynn was flooded with the questions regarding her background and if that was her inspiration behind writing this novel. Gillian Flynn, the author of the book- *Gone Girl*, born in Kansas, Missouri, she comes from a family of professors (her mother taught reading and her father film), this is parallel with Amy's parents who are writers, all this connects them to same field. In her high school, Gillian worked strange jobs, which hints that she did not have quite a pleasing school life. Through Amy's character, we might find Gillian's hidden desire for a charming school life. Gillian was also a crime reporter, which would have helped her creating such a storyline. Thus critics and readers were forced to think that, does the plotline have its roots in reality?

However, Gillian shuns away all these vague ideas. Flynn explains in an interview with *The Guardian*, how she "portrays women, her childhood love of horror- and how her marriage inspired the book"(Burkman 1). She mentions in one of the interviews that she wanted to portray a female villain, a female perspective of things "I'll write a column from Amy's point of view"(Vineyard 8). In an interview with *Vulture*, through Amy's certain dialogues Flynn tries to

Explains the tremendous pressure that's on women, not in a boo-hoo, poor us kind of way, but acknowledging that idea that, there's something wrong with the fact that we're constantly willing to make ourselves over for men, that we're so interested in pleasing men in a way that men would never do for women. (Vineyard 9)

Further she also adds how women an angry woman is always considered to be 'crazy'.

Since her childhood Flynn had passion for horror. “She watched Psycho Alien and “Bonnie and Clyde at an age one probably shouldn’t”(Burkeman 7). Gillian just got married to her husband, Brett Nolan when she wrote this book. She states her agony in one of the interviews about “What is marriage? What should it be? What shouldn’t it be?”(Burkeman 6). The solution to this agitation was shown in the novel when Amy when was drunk in love with Nick and she thought that marriage is so easy and she don’t understand why people find it difficult to cope with.

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Chapter 2

Amy's psychoanalysis

Amy as a Narcissist and Perfectionist

Amy was definitely suffering from Narcissist Personality Disorder. In Narcissist personality disorder a person has “inflated idea of themselves and a need for lots of attention from other people”(Nazario 1). Amy's narcissism is rooted back in her childhood and her parents are primarily responsible for that. They released a book named ‘Amazing Amy’ with Amy as the inspiration for this “beloved children's –book series”. This book portrayed Amy nearly as a perfect girl that could ever exist. Good grades at school, every guy wanting her, every girl wanting to be friends with her, always upright and correct in what she did- the perfect girl. This is where Amy gets obsessed with herself, she began associating herself with the book Amy, and she takes pride in being the “inspiration of the book Amazing Amy”. She grows up to be the shadow of the fictional ‘Amazing Amy’:

I've never been more to them than a symbol anyway, the walking ideal. Amazing Amy in the flesh. Don't screw up, you are Amazing Amy. Our only one. There is an unfair responsibility that comes with being an only child – you grow up knowing you aren't allowed to disappoint, you're not even allowed to die. There isn't a replacement toddling around; you're it. It makes you desperate to be flawless, and it also makes you drunk with the power. In such ways are despots made. (Flynn 250)

This dialogue hints how Amy had this parental pressure on her to be ‘perfect’, flawless.

She was afraid to mess up her image and thereby messing up her parent's career, their life. This pressure to be the 'perfect Amazing Amy' eventually became the very behaviour and personality of Amy:

My parents have always worried that I'd take Amy too personally – they always tell me not to read too much into her. And yet I can't fail to notice that whenever I screw something up, Amy does it right: When I finally quit violin at age twelve, Amy was revealed as a prodigy in the next book. ('Sheesh, violin can be hard work, but hard work is the only way to get better!') When I blew off the junior tennis championship at age sixteen to do a beach weekend with friends, Amy recommitted to the game. ('Sheesh, I know it's fun to spend time with friends, but I'd be letting myself and everyone else down if I didn't show up for the tournament.') This used to drive me mad, but after I went off to Harvard (and Amy correctly chose my parents' alma mater), I decided it was all too ridiculous to think about. That my parents, two child psychologists, chose this particular public form of passive-aggressiveness toward their child was not just fucked up but also stupid and weird and kind of hilarious. So be it. (Flynn 25-26)

