

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Patriarchy manifests through cultural, social, and political systems which prioritize, value, and reward men over women. Examples of patriarchy that exist in modern society include the gender pay gap, social pressures on women to occupy certain roles, and gender-based violence. According to Jangra (2025), “the patriarchal system accords wide social acceptance and legitimacy to family members and others to commit acts of violence against women in their roles as daughters, sisters, wives, and in some instances, mothers” (p. 313), showing that this type of violence is structural to the system itself, where the oppression of women is of primary importance. As a result of the oppression that women experience, many women subvert the system of patriarchal oppression and challenge traditional gender roles.

Additionally, there are many cases of women, due to the pressures that they experience in marriage, find that, as Aziza & Nugroho (2025) argue, “divorce becomes the only way to escape from an unhealthy environment” (p. 50) and other cases of women fleeing extreme hardship. Subverting societal expectations in an unhealthy marriage demonstrates how women are pressured to conform to unrealistic societal expectations on women as wives. The struggles that women face as they attempt to reach their full potential against the demands of the patriarchal society in which they live is the main theme of modern literature.

Moreover, literature does not merely reflect society; instead, it is directly involved in shaping the meanings of marriage, motherhood, and the female body (Showalter, 1977). Statistics and sociological reports describe the structures of gender inequality, but fiction shows the experience of living inside those structures. Through character, conflict, and narrative, a novel reveals the everyday workings of patriarchy that often go unnoticed in real life: the pressures women face, the silences they keep, and the strategies they develop to survive within systems that subordinate them.

*Gone Girl* goes into this tradition of feminist fiction. In the character of Amy Dunne, Flynn looks at the expectations that patriarchal marriage has for women and the consequences of women turning them back on the system that expects them. Amy is an intentional subversion. She plays the part of the perfect wife, and then builds an argument around it that portrays her husband as the culprit for the loss of her. For Nick and Amy, their marriage is a “war they wage to obtain and maintain power,” which has come as a direct result of the “patriarchal structures” (p. 142) found in Occidental societies, and whose first move is Amy’s performance. He and Jia (2021) read her similarly, as “a woman who refuses to be the appendage of man or submit to man’s authority” (p. 189) and, by using her wisdom to fight against her husband, one who “strives to attain freedom from man, freedom to be woman” (p. 189).

However, Amy’s way to fight the patriarchal system is complex. What makes *Gone Girl* useful for feminist analysis is that Amy’s subversion does not wrap up cleanly. Instead, she manipulates and weaponizes the very feminine

stereotypes that patriarchal society imposes on women. Throughout the novel, Amy performs the roles of the ideal wife, devoted partner, and vulnerable victim, only to reveal how these expectations can be strategically exploited. Her actions expose the limitations and contradictions of patriarchal norms while simultaneously raising questions about morality, power, and agency.

While previous studies on *Gone Girl* have primarily focused on feminism, gender representation, and female villainy, few have specifically examined her actions as a form of patriarchal subversion. Therefore, this study explores how patriarchal structures are constructed in the novel, how Amy challenges them, and the consequences of her resistance. This study argues that Amy subverts patriarchy by strategically performing and manipulating traditional expectations of femininity, revealing the complex nature of female agency within a patriarchal system.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1.2.1 What forms of patriarchal structures are depicted in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*?

1.2.2 What patriarchal subversion occurs through Amy Dunne's character in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*?

1.2.3 What are the reasons for Amy Dunne's attempt to subvert patriarchal norms in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*?

1.2.4 How does Amy Dunne's patriarchal subversion affect her marriage in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*?

### **1.3 Purpose of The Research**

The purposes of the study can be seen as the following matter below.

1.3.1 To identify and analyze the patriarchal structures represented in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*.

1.3.2 To analyze the instances of patriarchal subversion depicted through Amy Dunne's character in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*.

1.3.3 To explore the motivations behind Amy Dunne's efforts to subvert patriarchal expectations in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*.

1.3.4 To assess the impact of Amy Dunne's patriarchal subversion on her marriage with Nick Dunne in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*.

### **1.4 Scope of The Research**

This study examines Amy Dunne's character in Flynn's *Gone Girl* and her ability to challenge patriarchy from both an intrinsic and extrinsic perspective. On the intrinsic level, this study analyzes the novel's character and characterization, conflict, and setting. The analysis focuses on Amy Dunne and Nick Dunne as the main characters, examining their personalities, motivations, and development throughout the story. It also explores the internal and external conflicts that shape the narrative and influence the characters' actions. In addition, the study examines the spatial and temporal settings of the novel to understand how they contribute to the development of the plot and themes. On an extrinsic level, this study employs Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory in *The Second Sex* to examine the patriarchal structures depicted in *Gone Girl* and Amy Dunne's attempts to subvert them. The

theory is used to analyze the forms of patriarchy experienced by Amy, the motivations behind her resistance, and the impact of her subversion on her marriage with Nick Dunne. Through this perspective, the study investigates the relationship between patriarchal oppression, Amy's attempt to subvert patriarchal norms, and the consequences of her resistance within her marriage to Nick Dunne.

