CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Woman struggles in seizing equality and justice on second-half of twentieth century are surrounded by some significant movements in certain field, such as in politics, household, career and education. Woman made a huge progress to deal with fairness and balance. In step with this spirit, literary of female is also make a great leap. The women writers have to appear through a variety of literary works as a statement that women also have the similar chance and capability to create masterpieces of work like male author or famously classified as literary canon.

One name of female authors who contributes in crafting female literary canon in contemporary literature is Gillian Flynn. She is known for her works such as *Sharp Objects* (2006)*, Dark Places* (2009) and *Gone Girl* (2012). Flynn's *Dark Places* got several prestigious awards like New York Times bestseller, New Yorker Reviewers' Favorite, Weekend Today Top Summer Read, Publishers Weekly Best Book of 2009, and Chicago Tribune Favorite Fiction choice. In 2015, the movie adaptation starring Charlize Theron was released.

Flynn's last novel, *Gone Girl*, is also celebrated as an international sensation and being New York Times bestseller lists. *Gone Girl* was named one of the best books of the year by People Magazine and Janet Maslin at the New York Times. Nominated for both the Edgar Award and the Anthony Award for Best Novel, Flynn wrote the screenplay for David Fincher's adaptation of Gone Girl (2014) for the big screen, starring Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike.

Unsurprisingly, there must be certain reason behind Flynn's achievement in these novels. Things that make readers wonder and awe through her literary devices such as characterization, plot-building or hidden themes. At the first sight, Flynn provides the reader an adventure of irony behind the story of Libby Day as a female main protagonist. Libby is a girl who survived the serial murder in Texas in 1985. As the fortune ones, adult Libby in contrary grows up as a wasteful human being who has no purpose of life, a cynic, kleptomaniac, cold-blood and idler as she concedes "I was not a lovable child, […] unlovable adult. Draw a picture of my soul, and it'd be a scribble with fangs" (10). Through this characterization, Flynn creates an ironic character which is not sympathetic at all.

Furthermore, Flynn continues the exploration of irony in *Dark Places*. Intend to get profit from the story of thee terrible murder of his family, Libby somehow traps in a mission to free Ben Day as wrong-accused killer of his family. This is where the height of the conflict presented by Flynn. Libby was a key witness who pushed Ben to jail for twenty four years. Sardonically, Flynn puts Libby as the only one who could liberate Ben Day from prison.

Aside from its apparent struggle between miserable Libby with her salvation journey for saving Ben Day, *Dark Places* also presents a series of irony through Patty Day and Ben Day character. Patty Day is the mother of Libby and Ben Day. After enduring a difficult life as a single parent of four children, Patty finally takes an advantage via her death as redemption of his failure in life. Patty then trades her life for the sake of providing a good life for four children. The same act is done by Ben Day character who sacrifices his freedom for her sister's murderer and also his girlfriend, Diondra. As the effect, Ben Day has languished in prison for twenty-four

years, was hated by her only-left family, Libby and tarnished Patty's noble sacrificial act.

Set of irony which is presented by The Days in the *Dark Place* makes this novel becomes interesting to discuss. In terms of character, Libby Day was within the limits of a hero(ine) and villain. Libby's awful characterization must deal with her noble mission, to save Ben Day. Libby's trip is like a hero's journey due to deliberating Ben from more regretful punishment. Also, the salvation acts of Patty Day and Ben Day still leave room for debate whether good or bad.

In the second novel, *Gone Girl*, Flynn retains the bizarre devices that are similar with *Dark Places*. In terms of characterization, Flynn promotes Amy Dunne as the female protagonist. Throughout the story, Amy Dunne is described as wicked wife who wanted to punish her husband over evil plan which is arranged exceptionally brilliant. Motive that encourages Amy to do this vicious plan is a trivial issue, that is "to taught Nick a lesson" (328). In this case, Flynn pushed her heroine character to beyond the limits to do as far as possible, in order to satisfy personal desires and fulfillment.