One of the triggers of Personality Disorder such as Narcissist Personality Disorder is the person's childhood and environment. Amy was the eighth child of Marybeth and Rand (Amy's parents), before Amy all the seven children died, thus when Amy finally survived, her parents pampered her to extend. Amy too herself associated great worth to this so-called 'achievement' of hers:

I grew up feeling special, proud. I was the girl who battled oblivion and won.

The chances were about 1 percent, but I did it. I ruined my mother's womb in the process – my own prenatal Sherman's March. Marybeth would never have another baby. As a child, I got a vibrant pleasure out of this: just me, just me, only me. (Flynn 223)

This dialogue not only hints towards the fact that Amy's narcissism is rooted back in her childhood, with her highly elevated conception that she did something great by being born alive, but also towards her narcissist side. Amy desires all of her parents' attention thus doesn't wish to have another child in the family:

It bothers me that my marriage is disintegrating and I don't know what to do. You'd think that my parents, the double psychologists, would be the obvious people to talk to, but I have too much pride. They would not be good for marital advice: They are soul mates, remember? They are all peaks, no valleys – a single, infinite burst of marital ecstasy. I can't tell them I am screwing up the one thing I have left: my marriage. They'd somehow write another book, a fictional rebuke in which Amazing Amy celebrated the most fantastic, fulfilling, bump-free little marriage ever ... because she put her mind to it.

(Flynn 180-181)

In these lines Amy seems to be agitated over the fact that unlike the book Amy, she is not happily married in her life, things in her marital life seems to be 'disintegrated'. She also hates that like her parents she is not happily married- she does not have an idealized life. This also brings into light how Amy has always idealized her parents and wanted to have a similar life.

In the beginning of the novel, it could be noted that Amy was not satisfied with her current position in her life, she was not happy that she is “just a quiz writer”(Flynn 9). In her journal she states:- “At a party you find yourself surrounded by genuine talented people, employed at highprofile, respected newspapers and magazines. You are merely writer of quizzes for women’s rags” (Flynn 9). She seemed embarrassed to tell her about her low-key profession.

Later in the scene she decides to tell about her profession including the fact that she is the “inspiration for a beloved children’s –book series...Amazing Amy”(Flynn 20). Amy was obsessed over the fact that she was famous once. Now she no longer posses that popularity but she is fixated to it. The book ‘Amazing Amy’ is one of the major reasons for Amy’s narcissist personality disorder.

Nick, Amy’s husband once claimed that the book “Amazing Amy” has “quizzes at the end of every chapter”(Flynn 75). The quizzes gave options just like Amy creates options for herself in any situation. Among these options, one option made Amy the right person and it was always the answer “because Amy is always right, in every story”(Flynn 75). Amy became accustomed to always being right, flawless.

In the chapter ‘Nick Dunne- eight days gone’ a more vicious and inhumane side of Amy comes into light. Amy’s school friend or rather just someone who knew Amy better, Hilary Handy revealed a shocking incident about Amy. Nick even mentions how “If you said she looked beautiful, she knew that was a fact. If you said she was brilliant, it wasn’t flattery, it was her due”(Flynn 342). This shows how much self- obsessed or narcissist Amy is:

...it wasn’t like I was a pariah, I was just ... insecure, for sure. Amy was already

The Girl. Like, first day, I remember, everyone knew her, everyone was talking

about her. She was Amazing Amy – we’d all read those books growing up – plus, she was just gorgeous. Right. And pretty soon she was showing an interest in me, like, taking me under her wing or whatever. She had this joke that she was Amazing Amy, so I was her sidekick Suzy, and she started calling me Suzy, and pretty soon everyone else did, too. Which was fine by me. I mean, I was a little toadie: Get Amy a drink if she was thirsty, throw in a load of laundry if she needed clean underwear. (Flynn 278)

