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**Aspects of Crime in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects***

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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## Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to my parents and siblings who believed in me, and were and will always be my biggest supporters.

My greatest gratitude to both SADI and DJABOUB families who contributed in any way possible to help me reach where I am right now.

A special and significant dedication and exclusive words of gratitude to my friends **Kawthar** and **Dino** who were always present with their encouragement and help throughout the making of this work.

I may not have cited his name on the top of the page but it will always be on the top of my heart, **Ihab**, my inspiration, my go-to person in every hardship, may your soul rest in peace. Although I'm a bit late to achieve OUR dream I still did it, for the US.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Abstract**

This extended essay sheds light on three types of crime: Child Abuse, Sexual Harassment, and Murder in Gillian Flynn's contemporary novel, *Sharp Objects* (2006). These three "major" crimes are actual social phenomena in our world; however, Flynn approaches them differently. While other writers associate these crimes mainly with male characters, Flynn takes a step forward to show how women can be of greater danger to each other than men are to women. In this work, we aim to show the "power" of women, and women's crime from the perspective of Gillian Flynn through *Sharp Objects*. In *Sharp Objects*, women are vicious, cruel and heartless yet they still hold the image of vulnerable beings for other men in Wind Gap who think a woman cannot kill or hurt. Flynn is considered a feminist writer as she defends discrimination against women in all her books from her debut novel *Sharp Objects* to her bestseller *Gone Girl*.

**Keywords:** *Sharp Objects*– Child Abuse – Munchausen by Proxy – Sexual Harassment – Murder – Self-harm –Trauma – Rape.

## الملخص

يسلط هذا المقال الموسع الضوء على ثلاثة أنواع من الجرائم: سوء معاملة الأطفال، التحرش الجنسي والقتل من رواية جيليان فلين المواضيع الحادة (2006). ان هذه الجرائم الكبرى الثلاثة، ظواهر اجتماعية في عالمنا، لكن الطريقة التي تتعامل بها فلين معها مختلفة جدا، فبينما يربط كتاب آخرون هذه الجرائم أساسا بشخصية الذكر فان فلين تتقدم خطوة أيضا إلى الأمام في اظهار كيف يمكن أن تكون النساء أكثر خطورة على بعضهن البعض مما قد يكون عليه الرجل على المرأة. اننا نهدف من هذا العمل الى اظهار "قوة" المرأة وجرائم المرأة من منظور جيليان فلين من خلال المواضيع الحادة.

الكلمات الأساسية: المواضيع الحادة – تعنيف الأطفال – متلازمة منشوسن – التحرش الجنسي – القتل – إيذاء النفس – الصدمة – الاغتصاب.

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## General Introduction

At the modest Chicago Daily Post, Camille Peaker works as a journalist. She writes articles on crime, murder, and human neglect, and she is not happy with her job. Frank Curry, Camille's supervisor, whom she gets along with; helped her when she recently had to go to the hospital after self-harming. Since she had previously imagined them on her flesh, Camille has inscribed several words on her body. Curry assigns her a story to cover in Wind Gap, Missouri, where two girls have gone missing and one has been murdered.

When Camille arrives in Wind Gap, she can learn some details about the crimes from the locals, notably the family of slain child Ann Nash. The town sheriff, Chief Vickery, tells Camille off the record that he thinks the killer is a Wind Gap resident, not a stranger, even though the local police are not being very cooperative about the murder. The body of Natalie Keene, the missing girl, is soon found in a city alley. She was strangled and had all her teeth pulled, as was Ann. The crimes had the cops perplexed. After Camille publishes an article, Curry asks her to stay in Wind Gap so she may continue to write about the deaths. Camille meets up with her 13-year-old half-sister Amma and her estranged mother Adora while there. Adora always favoured Camille's younger sister Marian, who passed away from an undisclosed disease when Camille was a little girl. Therefore, the connection between Camille and her mother was never pleasant. Born after Marian's passing, Amma has developed into a spoilt adolescent who acts like a toddler in front of her mother to conceal her drinking, drug use, and promiscuity. Richard Willis, a dashing Kansas City police officer sent to look into the possibility of a serial murderer, and Camille becomes friends. As Camille continues to investigate, she begins a sexual relationship with Richard. During each encounter with him, Camille refuses to remove her clothes out of fear that he will reject her after he sees her scars. Camille and Amma begin to grow closer. After attending a party with her sister where the two of them get drunk and take drugs, Camille wakes to find Adora caring for her, giving her the pills that make her sick. When Camille learns that Adora routinely abuses Amma in this way, she is outraged and understands