Aside from its main female character portrayal that is really appalling, *Gone Girl* also challenged their readers through the series of plot-twist that arranges implicitly in plot. At the beginning of the story, Flynn dictates the readers to sympathize poor Amy as a victim of her abusive and ignorant husband, Nick. In the middle of the story, Flynn effectively deprives the reader's sympathy toward Amy after revealing that Amy falsified her suffering for the sake of personal ambition. At the end of the story, Flynn totally swipes away reader's sympathy when the novel unmasks the real face of both sides, Amy and Nick. In this term, Flynn manipulates
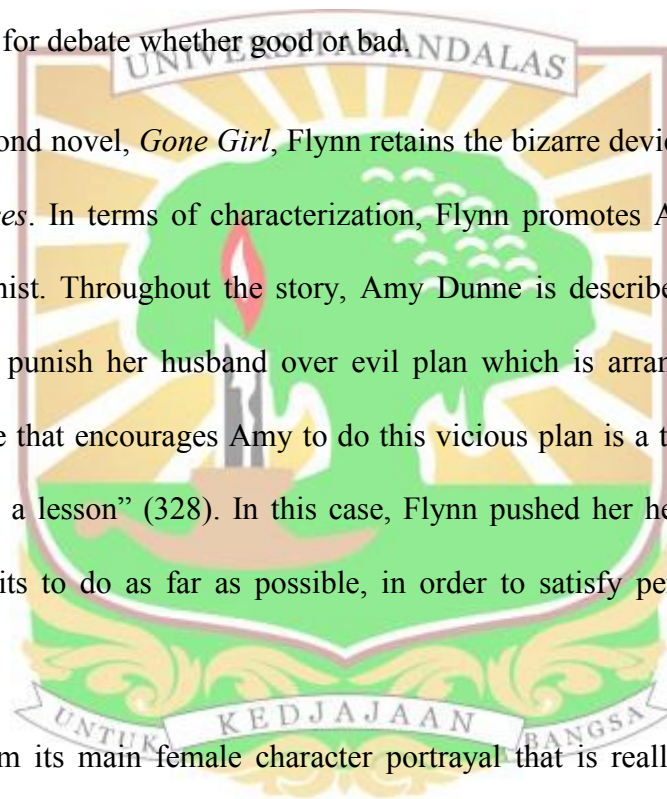
the reader's sympathy and sentiment through the falsehood of the two main characters.

The last aspect that astonishes *Gone Girl*'s reader is the celebration of violence and explicit sexual visualization. In the story, Amy is deliberately toying with the fragility of American's paradigm toward violence against vulnerable women, the myths of pregnancy, and sexual exploitation as Amy acknowledges "America loves pregnant woman" (128). Flynn purposely ignores the moral barrier that always hindering woman writers to talk about it, celebrating it or even utilizing it as literary devices. In this phase, Flynn tries to break the old tradition and the dominance of men in using or exploring trickery, violence and sexuality in pieces of literature.

Flynn's unique style of writing shown in both novels *Dark Places* and *Gone Girl* has managed to convince the readers and critics toward the quality of literary women. Next, the novels are important to be discussed in depth in order to reinforce female literary canon. Elaine Showalter's Gynocriticism is used as the main theory in comprehending the special differences of women's writing, or realize a distinct female literary tradition. What is more, with grounding in theory and historical research, Showalter sees Gynocriticism as a way to "learn something solid, enduring, and real about the relation of women to literary culture" ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" 179).

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the uniqueness which used by Flynn as her peculiarity. It is done by studying the intrinsic elements of the both novel, especially the characters and plot. As well, another element such as taboo and prohibited themes is also to be tested to value the quality of the work as a whole.

Therefore, the writer entitled this research as "**The Study of Uniqueness and Gynocriticism in Gillian Flynn's Novels Entitled *Gone Girl* and *Dark Places*.**"

1.2 Identification of The Problem

Through *Dark Places* (2009) and *Gone Girl* (2012), Flynn expresses her vast creativity as contemporary female writer in bizarre way. She tries to present fresh ideas through her characters, plots and themes. In both novels, she offers female lead-characters as the aggressor, Libby Day and Amy Dunne. She creates these characters with absent of morality, heroicness and great purpose of life. The plot also reveals an absurd event from both female characters. Libby must save her brother which is accused as a killer of her family. Amy Dunne manages to jail her husband through Amy's fake and well-planned disappearance. Moreover, Flynn also visualizes violence and sexual taboo in the storyline. In addition, Flynn tries to provoke established moral values in society through dilemmatic situation. To conclude, the writer sees Flynn's approach of writing as pure expression of woman writing. In the perspective of Gynocritics, these phenomena can be described with linguistic aspect of female writing.