These lines show how manipulative Amy could be. Amy was a tactical woman knowing when to play the right move. She befriends Hilary Handy for her selfish motives, Amy wanted a sidekick just as in the book ‘Amazing Amy’, and thus she acted all nice with her tacking advantage of her situation. Then:

a few weird things happened at once that I knew kind of bothered her”. “A guy from our brother school, he meets us both at the fall dance, and the next day he calls me instead of Amy. Which I’m sure he did because Amy was too intimidating, but whatever ... and then a few days later, our midterm grades come, and mine are slightly better, like, four-point-one versus four-point. And not long after, one of our friends, she invites me to spend Thanksgiving with her family. Me, not Amy. Again, I’m sure this was because Amy intimidated people. She wasn’t easy to be around, you felt all the time like you had to impress. (Flynn 278)

This was the point where Amy got jealous and she decided to turn over people’s attention to herself. As Hilary further tells her story she says:

... she starts getting me to do things. I don't realize it at the time, but she starts setting me up. She asks if she can color my hair the same blond as hers, because mine's mousy, and it'll look so nice a brighter shade. And she starts complaining about her parents. How they only love her as an idea and not really for who she is – so she says she wants to mess with her parents. She has me start prank-calling her house, telling her parents I'm the new Amazing Amy she'd tell me to stand outside their house – one time she had me run up to her mom and tell her I was going to get rid of Amy and be her new Amy. Then she starts distancing herself. She gets cold. And I think – I think that she doesn't like me anymore. Girls at school start looking at me funny. I'm shut out of the cool circle. Fine. But then one day I'm called into the principal's office. Amy has had a horrible accident – twisted ankle, fractured arm, cracked ribs. Amy has fallen down this long set of stairs, and she says it was me who pushed her." Amy did not stop here, as Hilary further tells, "About a month after...I got a letter. It wasn't signed, it was typed, but it was obviously Amy. It was a list of all the ways I'd let her down. Crazy stuff: Forgot to wait for me after English, twice. Forgot I am allergic to strawberries, twice.....I feel like Amy wanted people to believe she really was perfect. And as we got to be friends, I got to know her. And she wasn't perfect. You know? She was brilliant and charming and all that, but she was also controlling and OCD and a drama queen and a bit of a liar. (Flynn 279-280)

This incident tells a lot about Amy's narcissist character. Amy can cross any limit to take revenge, clearly if she can harm herself by deliberately falling from the stairs she is capable of doing more bad.

This was something so horrible and scary done by Amy. This particular instance shows that how far Amy can go for her needs and desires. As Freud calls “narcissism, a state in which one's body or ego as a whole is 'cathected', or taken as an object of desire”(Eagleton 134). It was Amy's desperate desire to be the perfect girl whom everyone admire that she acted in this ‘insane way’. Amy has a ‘sense of entitlement’, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with her expectations.

Another incident narrated by Amy's ex-boyfriend also gives quite a glimpse into Amy's character. Tommy O'Hara narrated his story:

we start dating, and we date a few months, two, three months, and then I find out the catch: She's not the girl I thought I was dating. She can quote funny things, but she doesn't actually like funny things. She'd rather not laugh, anyway. In fact, she'd rather that I not laugh either, or be funny, which is awkward since it's my job, but to her, it's all a waste of time. I mean, I can't even figure out why she started dating me in the first place, because it seems pretty clear that she doesn't even like me. (Flynn 266)

Further he tells how clever Amy was to find about him being not interested in her anymore. “The girl knew how to work me up”(Flynn 267). Amy then devices a trap, she had “consensual sex” with Tommy yet she planned things in a way that proved it to be a ‘rape’ and Tommy O'Hara a ‘rapist’. “... two cops are at my door, and they've done a rape kit on Amy, and she has “wounds consistent with forcible rape”(Flynn 267). And she has ligature marks on her wrists, and when they search my apartment, there on the headboard of my bed are two ties – like, neckties – tucked down near the mattress, and the ties are, quote, “consistent with the ligature marks.” Just as in the

previous story of Hilary, Amy did not stop here. She has this cruel desire to make people suffer and make them remember with whom they messed up. So, similarly as with Hilary she sent Tommy an “anonymous, typed” letter which “says: Maybe next time you’ll think twice”(Flynn 267). Here it is evident that Amy always pretends to be ‘perfect’ – the opposite of what she actually is. Tommy found this and began distancing herself from Amy:

I start making excuses not to hang out so much. I don’t call it off, because I’m an idiot, and she’s gorgeous. I’m hoping it might turn around. But you know, I’m making excuses fairly regularly: I’m stuck at work, I’m on deadline, I have a friend in town, my monkey is sick, whatever. And I start seeing this other girl, kinda sorta seeing her, very casual, no big deal....But Amy finds out – how, I still don’t know, for all I know, she was staking out my apartment. (Flynn 266)

Amy being self-centered could not accept this rejection and went all crazy to take her revenge.

As given in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th Edition* (1994), a narcissist is “interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own needs”. It could be noted that Amy was exploitative:

I’ve called devoted Desi to my aid (and abet). Desi, with whom I’ve never entirely lost touch, and who – despite what I’ve told Nick, my parents – doesn’t unnerve me in the slightest. Desi, another man along the Mississippi. I always knew he might come in handy. It’s good to have at least one man you can use for anything. Desi is a white-knight type. He loves troubled women. (Flynn 311)

It is evident from this dialogue that Amy planned to use Desi for her selfish purpose. Amy, the narcissist had no regard for Desi's feelings and emotions for her, she just shamelessly exploit them. Desi who had a crush on Amy earlier had now moved on and began living afresh in Missouri, Amy appeared in his life making him believe that she still have residual feelings for him. This totally tells how Amy suffers from narcissist personality disorder, who selfishly 'uses' Desi.

"One symptom of a narcissistic personality disorder is sadism"(Kamau 1), when someone seeks pleasure by inflicting pain upon others. Narcissists imply that because they are inflicting pain, they are superior. Some even consider Narcissistic Personality Disorder as 'God Complex'. Hilary also notes that "Amy likes to play God when she's not happy. Old Testament God" (The Christ) (Flynn 275). Amy just like God punishes people who ever hurt her. She takes immense pleasure in inflicting pain and to see people suffer. "It is anarchic, sadistic, aggressive, selfinvolved and remorselessly pleasure-seeking, under the sway of what Freud calls the pleasure principle; nor does it have any respect for differences of gender"(Eagleton 134).

All the above mentioned instances from the novel hint that Amy was brought up as a narcissist and now all she seeks is attention and incase she does not get it she goes to extremes. As stated in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th Edition* (1994), a narcissist is preoccupied "with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance beauty, or ideal love". Amy too was fascinated by the idea of 'perfect' girl getting 'perfect' life and husband. This idealization of a 'perfect' relationship came to Amy from seeing her parents' 'perfect' marriage, their 'perfect' success story. Amy wanted the same for herself. This also shows how environment influence Narcissism in an individual.

When Amy's life seemed to fall apart she decided to take drastic steps. Her parents went bankrupt and lend money from Amy as Amazing Amy was not doing well. Maybe here Amy connected the book's downfall with her own downfall. The way book wasn't doing well, Amy too wasn't doing well in her life. She too nearly lost everything in her life- her lifestyle, her job, and even her husband's love and attention.

Under his theory of psychical apparatus, Freud talks about Id (Es), Ego (Ich) and Superego (Uber-Ich). As given in *NCERT Psychology Textbook for class XII 1st Edition*, Freud defines Id as “the source of person's instinctual energy. It deals with immediate gratification of primitive needs, sexual desires and aggressive impulses. It works on the pleasure principle, which assumes that people seek pleasure and try to avoid pain”. According to Freud “Id does not care for moral values, society, or other individual”. Amy too seems to be working for her pleasure principle mainly her aggressive impulses and in doing so she overlooks moral values, societal norms and other individuals. Second there is Ego which “grows out of id” and “seeks to satisfy an individual's needs in accordance with reality”. Lastly, Superego is the “moral branch of mental functioning” and it “tells the id and the ego whether gratification in a particular instance is ethical”. In Amy's case her Id seems to be more dominating while Ego and Superego remains inactive or non-functioning. Amy works selflessly towards fulfillment of the desires and needs generated by Id. Her Id generates the desire to take revenge and she without even considering any reality or ethics acts towards its completion.

