

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Mystery-thriller is one of the genres in literature. Mystery is “a genre of literature whose stories focus on a mysterious crime, situation or circumstance that needs to be solved” (“Mystery”). A thriller is “a genre of literature, film, and television whose primary feature is that it induces strong feelings of excitement, anxiety, tension, suspense, fear, and other similar emotions in its readers or viewers—in other words, media that thrills the audience” (“Thriller”). One of the well-known mystery-thriller novelists today is Gillian Flynn. Flynn is an American author with a master degree in journalism and ten years experience as a staff writer at *Entertainment Weekly* magazine. Flynn is known for her darkly entertaining tales of murder and deceit in the Midwest (Pallardy). From the novels that she has published so far, it is obvious that she likes writing books with a dark and twisted plot.

Gillian Flynn has published four novels, *Sharp Objects*, *Dark Places*, *Gone Girl*, and *The Grownup*, that have always been listed in the *New York Times*

bestseller. Two of her novels have been turned into films, *Dark Places* in 2015 and *Gone Girl* in 2014, directed by David Fincher. Her first two novels, *Sharp Objects* and *Dark Places*, are two thriller novels in which both protagonists are single women who are dealing with their psychological puzzle in their past in order to survive in life. Meanwhile, *Gone Girl*, her third novel, is a mystery-thriller novel that is chosen to be analyzed in this thesis.

*Gone Girl* is a story about the life of a married couple, Nick and Amy Dunne, who narrate the same events from two different points of view. It begins with Amy's disappearance on their wedding anniversary and somehow it puts Nick as the suspect. According to Nick, he is innocent and he tries to prove his innocence. Meanwhile Amy's point of view shows what really happened to her. As the story goes the readers would have to keep guessing about the truth behind the whole events. *Gone Girl* has won nine awards and has been on *New York Times* bestseller for over 130 weeks and it has sold more than 2 million copies both print and digital only in the first year of its publication (Anolik). Michelle Weiner from *Associated Press* also said that it was her most intricately twisted and deliciously sinister story (Flynn). John Kelly from *Cincinnati City Beat* stated that "*Gone Girl* is a fast-paced, always surprising page-turner of a book .... *Gone Girl* is a superbly crafted novel by a talented and daring young writer and it will keep you guessing until the very last sentence" (Flynn).

As mentioned earlier, *Gone Girl* is a mystery-thriller novel, which has its strongest element in its plot. The elements of plot consist of suspenses, surprises and the artistic unity. Suspense "refers to the anticipation of readers (or of an audience) concerning the outcome of events in a novel, story, or play" (E-Martin).

Surprise “occurs when the events in the story violate the expectations the reader has formed” (“Handbook of Literary Terms”). Artistic unity is a “condition of a successful literary work whereby all its elements work together for the achievement of its central purpose” (“Artistic Unity”). In an artistically unified work, “nothing is included that is irrelevant to the central purpose, nothing is omitted that is essential to it, and the parts are arranged in the most effective order for the achievement of that purpose” (“Artistic Unity”).

For the approach, I use formalism to analyze the elements of plot in the novel. “Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical, or intellectual contexts” (“Formalism”). In formalism, the focus is the text itself without having to refer to other aspects outside the text.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems to be analyzed in this thesis are:

1. What are the suspenses in the novel?
2. What are the surprises in the novel?
3. How is the artistic unity built in the novel?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the above problems, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show the suspenses in the novel.
2. To show the surprises in the novel.
3. To show how the artistic unity in the novel is built.

## **Method of Research**

The method I used in this thesis was library research. First, I read *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn as the primary text. Then, I took some information from Internet sites and references to support my analysis of the elements of plot in the novel. In the end, I drew a conclusion from the whole discussion.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into three chapters, which are preceded by Table of Contents and Abstract. Chapter One consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two presents the analysis of suspense, surprise and artistic unity in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. Chapter Three contains the conclusion of the analysis. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendixes, which consist of the synopsis of the novel and biography of the author.