

**NICK DUNNE'S DISLOYALTY IN GILLIAN FLYNN'S  
*GONE GIRL***

**Difky Arung Darma**

Prodi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya  
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya  
[difkyarung@gmail.com](mailto:difkyarung@gmail.com)

**Ambar Andayani**

Prodi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya  
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya  
[ambarandayani@untag-sby.ac.id](mailto:ambarandayani@untag-sby.ac.id)

**ABSTRACT**

This study discusses about Nick Dunne's disloyalty in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. In analysing the data from Dunne's character, this study applies descriptive qualitative method and psychological theory which is aimed to explain the portrayal, causes, and effects of Nick Dunne's disloyalty. There are three categories of the findings as the result of this study, the type of Dunne's disloyalty, the causes of Dunne's disloyalty and the effects of Dunne's disloyalty. The type of Dunne's disloyalty is romantic love affair. The causes of Dunne's disloyalty are desire of novelty, poor communication, insecurity, and lack of intimacy. There are two kinds of effects from Dunne's disloyalty, namely effect on the doer and effect on the victim. The effects of Dunne's disloyalty on the doer, Dunne himself, include suffering from guilt and shame, inner conflict, identity crisis, self-doubt, fear of repercussion, desire of personal growth and change, and lack of intimacy with his wife. The effects of Dunne's disloyalty on the victim, Amy, include anguish from betrayal and emotional trauma, loss of self-esteem, trust issues, emotional roller coaster, self-blame, fear of repeating betrayal, and lack of intimacy.

**Keywords:** *disloyalty, love affair, betrayal, intimacy.*

**A. PRELIMINARY**

Every human always wants to live in harmony as well as harmonious relation between a married couple is absolutely needed in order they can trust and love each other. The journey in life however, sometimes is different, the reality is not as beautiful as the dream. Disloyalty can happen in any occasion which usually ruins the harmonious relation of a married couple. In this case, disloyalty means an act of betrayal especially to her or his beloved one. According to Raje, disloyalty is the cause and the consequence of unhealthy relationships which could ultimately harm the fabric of our social existence (Raje, 2019). Unquestionably, disloyalty has a detrimental impact, frequently causing profound harm to individuals and their relationships, and addressing its consequences poses notable difficulties in therapy and treatment (Whisman & Snyder, 2007). Both the reason for and consequence of unhealthy relationships are disloyalty (Selterman et al., 2020). The majority of past studies in psychology, communication, and family research indicate that issues

within relationships, such as experiencing feelings of abandonment from a partner or spouse, are the primary factors contributing to disloyalty (Barta & Kiene, 2005).

Disloyalty, particularly in the context of marriage, denotes engaging in sexual relations or forming connections outside the bounds of a marital union. The duration of such involvement can vary, spanning from brief encounters to enduring relationships, with the level of emotional attachment ranging from minimal to significant. Typically, the spouse or partner involved in the affair is unaware of it and would not condone such behaviour (D. Block, 1996). The phenomenon of disloyalty has garnered attention in social sciences and psychology. Scholars such as Moller and Vossler (Shaleha & Kurniasih, 2021) define disloyalty as a breach occurring when an individual already committed to a relationship violates the established norms governing emotional or physical intimacy with individuals outside that relationship.

When someone in a committed relationship engages in emotional or sexual activities outside of the primary partnership, it constitutes disloyalty. This conduct breaches trust and transgresses the explicit and implicit standards that dictate the expectations of emotional and sexual exclusivity within the relationship (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). One significant factor is the absence of contentment in either the emotional or sexual aspects of the relationship. A satisfying partnership involves the mutual exchange of affection and validation, along with open and truthful communication. When these qualities, as well as others like a sense of security, relationship stability, and emotional/physical closeness, diminish, the relationship becomes vulnerable to disloyalty (Perel, 2017).

According to Jatman and Roekhan (Endraswara, 2013), literature and psychology have an indirect and functional relationship. This is due to the fact that literature and psychology coincidentally have the same starting point, namely the human psyche. In order to dissecting literary works, several theories are available. One of them is the psychology of literature. In the view of Wellek and Warren (1993) states that the psychology of literature has four research possibilities. First, the psychology of the author as an individual. second, creative process research in relation to psychology. third, the laws of psychology applied to literary works. fourth, the psychological impact on the reader.