1.3 The Scope of The Research

This research focuses on Flynn's exquisite writing in two acclaimed novels *Gone Girl* and *Dark Places*, then these are the scope to be covered as the following:

1. The uniqueness elements as reflected in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*.

2. The uniqueness elements as reflected in Gillian Flynn's *Dark Places*.

3. The analysis of Gynocritics criticism from both novels.

1.4 Objective of The Research

The objective of the research is to identify and describe uniqueness elements of Flynn's writing and analyzing them through Gynocritics term as reflected in both *Dark Places* and *Gone Girl*. This conclusion will be achieved after the examination of intrinsic elements of the both novels.

1.5 The Review of Previews Studies

Eliana Dockterman's published article in TIME entitled "Is Gone Girl Feminist or Misogynist" examines how Flynn's ideas of making women have a motivation to search their own happiness. She claims that what Gillian Flynn is doing is also "extremely feminist." She criticizes there are few strong women in literature (or TV shows or movies) the burden falls on the writers write about women to make them represented all of womanhood. She also notes that very few writers are "creating complex evil-female-characters with interesting motivations, Gillian Flynn did it. It sexist to assert that female characters ought to be, at their core, loving and good."

Dockterman judges that Flynn's Gone Girl as "a feminist and makes a new existential character of women" by writing complicated story about how to be an independent women and making Flynn the hero for giving the solution of the problems in the novels. In order to make women being the center and object, Flynn represented female main character full of ordinary movement of being soundly and active with their act for becoming brave women. (2014) This article give contribution of gynocritics by the comment of the author.

Alsha Vandertogt's paper in *The Journal of Queen's University*, entitled "Gone Girl: From Page To Screen", states that she chose *Gone Girl* because Flynn's presents

"the ability to alter how the reader views of the protagonist, culminating in an ending that leaves the reader non-empathetic to both characters (Nick and Amy)." Vandertogt sees how Flynn's description in the novel makes readers change their imagination about passive women into active women to break the patriarchy and stereotype of women and this point of view is proves when Amy as female character have a strong character against male character. (2014) This article give the perspective of how the female readers criticize female author.

Becca Rothfeld's article *Gone Girl's Feminist Update of Old-Fashioned Femme Fatale* asserts that Amy Dunne is "a new kind of femme fatale, a reaction of new kind of patriarchy" (par. 1). Rothfeld sees Flynn's revolutionary move in Amy is character to reject modern patriarchy which is "evasive, shifty, slimily manipulative and it requires a different sort of resistence" (par. 5). In this term, Becca values that Flynn's anti-heroine Amy "refuse to pander to male expectation" (par. 7). Rothfeld also notifies the concept of "new sexism" that wants "a woman who does not care too much, who makes no demands, and puts up no resistence" (par. 9) (2014). This article gives the other perspective about the character depicted by female author.

The next literature, Ayu Hudzaifah analyzes Amy Dunne's personality as the main objective. In her thesis entitled *Psychological Oppression Towards Amy Elliot Dunne in Gillian Flynn's Gone Girl,* she argues Amy character has feminist psychological oppression by her husband and her parents in her marital life. The oppression and struggle that Amy gets from her husband and parents makes Amy have to step forward in making a new path of being aggressive women for getting her happiness and cannot be bound by everything she dislike. Hudzaifah in general concludes that Amy is a victim of her overpressure society. (2016) This thesis give contribution by seeing the character that female author make in her works.

Sandra Widya Resti's unpublished thesis entitled *From Enchantress To Murderess: A Feminist Study on The Character of Amy Dunne as A 'Femme Fatale' in Gillian Flynn's Gone Girl* intends to reveal "how main character can be the prominent portrayal of a *femme fatale* and whether such portrayal reinforce or resist feminism and patriarchy." Resti uses Beauvoir's theory of Others to examine the main problem and also uses The Myth of Woman to trace the connection between the idea of *femme fatale* and feminism. The conclusion states that Amy Dunne is "an anti-feminist, patriarchy-centered and misogynistic representation." (2016)

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Gynocriticism in Brief

Showalter makes a clear distinction within feminist criticism between feminist critique and Gynocriticism. Feminist critique is male-oriented in that its subjects include images and stereotypes of women in male literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in male criticism, and limitations in male-constructed literary theory. Gynocriticism, on the other hand, concentrates not on *women as readers*, but on *women as producers of texts: on history, themes, structures and genres of literature by women* ('Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' 25-28). Instead of studying stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women played in history, instead of, that is, learning what men thought women should feel, Gynocriticism is turning to the authority of women's writing in order to learn what women really feel and experience.