that Marian's illness was Adora's Munchausen syndrome through proxies—rather than Marian's. Following some research, Camille discovers a letter that Marian's nurse had written, indicating that the nurse shared Camille's thoughts. Camille also learns that Adora is thought to have killed Ann and Natalie, according to Richard. She goes back to her mother's house, where Adora bathes Camille after poisoning her and tries to treat her wounds.

After falling asleep, Camille wakes up to see Richard and the police taking her mother into custody. The severity of her scars horrifies Richard. Despite his earlier assertions that he was falling for her, this puts an end to their relationship. Amma is transferred to Chicago to live with Camille after Adora is accused of killing Marian and the two girls. At first, Amma appears to be recovering from the trauma she endured at the hands of Adora, but not long after she enrolls at a girls' school in Chicago, a classmate is found dead after having six teeth extracted. Then it is revealed that Amma murdered Ann Nash and Natalie Keene in addition to killing Marian, partly because she was envious of the attention Adora was providing the girls. In the future, Amma is detained for her misdeeds. After cutting herself once more out of desperation, Camille is stopped by Curry and his wife, who adopt her as their daughter. Camille gains her first experience of being treated like a daughter and a child towards the conclusion of the narrative. Our study through *Sharp Objects* intends to answer the following research question:

- What are the aspects of crime in the novel and how were they manifested?
- What are the reasons behind these crimes and how are they related?
- What are the impacts of child abuse and sexual harassment on adult mental health?

Repressed feelings, memories, and unacceptable desires are generally connected to childhood abuse and sexual harassment. Therefore, in an attempt to draw this belief on solid academic grounds, we lay these probable hypotheses to the research questions above:

- Crime in the novel is manifested greatly from the very first beginning in different types and ways some are direct while others are indirect from child and animal abuse to sexual

harassment, and murder crime is always present throughout the novel.

- In one way or another, most of the crimes in the novel are interrelated and walk hand in hand one crime is the reason for another and one crime is the result of the other but the mother of all crimes is one "maternal criminality".
- Traumas, self-harm, alcoholism and many other adult mental health disorders are usually consequences of child abuse and sexual harassment

These hypotheses will guide our research, which is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will tackle the general and main theme of this work, Psychological Thriller and Crime Mystery, and its history. The second chapter, the core of our work, is a study of crime its types reasons and consequences according to Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*. The third and last chapter will be dedicated to a comparison and contrast between the novel *Sharp Objects* and its series.

My first encounter with Gillian Flynn's novel *Sharp Objects* was in 2018 after its screen adaptation was released. The novel was addicting and had a way to draw you to it; once you start you never stop. The storyline was perfect it was a piece of work that keeps you questioning, who, why and how. Therefore, when choosing a novel to work on I decided to use one of my favourites; Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*.

The themes discussed in the novel were themes that other students usually avoid in their research works (sexual harassment and female criminality), and the novel itself is a contemporary novel instead of the usual classics used in dissertations which made up my mind that this was the book that I needed to work on. It is new, rich and especially interesting both to read and work on.

# **Chapter One: Literature review**

## 1.1 Introduction

A subgenre of thriller known as the psychological thriller explores the psyche of its protagonists. Any psychological thriller's main focus is on finding answers to the puzzles surrounding behaviour and the mind. It may also occasionally include elements of mystery, as well as themes of crime, morality, mental illness, substance abuse, multiple realities or a sense of reality that is dissolving, and unreliable narrators.