Novel is a long and complex literary work in prose. The novel creates a vast imaginary world that explores human life, society, interactions between people, and other aspects of life. The novel paints a documentary picture of life. They are long-form works with lots of detail on every page (Peck & Coyle, n.d.). The story may focus on one or more of the main characters who have undergone significant journeys or changes as the story unfolds. Fiction is closely related to psychological problems. As fiction, a novel differs from historical fiction, which purports to recount facts, and from prose, which often presents characters and events but only as a brief exposition of a concept or idea. The novel differs from the short story as an extended narrative that encompasses a wide range of characters and experiences (Abrams, 2018).

Penned by Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* is an enthralling book classified within the psychological thriller genre. At its core, the narrative revolves around the married duo, Nick and Amy Dunne. On the eve of their fifth wedding anniversary,

Amy mysteriously disappears, thrusting Nick into the limelight as the primary suspect in her vanishing. As the investigation unfolds, the storyline effortlessly shifts between Nick's present-day viewpoint and Amy's documented musings in her diary from previous times.

This research will concentrate on examining and dissecting the persona of Nick in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*, while also delving into the portrayal of disloyalty through Nick's behaviours, motivations, and interactions within the novel. The introduction to the problem identifies the main idea of the study, focusing on the theme of disloyalty represented by the character of Nick Dunne in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. The following questions summarize the central research questions and areas of inquiry: (1) How is the Nick Dunne's disloyalty portrayed in the novel? (2) What are the causes of Nick Dunne's disloyalty? (3) What are the effects of Nick Dunne's disloyalty?

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The process of conducting research involves various research plans and procedures, known as research approaches. These approaches encompass a spectrum of assumptions and specific methods for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data (Creswell, 2013). In essence, research approaches outline the actions taken by researchers during the research process. Creswell (2013) identifies three types of research approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. For this particular study, a qualitative approach is employed.

The research uses psychological approach as the extrinsic approach to analyze the novel because it deals with the disloyalty that occurs on the main character in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. In analysing type of disloyalty, it applies the concept from Subotnik and Harris (2005) which divides it into serial affair, flings, romantic love affair and long-term affairs. In explaining causes and effects of disloyalty, this research uses the concept from Esther Perel (2017).

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Nick Dunne's Disloyalty**

Nick Dunne's affair depicted in the novel is a type of romantic love affair. According to Subotnik and Harris (2005), romantic love affair involves a deep emotional connection

Now let me string still more clichés together for your amusement: It happened gradually. I never meant to hurt anyone. I got in deeper than I thought I would. But it was more than a fling. It was more than an ego boost. I really love Andie. I do. (Flynn, 2012:141)

The statement suggests that Nick is grappling with the significance of his affair, emphasizing that it goes beyond a simple momentary lapse. It indicates that Nick has developed genuine feelings for Andie, complicating the moral landscape of his actions. Overall, the quotation provides insight into Nick's disloyalty, presenting a mix of self-awareness, regret, and a genuine emotional connection with his extramarital partner.

## **Causes of Nick Dunne's Disloyalty**

### ***Desire of Novelty***

Nick Dunne's extramarital affair with Andie Hardy is portrayed as a complex desire for novelty and excitement, could be considered a factor in Nick's disloyalty, it's important to note that the motivations for his actions are nuanced.

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. Or so I think. But Amy finds out – how, I still don't know, for all I know, she was staking out my apartment. But ... shit ... (Flynn, 2012:268)

The quotation above clearly mentions that Nick is just stressed about his deadlines and all the things he has to do responsibly. The obstacle he has to overcome is an unexpected encounter with this lovely girl who eventually attracted him, which is one of the reasons why Nick cheated on his wife, Amy Dunne, after falling in love with another young girl.

### ***Poor communication***

Nick and Amy's relationships suffer from communication issues, which is a common theme in unhappy marriages. When Nick loses his job and their funds became tight, the lack of communication is evident. Amy appears to be attempting to comprehend that Nick's frustration as a husband is quite understandable.

I don't love my wife anymore, I thought, turning to grab two tumblers. Not even a little bit. I am wiped clean of love, I am spotless....We drank together an hour past closing time, and I mentioned the word wife three times, because I was looking at Andie and picturing taking her clothes off. (Flynn, 2012: 144)

As their family deals with a financial crisis that they previously believe it will not be as bad, their marriage becomes unstable. They do not reveal their genuine selves right away, and they don't even communicate with their spouses during the marriage which is a necessary type of communication. They do not have good communication as a couple so they have negative preconceptions about their partner.