Showalter then establishes the theory of Gynocritics on concepts like language, body, psyche and culture related to women. In the section titled "Women's Writing and Women's Body", she suggests that feminist criticism rejects biological inferiority in words. It is observed that female writers use body images in a more frank manner.

Biological criticism believes that biological differentiation is fundamental to understand how women see themselves in relation to society. It is also instrumental in understanding how they represent themselves in writing.

Gynocriticism is also "a theory of culture that incorporates ideas about women's body, language and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social context in which they occur." Women's culture and men's culture are represented by two interesting circles. One of these is specific to women and the other is specific to men. Historically women have been the muted group and men the dominant group. Showalter adds that feminist theories need to articulate the area specific to men and put it at the centre of women's writing. Showalter believes that one of the great advantages of women's culture model is that it shows how the female's tradition can be positive source of strength as well as a negative source of powerlessness.

Showalter mentions the same point in women's history of literary creation saying that women have traditionally been considered as "sociological chameleons" who have historically been allowed only to adopt lifestyle, class, and culture of their male counterparts. Their literature before the foundation of feminism was too much of an imitation of their male authoritarians. Therefore what they needed most was to express and illustrate what they have really known, felt, and suffered. Hence, in line with feminism women writers start to form a subculture, within the larger framework of a whole society, unified by common values, conventions and experiences, making their way for direct self-expression (*A Literature of Their Own* 159).

Showalter believes that such a way of looking at female literary tradition and evolution, that is, tracing the way that women started with an imitation of their male counterparts and the ways through which this subculture or "minority group finds its direction of self-expression relative to a dominant society" is very illuminating (*A*

Literature of Their Own 27). This is what a gynocritic does; a gynocritic starts a feminist research in "history, anthropology, psychology and sociology" all of which have developed and supported the premise of a "female subculture including not only the ascribed status, and the internalized constructs of femininity, but also the occupations, interactions and consciousness of women."

Showalter considers that without apprehending the framework of female subculture, one would either totally miss or simply misinterpret the themes, motifs and structures of female literature and would finally fail to make necessary connections within a tradition. Gynocriticism finally is the study of not only the female as a gender status but also the "internalized consciousness" of the female. The uncovering of the female subculture and exposition of a female model is the intention of Gynocriticism.

1.6.2 The Definition of Anti-Hero

In two acknowledged dictionaries, Merriam-Webster and Oxford English Dictionary note that the word "anti-hero" was first used in 1714 (antihero, 2012). Oxford English Dictionary offers a list of early works in which the earliest source is *The Lover* by Sir Richard Steele. In this work, the author, who is complaining about his wasteful age, discusses how the notions of heroism have changed as men chasing after women are insensible of love and do not respect females. He calls them brutes and continues:

> "I shall enquire, in due time, and make every **Anti-Heroe** in Great Britain give me an account why one woman is not as much as ought to fall to his share; and shall show every abandoned wanderer, that with all his blustering, his restless following every female he sees, is much more ridiculous" (Steele, 1715: 13).

The same dictionary also provides the first derivative, that is antiheroic, stated in J. E. Hopkins' book *Rose Turquand* (1876). In this book, one of the characters is crying like a child, which the narrator depicts as "a lame and impotent conclusion...altogether **antiheroic**" (qtd. in Lovesay, 2011: 37). Another renowned dictionary, Collins, dates the first word for "antihero" as 1876 (antihero, 2012), the same date for the publication of Rose Turquand, but there is no specific work cited.