While any novel may elicit a sense of intrigue, tension, and adrenaline, thriller authors are particularly skilled at doing so since these are the genre's main objectives. Although there are some similarities between the psychological thriller and psychological horror subgenres, the latter includes more terrifying themes; Stephen King's *The Shining* is a classic example of the latter. Psychological thrillers often steer clear of science fiction and instead concentrate on scenarios that may occur.

As this research was based on a Psychological Thriller, Crime fiction, Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*, this chapter will be dedicated to giving an overview of this genre and its history.

## 1.2 Crime fiction

British and American authors predominated the crime fiction genre throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. The words "murder mystery" and "police book" are used to characterize stories that focus on criminal activity, particularly the investigation of a crime often murdered by a professional or amateur investigator. The lines between popular fiction and other historical or science fiction genres are frequently blurry. There are several subgenres of crime fiction, such as detective fiction, courtroom drama, hard-boiled fiction, and legal thrillers. The courtroom is rarely seen in crime dramas since they concentrate on crime investigation. Key components that are virtually constant in the genre are suspense and mystery.

### 1.3 History of Crime Fiction

In the 19th century, crime fiction became recognized as a unique literary genre with specialized authors and a loyal following. In earlier novels and stories, organized attempts at detection were often absent: There was a detective amateur or professional trying to determine how and by whom a certain crime was committed; there was no police attempting to solve a case; there was also no discussion of motives, alibis, the modus operandi, or any other components that make up contemporary crime writing.

### 1.4 Description of crimes and detectives

The ghost story, the horror narrative, and the revenge story are predecessors of modern crime fiction. *The Rector of Veilbye* by Steen Steensen Blicher, *Confessions of a Thug* by Philip Meadows Taylor, and *The Murder of Engineer Roofsen* by Maurits Christopher Hansen are a few early examples of crime fiction. Thomas Skinner Sturr's anonymous *Richmond, or stories in the life of a Bow Street officer* (1827), Steen Steensen Blicher's *The Rector of Veilbye* (1829), and Steen Steensen (1839).

An example of an early crime/revenge story is an American poet and short-story writer Edgar Allan Poe's (1809–1849) tale "*The Cask of Amontillado*", published in 1846. Poe created the first fictional detective (a word unknown at the time) in the character of C. Auguste Dupin, as the central character of some of his short stories (which he called "tales of ratiocination"). In the words of William L. De Andrea (*Encyclopedia Mysterosa*, 1994).

These tales are so named because a crime—typically a murder—occurs in a "closed room" in them. In the most straightforward scenario, this is a hermetically enclosed space that, by all appearances, nobody could have entered or left at the time of the crime. These tales are so named because a crime—typically a murder—occurs in a "closed room" in them. In the most straightforward scenario, this is a hermetically enclosed space that, by all appearances, nobody could

have entered or left at the time of the crime. (For example, one such Agatha Christie mystery (*And Then There Were None*) takes place on a small island during a storm; another is on a train stalled in the mountains and surrounded by new-fallen, unmarked snow.) *The Hollow Man* was among the most well-known locked-room mysteries. In such a case, the resolution can entail proving that the room was not actually "locked," that no one else had to enter or leave, that the murderer is still inside, or that the person who "discovered" the murder when the room was unlocked had committed it right then.

Furthermore, British author and physician Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859, and died on July 7, 1930. *A Study in Scarlet*, the first of four books and 56 short stories featuring Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, was written by him in 1887. The Sherlock Holmes stories established crucial standards for crime fiction. The goals of "Our Society," which Doyle renamed from the exclusive social organization he founded in 1903 with a membership cap of 100, are still discussions of crime and investigation, criminals, and criminology.

One of the first sound-on-film interviews with Arthur Conan Doyle was captured in the summer of 1927, just three years before he passed away and shortly after publishing his final Sherlock Holmes story. Three years before his death and soon after the release of his final *Sherlock Holmes* story, in the summer of 1927, Arthur Conan Doyle participated in one of the first sound-on-film interviews. Doyle claims that he was not only annoyed by these stories but also began to consider applying scientific approaches to the task of detection after spotting a gap in the literary market. He explains how Joseph Bell, one of the instructors from his medical school, served as an inspiration to him.