### ***Insecurity***

Nick's insecurities stem from feelings of inadequacy and a lack of self-worth. He often doubts his own capabilities and feels overshadowed by Amy's intelligence and success. This sense of insecurity creates a power dynamic within their relationship, where Nick believes he is not deserving of Amy's love and admiration. "Why don't we just tell the police?" she said. "Wouldn't that be better—" "No. Andie, don't even think about it. No." "They're going to find out—" (Flynn, 2012:147)

In an attempt to regain a sense of control and boost his ego, Nick engages in the affair. He seeks validation and affirmation from someone outside of his marriage, hoping to fill the void created by his own insecurities.

### ***Lack of intimacy***

There is a distinct lack of intimacy in the relationship between Nick Dunn and Amy Dunne. One aspect that contributes to a lack of intimacy is a gradual loss of trust. As the story progresses, secrets and deceptions come to light, causing the foundation of their relationship to crumble.

So, we're back to black squares. Sweet, doting, loving Nick is gone. Gruff, peeved, angry Nick is back. You are supposed to lean on your spouse in hard times, but Nick seems to have gone even further away. He is a mama's boy whose mama is dead. He doesn't want anything to do with me. (Flynn, 2012:18)

Amy thinks Nick is just using it as a tool to satisfy his own desires, and that a sexual marriage should bring equal benefits to both parties in the form of emotional satisfaction and the distribution of sexual needs themselves. Seemingly it concerns only with one's own satisfaction. Both Nick and Amy harbour hidden aspects of their personalities, and the discovery of these hidden aspects creates a sense of betrayal that makes it difficult for them to connect on a deeper, more intimate level.

#### **Effects of Nick Dunne's Disloyalty on Nick Dunne as the Doer** ***Guilt and shame***

Nick deeply regrets in violating Amy's trusting and ruining their love. He struggles with the shame of his actions and is vividly aware of the suffering he has caused her.

I'd say: Amy, I love you. You are the best woman I have ever known. You are more than I deserve, and if you come back, I will spend the rest of my life making it up to you. We will find a way to put all this horror behind us, and I will be the best man in the world to you. Please come home Amy. (Flynn, 2012:340)

Nick is expressing a deep sense of remorse and desperation as he addresses Amy, the person he has been unfaithful to. The language used reflects a heartfelt plea for forgiveness and reconciliation. Nick begins by declaring his love for Amy, emphasizing her qualities and stating that she is the best woman he has ever known. The concluding plea, underscores Nick's longing for reconciliation and the restoration of their relationship.

#### ***Inner conflict***

Nick Dunne has a serious internal dilemma about his relationship with Andie, a woman he meets while he is married to Amy. Nick has complex emotions and moral quandaries as a result of his acts, which lead to this internal conflict.

Look, Andie, we are both under an amazing amount of stress and pressure, and a lot of it is brought on by our feelings of guilt. Andie, the thing is, we are good people. We were attracted to each other, I think, because we both have similar values. Of treating people right, of doing the right thing. And right now we know what we are doing is wrong. (Flynn, 2012:234)

Nick's sadness and disgrace about betraying Amy's trust and breaking his marriage's vows are a part of his internal battle. He knows that his affair has caused Amy great suffering, so he carries a heavy burden of guilt. Nick wrestles with the moral ramifications of his deeds and doubts his own devotion and honesty.

#### ***Identity crisis***

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The more despicable I became, the more I craved Andie, who knew that I wasn't as bad as I seemed, if my story were published in the paper for strangers to read. Amy will divorce you, I kept thinking. She can't let it linger on much longer.

But as spring faded away and summer came, then fall, then winter, and I became a cheating man of all seasons—a cheat with a pleasantly impatient mistress—it became clear that something would have to be done. (Flynn, 2012:146)

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### ***Self-doubt***

Meanwhile Nick also experiences constant doubts when he wants to talk about his affair, it is because he is afraid of his wife and afraid of being thought of as a bad man. "I was going to tell Amy. I knew it had to happen. I continued not to tell Amy, for months and months. And then more months. Most of it was cowardice." (Flynn, 2012:146). The statement suggests an initial intention or obligation to disclose information to his wife. However, from Nick's expression, it reveals a sense of internal conflict regarding a decision to inform Amy about something significant.

### ***Fear of repercussion***

The media attention and the public's image of Nick as a suspected murderer feed Nick's guilt and shame even more. The pressure of having to defend himself and the weight of the charges overwhelm him.