Another point concerning the timeline of the frequency of term's usage is that it has begun to be used more frequently in 1970s in literary works according to two dictionaries (Oxford and Collins, antihero, 2012). It is also significant to note that antihero as an entry is included in some of the dictionaries in 1970s. It enters A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary I in 1972 as "one who is the opposite or reverse of a hero; esp. a chief character in a poem, play, or story who is totally unlike a conventional hero" (antihero, 2012). It first entered Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary in 1973: "a protagonist who is notably lacking in heroic qualities (as courage or unselfishness)" (Merriam-Webster's, 1973: 50)

In his book entitled *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, literary critic M. H. Abrams describes antihero as "the chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that which we associate with the traditional protagonist or hero of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual or dishonest" (11). In *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory,* the author and dictionary writer J. A. Cuddon notes that the history of literature is full of fictional heroes who have been granted noble qualities and virtuous characteristics. However, the antihero is usually the one who is given the ability of failure (43).

An antihero might not have high moral standards, and might be indecent unlike the traditional principle character of mythology, folklore or legends. Lacking bravery, he is sometimes a coward. As a result, he is not honoured as a saviour or a leader. He can attempt to claim a war medal with his so- called brave actions, but he does not actually deserve it, or he simply cannot achieve it. He is a "cowardly, weak, inept, or simply unlucky" (Quinn, 2006: 28-29) type that springs from ancient literature.

The original practice of **Antihero** in literary work is probably used in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Notes from Underground* (1864) in place of hero or protagonist (Brombert, 1999: 1). In the ending of the novel, the underground man who is the narrator and the protagonist points out that he made a mistake by writing his memoirs because there is no point in showing how he had spoiled his life. He confesses that "a novel needs a hero, and all the traits of an antihero are expressly gathered together here" (2008: 152). With example of underground man, Dostoevsky tries to portray a contrary the example of an **antihero** who does not satisfy the expectation of readers, but still dominates the novel as the main character.

1.6.3 Definition of Uniqueness Elements in Literature

The uniqueness in literature usually define as *bizarre* but possibly in part because it is difficult to define. Though it may sound like some sort of exclusive and super-strange underground literary movement, it in fact encompasses many kinds of fiction; all of it weird.

The uniqueness or *weird* stuff in literature could be define as new particular things of describe something. For decade, people have been going into bookstores and video stores looking for the weird stuff. To them, "weird stuff" is a genre, just like horror or science fiction. The uniqueness encompasses a limitless number of styles

and subgenres. It covers from unreal westerns to romantic absurdism to surreal splatterpunk until post-apocalyptic avant-garde crime noir porn. There is a wide range of possibilities. Some popular examples of *Weird Fiction* is *Eraserhead, Alice in Wonderland, Naked Lunch, Visitor Q, Bartholomew and the Oobleck, Tromeo and Juliet, Ichi the Killer, Fando & Lis, Tetsuo: The Iron Man, Dellamorte Dellamore, Uzumaki, Conspirators of Pleasure, Lost Highway*, or anything described as Lynchian (in "Mondo Bizarro").

1.7 Method of The Research

In conducting the research, the writer follows three steps: collecting the data, analyzing the data, and presenting the result of analysis.

1.7.1 Collecting The Data

In collecting the data, the writer used library method as the main tool. The writer collected the data from library and selected documents. Next, the writer divides the data into two categories which are primary data and secondary data. First, the primary data, which is taken from literary work itself in the novel *Dark Places* (2009) and *Gone Girl* (2012) by Gillian Flynn. Then, the secondary data are taken from several sources by gathering some books, journals, articles from reliable source to give input and supporting statement that is related with this research.

1.7.2 Analyzing The Data

The second step is analyzing the data. In analyzing the data, the writer used critical perspective through critical theory called Gynocriticism. The writer did simulation through critical reading from the both novel to get the evidence which related to problem of the research. Then, the writer identified the relationship between the content of the novel with the issue that relevant to the term of Gynocriticism by

Elaine Showalter. In the end, the writer explained the relationship between the arguments, the data and the related theories descriptively to reach the final conclusion.

1.7.3 The Result of Analysis

The last step will present the result of analysis. In presenting the discussion and conclusion, the descriptive method is one of the important parts in order to comprehend the novel since the research is a qualitative one. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998) in his book *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* states that, "...Qualitative research is descriptive; the collected data is in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written result of the research contains quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentations" (28). From the quotation above, it shows that the data deals with description, exploring the issues and understanding the phenomenon through the words rather than numbers or pictures.