Doyle tells how his 'new' detective later grew from this 'comparatively modest germ' into a monstrous growth' after starting to appear in short stories in *The Strand Magazine* in 1891. His sense of amusement can be felt as he writes. As Holmes's fame "took root," devoted followers started writing him letters, applying for jobs as domestic helpers and even giving him uninvited advice on beekeeping

after Holmes "retired." These weren't the only ways that Doyle's original vision for the Great Detective evolved. More noteworthy from a literary standpoint is how Holmes has come to be associated with nineteenth-century detective fiction in general, a Victorian giant who surpasses both his literary forebears and peers, and whose influence has shaped the conventions of the detective genre ever since, either by emulation or by the dissent.

In the videotaped conversation, Doyle reflects that Holmes' popularity came from his inventive use of scientific procedures in the "task of detection," giving readers the possibility to solve the mysteries for themselves. However, Doyle's remarks on the "old-fashioned detective" also underline the fact that the genre predates Holmes' publication. In actuality, the kind of fictional investigator who used scientific techniques to solve mysteries did as well. Even though Doyle did not create the genre or the scientific method, the magnitude of Holmes' domination in our ideas of Late-Victorian detective fiction may lead one to believe that Doyle was the most successful practitioner of detective fiction. Even so, this is not entirely true.

So why does Holmes have such a significant place in the history of detective fiction? Before looking at the influence of Edgar Allan Poe and Émile Gaboriau, I will look at some of the Late-Victorian detective literature against which Doyle defined his "new" detective in the first section of this chapter. I will next look at a few of Holmes' rivals and analyze the factors that led to his eventual success in influencing the course that the genre would follow. The chapter's conclusion charts Holmes' evolution as a literary influence on whodunit and hardboiled American private eye thrillers as well as the broader genre of crime literature.

Furthermore, Detective fiction is frequently referred to as having its "Golden Age" in the 1920s and 1930s. The majority of its writers, including Agatha Christie (1890–1976) and Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957), were British. Some of them had a British flavour while still being American. By that point, some norms and clichés had already become established, so the reader was only likely to be surprised by the plot's turns and, of course, by the murderer's identity. The majority of books

published at that time were whodunits, and numerous authors excelled at getting their readers to believe the wrong person was the guilty party before persuading them otherwise. They also preferred particular casts of individuals and particular places, with the isolated English country house topping the list. A typical plot of the Golden Age mystery followed these lines:

- A body, preferably that of a stranger, is found in the library by a maid who has just come in to dust the furniture.
- As it happens, a few guests have just arrived for a weekend in the country—people who may or may not know each other. They typically include such stock characters as a handsome young gentleman and his beautiful and rich fiancée, an actress with past glory and an alcoholic husband, a clumsy aspiring young author, a retired colonel, a quiet, middle-aged man about whom no one knows anything, who is supposedly the host's old friend but behaves suspiciously, and a famous detective.
- The police are either unavailable or incompetent to lead the investigation for the time being.

## 1.5 Conclusion

Since the early 1800s, writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, and many others have contributed to the development of the psychological thriller and crime fiction genres. Contemporary author Gillian Flynn chose to follow this path with her psychological thrillers *Sharp Objects: A Novel*. New York, Shaye Areheart Books, 2006 and *Gone Girl*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. By emphasizing the criminality of the female characters more than that of the male characters because this was a theme that many other crime fiction authors had abandoned because the criminal in their novels is almost always a male.



## **Chapter Two: Aspect of Crime in *Sharp Objects***

## 2.1 Introduction

Gillian Flynn's debut novel *Sharp Objects* (2006) is a contemporary Psychological Thriller in which the writer tackles all types of crime and psychological disorders in such a way that it keeps the reader wondering. In the novel, Flynn sheds light on different types of crime some were pictured as "major" and others were briefly discussed or just hinted about throughout the novel as they were considered "minor". In this chapter, we will discuss some of the major crimes that the writer focused on and the main themes of the novel: child abuse and maternal criminality, sexual harassment, rape, and murder. As well as a study of the reasons behind these crimes and their influence on mental health.