Under his theory of drives Freud explains that drives are the forces that lie behind the tensions caused by the needs of the Id. “They represent the physical demands on the psyche”. According to Freud the two basic drives are ‘Eros (life drive)’ and ‘Thanatos (Death or Destruction Drive)’. The

aim of 'Eros' is "to establish and maintain ever greater unities" whereas the aim of 'Thanatos' is "to dissolve connections, and thus destroy things....In the biological function the two basic drives work against one another or combine with one other" (Freud 5). So, if death drive in a person is high the person would be more destructive. Freud himself explains in his essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" that it was the analysis of sadism that forced him to assume a destruction drive. Thus, it can be said that Amy's narcissism is mainly due to her destruction drive being dominant. Freud also explained the word 'libido', "the instinctual life force that energizes the id", as explained in *NCERT Psychology Textbook for class XII 1st Edition*. This libidal energy is the driving force of all behaviour. This libidal energy is limited and is stored in ego. This state is called "absolute, primary narcissism. It lasts until the Ich (ego) begins to invest its notions of objects with libido, to transform narcissistic libido into object libido"(Freud 6). Thus if a person's libido is fixation to Ego, they will utilize this libidal energy for narcissist purpose as in the case of Amy. Personality dynamics, according to Freud is how psychic energy is distributed and used by id, ego, and superego. In Amy, most of this energy is utilized by id and since the id is very dominant, it cannot be controlled by the ego and the superego. Thus there is no harness controlling id or restraining id to take drastic steps.

It could be noticed that all her life Amy was trying to be the non-fictitious version of the 'Amazing Amy'. "For Lacan, the ego is just this narcissistic process whereby we bolster up a fictive sense of unitary selfhood by finding something in the world with which we can identify"(Eagleton 154).

The book was not doing well and so was her life. Amy lost her job as a magazine quiz writer. Nick lost his job. Amy had to move to Missouri, her husband's home town as his mother was sick

and there Nick had a bar to run with his sister, Go (and a job). Amy was never appreciative of moving to Missouri from New York, leaving her glamorous life behind. While her husband adjusted quite well considering that he spent his childhood there, Amy had trouble settling in. Their marriage seemed to be bitter now as the romance which once was so high was lost now. Notwithstanding these situations Amy wanted things to work out “we can still find a way to make this work. Faith!” (Flynn 224). Until a revelation that changed her mind, that “Nick is cheating”(Flynn 224). This incident further triggers her narcissism:

I was an Average Dumb Woman Married to Average Shitty Man. He had single-handedly de-amazed Amazing Amy”. “I could hear the tale, how everyone would love telling it: how Amazing Amy, the girl who never did wrong, let herself be dragged, penniless, to the middle of the country, where her husband threw her over for a younger woman. How predictable, how perfectly average, how amusing. And her husband? He ended up happier than ever. No. I couldn't allow that. No. Never. Never. He doesn't get to do this to me and still fucking win. No. (Flynn 225)

Amy grew more revengeful as she kept following her husband when he went out to meet his extramarital affair, the college girl Andie. She decides to take revenge on Nick. “Nick must be taught a lesson”. It can be noted that Amy could not accept the fact that her husband loves someone else, that he no longer loves her, and that she no longer attracts him. Moreover she was perturbed to know that her marriage was ending, that she was not the ‘perfect Amazing Amy’ with a ‘perfect’ husband and her ‘perfect’ marriage. Thus, she plotted her own murder just to frame Nick and take her revenge. She partly did it for attention as she was loved the idea how the whole town of

Missouri was talking about her, how everyone was sympathizing with her, “because everyone loves the dead girl”(Flynn 225). Amy took her revenge because she could not digest the fact that she is no longer her husband’s first choice.