I'm a man with a missing wife and a secret ... girlfriend. Yeah, it looks bad. It looks criminal..."People don't know us, Andie. I felt bad: This was not how she thought the night would go. (Flynn, 2012:147).

In this quotation, Nick reflects on his situation, acknowledging the appearance of impropriety due to his missing wife and a secret girlfriend. He conveys a sense of self-awareness, recognizing that from an outsider's perspective, his actions could be perceived as not just suspicious but even criminal. He feels more ashamed and guilty due to the ongoing media and public attention, which makes him wonder about his own intentions.

### ***Desire personal growth and change***

Nick's disloyalty serves as a catalyst for self-reflection. Faced with the consequences of his actions and the unravelling of his marriage, Nick experiences a desire for personal growth and change. This transformation is driven by the need to confront his own shortcomings, understand the impact of his choices, and strive for a better version of himself.

This young girl, she hadn't seen me crying into a towel in the bathroom in the middle of the night because I lost my job. She didn't know all my foibles and shortcomings. I was a fool who believed if I wasn't perfect, my wife wouldn't love me. I wanted to be that hero anymore. Sharon, I know right from wrong. And I just—I just did wrong. (Flynn, 2012:339)

Nick's desire for personal growth becomes intertwined with the need to salvage his relationship with Amy and rebuild trust. Nick seeks to distance himself from the mistakes of his past, acknowledging the importance of self-improvement and demonstrating a commitment to change.

### *Lack of Intimacy*

The revelation of Nick's betrayal serves as a disruption to the emotional and physical closeness that once defined their marriage.

The only thing that kept me from dragging her into the bedroom now was not how wrong it was—it had been many shades of wrong all along—but that now it was actually dangerous. And because there was Amy. (Flynn, 2012:145)

As trust crumbles in the wake of infidelity, so too does the foundation of their intimacy, leaving behind a complex tapestry of emotional distance, vulnerability struggles, and shattered communication.

### **Effects of Nick Dunne's Disloyalty on Amy as the Victim**

#### ***Betrayal and Emotional Trauma***

Amy experiences deep betrayal and emotional trauma due to her perception of her husband Nick's infidelity. Amy believes that Nick is unfaithful, and this belief becomes a catalyst for her elaborate scheme to frame him for her disappearance.

Two notes with me swearing I loved you and I wanted you back, and I thought you were just great after all—was that it for you? You are WITTY, you are WARM, you are BRILLIANT. You're so pathetic. You think you can ever be a normal man again?(Flynn, 2012:383)

In this quotation, Amy appears to be confronting Nick. Amy's ability to switch personas and her skill in constructing false narratives raise questions about her role as a victim. Amy may be trying to portray herself as the injured party, hurt by Nick's apparent quick return to her after a brief period of estrangement.

#### ***Loss self-esteem***

The betrayal Amy experiences from Nick shakes the foundations of her self-esteem. The idea that her spouse, someone she had regarded as her life partner, could be unfaithful leads to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and a questioning of her own value. The perceived betrayal may make her question whether she is deserving of loyalty, love, and respect.

I know this is not the real Andie, because I have followed her in real life. In real life she wears snug tops that show off her breast, and clingy jeans, and her hair long and wavy. In real life she looks fuckable.(Flynn, 2012:318)

This interpretation suggests that Amy, by downplaying Andie's appeal and presenting her as harmless and non-threatening, is attempting to assert control and undermine any potential threat posed by Nick's infidelity.

#### ***Trust issues***

Amy's trust issues stem from her belief that her husband, Nick, is cheating on her. This perception becomes a significant source of tension and conflict in their marriage, ultimately driving Amy to take drastic actions in response to what she perceives as a betrayal of trust.

I try to hack in when he's asleep (although he sleeps like me now, fussy and anxious, and I sleep like him). But he's learned his lesson, that he's no longer beloved Nicky, safe from wrong—he no longer uses his birthday or his mom's birthday or Bleecker's birthday as a password. I can't get in.(Flynn, 2012:398)

Amy reveals her suspicions about Nick's behaviour. Despite outwardly pretending to be a happy and carefree couple, Amy believes that Nick is secretly writing, possibly crafting his own narrative or side of the story. She acknowledges

that Nick has become more cautious with his passwords, likely as a response to past attempts by Amy to access his private writings.