## 2.2 Child Abuse and Maternal Criminality in *Sharp Objects*.

Child abuse and maternal criminality have always been there since centuries ago, yet they started spreading more aggressively in the twentieth century. Child abuse is a crime that is in one way or another passed from one generation to another and that is what Flynn tried to point out through her main characters in *Sharp Objects*, Camille Preaker, Adora Crellin Preaker and Amity Adora Crellin also known as Amma.

In this small "perfect" family image, child abuse was carried from one generation to another. Adora, the mother, was abused and maltreated by her mother; who in turn was abused by her mother, Joya, and that was exposed when Camille held a conversation with Jackie, her mother's childhood friend and asked about her mother's life back at "home Jackie answered by saying: "Adora was ... overly mothered. Never saw your grandma Joya smile at her or lovingly touch her" (Flynn, p. 258).

A mother who grew up being abused turned out to be more abusive than her mother. When Camille got to her mother's house, the readers could notice that Adora is not a normal mother, she is a mother who greets her daughter whom she hadn't seen for months by saying "The house is not up to par for a visitor, I'm afraid" (Flynn, p. 29).

It was always clear throughout the novel that something was off about Adora. Her obsession with her status: the owner of the town's major source of profit —a gargantuan hog farm —, fluttery ways, and smothering approach to motherhood would never have earned her a mother of the Year award. However, when the chapters started getting deeper into her character there was something significantly darker lurking under her already bad mom façade.

Both Adora and Camille have a contentious and hateful relationship, fueled by the pain and trauma Marian's death left on both of them. However, how did Marian die?

Marian was Camille's little sister who died when Camille was thirteen years old. Marian was a sickly child and unlike Camille, she was "obedient" and a "good girl". Her death left both Camille and Adora devastated. However, after passing some time at home Camille noticed Amma making several references to being sick and feeling unwell and until Adora's poison "The Blue" was revealed it seemed like her sickness was just a side effect of her drinking and drug use. When Camille got sick and Adora "took care" of her for the first time she had the most shocking and secret revealing conversation of her life;

"She gave me something that made me feel groggy and sick," I said.

"Blue?"

I nodded.

"Yeah, she likes that one," Amma mumbled. "You fall asleep all hot and drooly, and then she can bring her friends in to look at you."

"She's done this before?" My body went cold under the sweat. I was right: Something horrible was about to happen.

She shrugged. “I don’t mind. Sometimes I don’t take it—just pretend. Then we’re both happy. I play with my dolls or I read, and when I hear her coming, I pretend to be asleep. (Flynn, p. 249-250)

Adora did not like Camille because she used to be “rebellious” and “strong enough” because she refused to take “The Blue” which made her stay “healthy” and did not need her mother’s affection and attention.

Suspects rose in Camille’s mind about her mother’s sickly behavior and her poisoning her daughters. Therefore, she did an investigation which led her to know that her mother suffered from Munchausen by Proxy (MBP) which was explained by Nurse Beverly Van Lumm to Camille as: “Munchausen by Proxy. The caregiver, usually the mother, *almost always* the mother, makes her child ill to get attention for herself. You got Munchausen, you make yourself sick to get attention. You got MBP, you make your child sick to show what a kind, doting mommy you are” (Flynn, p. 293).

Adora’s abuse of children did not stop there, it was also present when she bit her friend’s baby according to Camille’s memory:

I have one memory that catches in me like a nasty clump of blood ... when the ladies went into the kitchen to help tidy up the dishes, something changed. I remember my mother, alone in the living room, staring at the baby almost lasciviously. She pressed her lips hard against the baby’s apple slice of a cheek. Then she opened her mouth just slightly, took a tiny bit of flesh between her teeth, and gave it a little bite. The baby wailed. The botch faded as Adora snuggled the child, and told the other women it was just being fussy. (Flynn, p. 123-124)

Child abuse comes in many different types it could be in form of neglect, emotional neglect, medical and physical neglect, violence, sexual abuse and many others. Yet Flynn focused on maternal Criminality and child abuse more because a “mother” is usually seen as a “caregiver”, a source of

“love” and “care” yet Adora the “mother figure” was all but this. She was “cruel”, “cold” and “selfish” she never treated her daughter with love.