You know Amy; she needs to win. She’s less pissed off that I cheated than that I picked someone else over her. She’ll want me back just to prove that she’s the winner. Don’t you agree? Just seeing me begging her to come back so I can worship her properly, it will be hard for her to resist. (Flynn 342)

“Influenced by Melanie Klein who suggested early primitive envy to represent a malignant and severe form of innate aggression, both Rosenfeld (1964, 1971) and Kernberg (1984) considered the aggressive drive and aggression central to pathological narcissism”(Campbell and Miller 43). “Aggressive, dissociated, and projected superego functions represent another source of aggression in the narcissistic individual. Such severe superego pathology leads to the syndrome of “malignant narcissism” (Kernberg 1984), characterized by antisocial behavior, paranoid ideation, and egosyntonic aggression and sadism”(Campbell and Miller 43). Amy too was anti-social considering the fact that she had no friend from her school or college and even she is not in contact with any of her colleges. Even in Missouri she never tried to make connections or friends (except for the one whom she befriends only for a part in her plan).

Heinz Kohut recognized “narcissistic rage” as a powerful violent and destructive affective force, an unrelenting compulsion, described as “orderly and organized activities in which the perpetrators’ destructiveness is alloyed with absolutarian conviction about their greatness and with their devotion to archaic omnipotent figure”(Campbell and Miller 44). The way devices and executes her plans surely proves this view of Kohut. The way she dealt with Hilary and Tommy

was definitely a series of orderly organized activities to trap them. Most part of the novel deal with this planning and plotting Amy did just to frame Nick. She created the whole “treasure hunt” game on their fifth wedding anniversary.

The locations in this game although seems related to their relationship, were the places where Nick cheated her with Andie. This could also be considered a psychopath move as it shows how desperate Amy was to outsmart Nick. Amy planned her moves so well that she befriended this Missouri lady, Noelle, to further gain sympathy from the crowd on the pretext of being poor pregnant woman murdered by her cheating husband. “I’ve already left enough for the police to make a case against Nick: the staged scene, the mopped-up blood, and the credit-card bills. All these will be found by even the most incompetent police departments. Noelle will spill my pregnancy news very soon (if she hasn’t already)” (Flynn 235). She planned everything really well that could shock anyone like the hiding of the half burned diary in Nick’s father house, which would further incriminate Nick for destroying the evidence.

Amy’s anti-social personality

“Anti-social personality disorder is a mental health condition in which a person has a long-term pattern of manipulating, exploiting or violating the rights of others”, as stated by *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5th Edition* (2013). As noted in the lines individual with anti-social personality disorder tends to violate laws and so does Amy. She holds no regard for any laws rather just aims to break them. The fact that she plotted her own murder, framed her husband and later even killed Desi, all hint towards Amy’s anti-social personality.

I collected cash forwards from credit cards I took out in Nick’s name – the cards that would make him look like a greedy little cheat – and I siphoned off another

\$4,400 from our bank accounts over the months: withdrawals of \$200 or \$300, nothing to attract attention. I stole from Nick, from his pockets, a \$20 here, a \$10 there, a slow deliberate stockpile – it's like that budgeting plan where you put the money you'd spend on your morning Starbucks into a jar, and at the end of the year you have \$1,500. And I'd always steal from the tip jar when I went to The Bar. (Flynn 237)

This instance tells us how Amy does not mind stealing money for her the purpose of her run. She does not at all consider stealing money an offence or rather she is not even afraid of any punishment as she knows that she will devise a perfect cover plan as she always does. She also misleads her pregnancy results.