### 1.5 Previous Research

The first previous research is titled "Feminist Critique to Patriarchal Society through the Characters in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*" (2018) by Diksita Gita Anindita. This study discusses the critique of society's patriarchy through the characters of Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. This study discusses the effects that the dominance of patriarchy and the stereotypes that come with it have on society's behavior and judgment, and the role that gender plays in this. This study is divided into three parts: the first part is intended to analyze the major characters of the novel; the second part is intended to analyze the conflicts of the novel; and the last part is intended to analyze the author's critique of the patriarchal stereotype. Using the theories of characterization, conflict, patriarchy, and feminism, the researchers discovered that the fiction as a whole critiques the bourgeois concept of women in the institution of marriage and the societal concept of women. Flynn's work contrasts the traditionalist institution by creating multifaceted women that are reflective of and contradictory to the aforementioned societal concepts.

The second previous research is titled "Amy Dunne as The Representation of *Femme Fatale* in Gillian Flynn's Novel *Gone Girl*" (2018) by Irene Heni

Indrasakti. This research focuses on Flynn's *Gone Girl*, and studies how Flynn's text presents the *femme fatale* and female myth, in a way that critiques the social order of patriarchy. By employing textual and contextual methods, this study is successful in finding that Flynn, a female author, critiques patriarchy through the character of Amy Dunne. The study concludes that the character of the *femme fatale* critiques and challenges the patriarchy and the surrounding social values and concepts.

The third previous research is by Aida Hanissa and Rahayu Puji Haryanti: "Women's Subversive Strategies Against Patriarchy in The Modern Thriller Stories *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Owen and *Gone Girl* by Flynn" (2025). This study uses feminist theory based on Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*. This study shows how women outsmart patriarchy in the contemporary thriller novels *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens and *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn. This study uses a qualitative textual analysis. The study focuses on the various types of resistance shown by women and how such types are contextually created by the patriarchal framework in the two novels. In Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*, it is shown how Amy Dunne restores her agency and control within the context of patriarchal narrative and norms by cleverly manipulating the patriarchy through language and deception, coupled with the performance of the so-called idealized female role. In contrast, in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Kya defies the norms of social and patriarchal order by creating a resilient identity that is emotionally strong and independent, with a deep connection to the natural environment. These diverse strategies create richly sophisticated conflicts and subvert the traditional concept of

the patriarchal female character and her subservient role by showing women as imaginative, strong, and active protagonists of their own stories.

The fourth previous research is titled “Konsep Perempuan Menurut Simone de Beauvoir dalam Buku *The Second Sex*” (2024) by Nabilla Chandrawati. This study aims to analyze the concept of women in Simone de Beauvoir’s thought, particularly its relevance and application in the Indonesian context. Using a literature study method and a qualitative approach, the study explores how Beauvoir’s thinking can be used to address gender injustice and change social perceptions of women. The research examines Beauvoir’s argument that gender identity is not rooted in biological differences but is rather a social construction shaped by historical, cultural, and economic factors. It also discusses how women are frequently positioned as the “Other” in a society governed by gender stereotypes. The study concludes that social myths about women must be dismantled to achieve genuine gender equality, and calls for deeper social transformation through education and inclusive public policy.

The fifth previous research is a book called “Standar Kecantikan yang Menindas Perempuan: Analisis Fenomena ‘Standar Kecantikan Ideal Tubuh Perempuan’ Melalui Perspektif Feminisme Eksistensialis Simone de Beauvoir” (2021) by Miaffido Ordinasari. This research discusses how attention to beauty standards through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir’s “existential feminism.” Using Beauvoir’s “self” and “Other” in *The Second Sex*, this research claims that beauty standards create oppression and remove women’s subjectivity by making women the “Other” and transforming women into the object of other people’s interests

rather than the choices that women make. The research claims that beauty standards remove women's freedom and women's expression in order to make women conform to physical standards and ideals promoted through the media, advertising, and consumerism. The research states that women must become the subject of 'othering' in beauty standards in order to reclaim the subjectivity that women have lost, and that this beauty standard has patriarchal oppression to provide a 'theological' reflection of human freedom as a framework of women's self-determination.

Based on the five previous studies discussed above, it can be seen that research on *Gone Girl* has largely approached Amy Dunne's character through the lens of feminist critique, *femme fatale* theory, or comparative subversive strategies, while research employing Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has so far been limited to philosophical or social applications unrelated to literary analysis. Among the studies reviewed by the writer, none have applied de Beauvoir's theoretical framework directly to Amy Dunne's character in *Gone Girl*, particularly her concepts in marriage and the construction of woman as the Other. Furthermore, studies that do frame Amy as a subversive figure, such as Indrasakti (2018) and Hanissa and Haryanti (2025), tend to conclude at the point where Amy successfully resists or outmaneuvers patriarchal control, without examining whether this resistance output genuine liberation or merely a reproduction of the same patriarchal logic in a new form. This study, therefore, occupies a position not yet addressed by the studies available to the writer at the time of this study: it employs de Beauvoir's framework to analyze not only the forms and reasons of Amy's

patriarchal subversion, but also its consequences. In this sense, the present study offers a more critical perspective on Amy Dunne's subversion in *Gone Girl*, contributing to feminist literary discourse by questioning whether manipulation and reversal of power within a patriarchal system can be considered authentic liberation, or whether it simply perpetuates the same cycle of domination under a different guise.