### ***Emotional roller coaster***

Amy experiences a tumultuous emotional roller coaster as a result of her belief that her husband, Nick, is cheating on her. The revelation or suspicion of Nick's infidelity sets off a cascade of intense and conflicting emotions, creating a complex psychological landscape for Amy.

I cannot believe anyone would feel sorry for Andie. I literally refuse to believe it... Did I know about the about the affair? Was I okay? My face is a mask of fury-poor little lamb, my ass-but, I can pretend it is because of this betrayal. I nod, smile weakly. I am okay.(Flynn, 2012:319)

Amy's anger and refusal to believe that anyone would feel sorry for Andie highlight her intense animosity towards Nick's extramarital affair. The quotation also introduces a layer of deception. Amy seems to be pretending to be okay.

### ***Self-blame***

Amy is grappling with a profound shift in her perspective and a sense of self-blame following the revelation of her husband Nick's infidelity. Amy, who once viewed herself as separate from women who constructed personas around perceived mediocrity and victimhood, now finds herself immersed in a similar narrative.

I know women whose entire personas are woven from a benign mediocrity. Their lives are a list of shortcomings: the unappreciative boyfriend, the extra ten pounds, the dismissive boss, the conniving sister, the straying husband. I've always hovered above their stories, nodding in sympathy and thinking how foolish they are, these women, to let these things happen, how undisciplined. And now to be one of them! One of the women with the endless stories that make people nod sympathetically and think: Poor dumb bitch.(Flynn, 2012:226)

In this quotation from *Gone Girl*, the character Amy reflects on her own situation and acknowledges a shift in her perspective, particularly in how she views and judges other women. The passage indicates a deep sense of self-blame and a recognition of her own vulnerability in the aftermath of Nick's infidelity.

### ***Fear of repeating betrayal***

Amy's fear of repeating betrayal is a central theme that emerges as a consequence of her belief that her husband, Nick, is cheating on her. The revelation or suspicion of Nick's infidelity becomes a haunting spectre that casts a long shadow over Amy's perception of relationships and trust.

I am supposed to love Nick despite all his shortcomings. And Nick is supposed to love me despite my quirks. But clearly, neither of us does. It makes me think that everyone is very wrong, that love should have many conditions. Love should require both partners to be their very best at all times. Unconditional love is an undisciplined love, and as we all have seen, undisciplined love is disastrous.(Flynn, 2012:403)

Amy appears to feel betrayed and questions the notion of unconditional love in the face of Nick's shortcomings. She expresses a sense of disillusionment with the idea that love should be free from conditions. Amy argues that if love has no boundaries, there is little motivation for individuals to strive to do the right thing or



be their best selves. In the context of her relationship with Nick, it seems that his disloyalty has shaken her belief in the ideal of unconditional love.

***Lack on intimacy***

Amy's experience of intimacy is profoundly affected by her belief that her husband, Nick, is cheating on her. The revelation or suspicion of Nick's infidelity introduces a complex layer to the dynamics of their intimacy, influencing both the emotional and physical aspects of their relationship.

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. I just need to get Nick on the same page so that we both agree how this story will end. Happily. (Flynn, 2012:388)

Amy is contemplating the various deals she receives to share her story and seems determined to choose the most favourable one. Her desire is to start writing, suggesting a desire to shape her own narrative and control how the events are portrayed. The ultimate goal indicates a desire for a positive resolution or public perception.

**D. CONCLUSION**

After analysing the data regarding to disloyalty from the novel, the writer can conclude, there are four main reasons why the main character in the novel is unfaithful. Firstly, he craves excitement and new experiences, feeling bored with his current relationship. The dullness of his marriage with Amy leads him to seek something different. Secondly, there's a lack of effective communication between Nick and Amy, which is typical in unhappy marriages. When Nick loses his job and they face financial strain, they fail to talk openly about their concerns. Thirdly, Nick's deep-seated insecurities play a role in his infidelity. These insecurities contribute to his decision to cheat on Amy and complicate their relationship further. Lastly, the couple's hidden sides create a sense of betrayal, making it hard for them to connect intimately.

The writer finds that the type of disloyalty depicted by the main character is a romantic love affair. Nick's disloyalty affects to Nick Dunne as the doer and to Amy as the victim. For Nick, the disloyalty brings deep regret and shame, damaging his marriage and reputation. Amy suffers emotional devastation and feels deeply betrayed, losing her sense of security. Both characters are profoundly affected by the disloyalty, showing how betrayal can have lasting consequences on both the perpetrator and the betrayed.

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