Anti-social personalities also tend to get manipulative. Amy too was manipulative since the beginning. She was manipulative with Hilary, Tommy and later Desi. She nearly ruled the way these people act and behave. With Hilary, she manipulated her into being her 'sidekick Suzy'. She even manipulated Tommy to be in a relationship with her and later even to have sex with her- as Tommy said "The girl knew how to work me"(Flynn 267). The worst victim of manipulative Amy was Desi. As Amy says "Desi has loved me ever since the lie", this dialogue tells us how manipulative Amy can be to make a person believe in her lies, her fake story. She told Desi how unhappy she was after marrying Nick. And Desi is not only the one manipulated, Amy manipulates anyone and everyone around her. She manipulated her parents and authorities to believe in the fake story she created to frame Hilary and even the police in Tommy's case. Her own parents were manipulated, they blindly believed every story Amy told them. She emotionally manipulated Noelle into believing that she was pregnant. Even Nick realized that "After all these years, Amy

could still play me. She could write a few notes and get me back completely. I was her little puppet on a string”(Flynn 221). Amy engaged him in the whole wedding game- the “treasure hunt” only to take her revenge which he never realized. She is not “Amazing Amy” but “Avenging Amy”.

A big part of Amy’s manipulation was her diary where she created pseudo-Amy, the one everyone would like, as Amy herself says, “She was meant to be likable. Meant for someone like you to like her” (Flynn 227). This diary was so manipulative that even the police believed the fake story Amy was putting and nearly declared Nick as the murderer of his wife. The diary Amy was the opposite of how Amy actually was. It can be considered that this diary Amy is like a whole another personality of Amy which she opted to appeal pleasing to people. This also hints towards the fact that Amy had trouble sticking to one personality. What she writes in her diary she thought opposite of it. In the diary she mentions that she is trying to settle in Missouri, however in reality she loathe her moving into a small town like Missouri.

Borderline personality disorder in Amy

In *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th Edition* symptoms of Borderline personality disorder are instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image issue, difficulty in managing behaviors and emotions, impulsivity, making frantic efforts to avoid abandonment, identity disturbance and difficulties with anger. Borderline personality would be diagnosed if there is the evidence of emotional liability, anxiousness, separation insecurity, depressivity, impulsivity, risk-taking and hostility.

Amy no doubt has instable inter-personal relationships; she had no friend except for the one she made for framing Nick. She lost all her contacts because she is a ‘psychopath’. All people eventually break up all ties with her. Even Nick, her husband somewhere realized that maybe Amy

is not a good match for her and thus, even tried to divorce her. Amy tries to be the ‘cool’ girl for Nick:

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. Can you imagine, finally showing your true self to your spouse, your soul mate, and having him not like you? So that’s how the hating first began. I’ve thought about this a lot, and that’s where it started, I think. (Flynn 217)

Amy was never the ‘cool’ girl she was pretending to be. Amy had to change her personality to please. And when she shows her true self, Nick cheats on her. Similarly, when Tommy realized that Amy is not the girl that she is pretending to be, he starts distancing himself. This also hints that Amy also had issues with self-image.

The novel also traces Amy’s impulsivity, hostility and difficulties in dealing with anger. Amy is impulsive with the people around her who do not give her the attention. Amy is also indulged in self-harm. She slit her own wrists, broke her own bone and even sexually assaulted herself. All these are risk-taking tasks done by Amy. Further risk-taking tasks may be planning her own disappearance, stealing money and even killing somebody. All these could be counted as ‘frantic efforts to avoid abandonment’. Amy always wanted attention from everyone- she wanted her husband to be mad in love with her and when she learns about his affair, she was dawning with the fear of abandonment. This also leads to separation anxiety, the fear of being separated with people they are close and thereby being abandoned.

Sexually frustrated Amy

The novel shows few hints which show that Amy was sexually frustrated, which also pushed her towards Borderline Personality Disorder. Amy explains how enthusiastically she and her husband were once head over heels for one another. “We do silly things, like last weekend we drove to Delaware because neither of us have ever had sex in Delaware” (Flynn 38).

We’ll eat lobster with butter and have sex on the floor while a woman on one of our old jazz records sings to us in her far-side-of-the-tunnel voice. We’ll get slowly lazy-drunk on good Scotch, Nick’s favorite”. “Then maybe we’ll have sex again. And a late-night burger. And more Scotch. Voilà: happiest couple on the block! (Flynn 39)

All these instances show that they were the ‘perfect’ couple that everyone wants to be- Amy was delighted over the thought of being the extraordinary couple. She even felt that she is drunk in love and that marriage is quite simple to keep. However, Amy is proved wrong when she finds her husband cheating. She also gets jealous that now her husband has a new sex-partner while she remains deprived. This also triggers her narcissist personality, she cannot see her husband getting all the fun and pleasure while she suffers in the town of Missouri.

Amy, the Psychopath

Above mentioned all instances justify Amy as a psychopath. All the theory and examples points Amy as a psychopath who tends to cross limits. Psychopathy is characterized by diagnostic

features such as superficial charm, high intelligence, poor judgment and failure to learn from experience. Amy no doubt was charming that Tommy, Desi and Nick fell for her charms. Amy sure is intelligent considering she planned everything so that well that everyone believed it to be true. And she did have poor judgment as she was unable to judge the intentions of Jeff and Greta, the inmates of the place Amy was hiding. They rob Amy of all her cash and leave her cashless and miserable. Amy was not able to judge the danger she is prone to carrying a huge amount of cash with her and also she cannot call cops if she falls in danger as she was hiding. Notwithstanding her poor judgment skills, Amy did have intelligence. Thus, she was able to quickly plan further- she “called devoted Desi” (Flynn 311) to her aid.

Amy was also a psychopath in the sense that all this fake murder scenario and framing Nick was a game, a contest to her. “...I get to be sweet missing pregnant lady, my parents suffer even more, Ellen Abbott can’t resist. Honestly, it was thrilling to be selected finally, officially for Ellen among all the hundreds of other cases. It’s sort of like a talent competition: You do the best you can, and then it’s out of your hands, it’s up to the judges”(Flynn 250), these lines show how Amy was enjoying the misery of other people just as a psychopath would.

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Conclusion

This chapter would conclude the analysis done in previous chapter on Amy Elliot Dunne. After psychoanalysis of Amy Elliot Dunne, it was noticed that Amy was suffering from various psychological disorders.

The research question “why is she doing it”, is answered and analyzed. Amy was brought up in an environment, which nurtured her into person seeking perfectionism. Perfection is the thing that Amy seeks and fights for as her parents compared her with the “Amazing Amy” from the book. This comparison eventually became an obsession for Amy. Amy wanted to be the perfect, ideal woman in every aspect. She wanted a perfect school life, perfect college life, a perfect profession and even a perfect marriage- a perfect husband. This whole idea of perfection gave rise to Narcissist Personality Disorder in Amy. With narcissism came the attention seeking factor. Amy wants people to notice her, talk about her and love her. If Amy does not get this attention she can and does every extreme thing. This is the most dangerous thing about Amy that she will do absolutely anything and everything from stealing, lying, blackmailing, manipulating, and self-harming to even murdering someone.

Amy was the single child of her parents and being born after seven miscarriages and stillborn, she was definitely pampered. She was spoiled by the excessive love of her parents. Amy has always got what she wanted and even she does not, she knows how to get it. She gets people’s attention back on her by taking revenge from Hilary, took revenge from Tommy for cheating on her by putting false rape allegations on him and she also frames her husband for her murder to seek revenge for cheating on her. It was Amy environment and childhood that molded Amy’s personality.

Amy Dunne's psychoanalysis shows that she has narcissist personality disorder, anti-social personality and borderline personality disorder. Amy shows symptoms from all these personality disorders. Amy is impulsive, hostile, aggressive, reckless, inhumane, manipulative, law-breaker etc. The cause of these personalities is Amy's environment, her peers, her parents and lastly her husband. They all were triggers to the outburst of Amy's personality. Amy suffers from three personality disorders out of ten personality disorder.

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