### **2.3 Sexual Harassment and Discrimination in *Sharp Objects*.**

Data from the United States Centers for Disease Prevention and Control indicates that in 2012, 54% of child maltreatment perpetrators were women. And according to Mental Health America, about 4% of American adults engage in self-injury behavior, with skin cutting as the most common method (between 70-90%). These statistics are considered only a glimpse into these and the other complex issues explored in the novel, but they highlight that preconceived ideas we may hold – such as women as victims and not perpetrators of abuse – are not always accurate. In a conversation held between Camille and Amma, Camille was asked “What if you hurt because it feels so good? Like you have a tingling like someone left a switch on in your body. And nothing can turn that switch off except hurting? What does that mean?” (Flynn, p. 242)

Given that she identified herself as a “cutter,” Camille is a symbol of these women. Camille, unlike Amma, chose to harm herself rather than harm others to lessen the anguish. Every time she feels pain and needs release, she cuts and carves words and expressions like “kill” and “vanish” upon her body. “As you can see, I cut. In addition, a jabber, snipper, slicer, and carver. I’m a really unique case” (Flynn, p. 76).

At the age of thirteen, she used “sex” as a way of self-injury as she “let” the football team “rape” her in the woods. “Thirteen years old, I thought to myself, but I felt a spear of admiration for the girl. When I’d been sad, I hurt myself. Amma hurt other people” (Flynn, p. 194-195).

In a report from the Children’s Welfare Foundation Sweden, Sex as self-injury (SASI) was suggested to be defined as: “when a person has a pattern of seeking sexual situations involving mental or physical harm to themselves. The behaviour causes significant distress or impairment in school, work, or another important area”. (Children's Welfare foundation Sweden).

Camille's story was not pretty, but it was worth being told because the truth is, this was the story of many women in the real world. According to her, it was "offensive", "sexist" and an act of "discrimination" when men try to "protect" women against discrimination when she told detective Richard in a conversation, she held with Detective Richard "I'm so sick of liberal lefty men practising sexual discrimination under the guise of protecting women against sexual discrimination." (Flynn, p.140) because for her, women did NOT need men to protect them as most of the events happening in their lives were "their choice".

According to her, it was not called "rape" if a group of men had sex with a drunken woman, it was just a stupid choice that women made and it was a type of discrimination to try and protect those women from that act as she said: "I liked the Old Testament spitefulness of the phrase got what she deserved" (Flynn, p. 118).

When seeing her reaction to this type of incident and how she thinks she was not "raped" and those other girls who were sexually assaulted and had to apologize for that themselves instead of getting an apology, readers might think she is unaware of what is going on. However, this is how she and all the girls in Wind Gap were raised and we see this when she tells the story of a girl being sexually abused in school and that bullies made her "put a stick inside of herself" in front of everyone but later on the teacher made her apologize to everyone in school saying "young ladies must be in control of their bodies because boys are not" (Flynn, p. 139).

Women are as strong as a thirteen-year-old pre-adult-adult, Amma, manipulating everyone according to her liking. Letting Adora see her as the "cute" little "good" and "obedient" daughter while the whole town sees her as the "rebellious", "sexy" and "bully" of her group. Both her boy and girl friends follow her leads and do whatever she asks. Amma was as strong as to torture pigs for pleasure and murder "tomboy" pre-adults of her age, pulling out their teeth and making dollhouse marble floors with them out of jealousy.

## 2.4 Murder and its reasons in *Sharp Objects*.

Murder is one of the greatest crimes that can be committed against individuals, and it has been defined variously: Whether the victim is an Englishman or a foreigner, Hawkins defines it as "the willful death of any subject whatsoever, with malice aforethought" (Ashworth, 2006)

According to Russell, "murder is the killing of any person under the king's peace, with malice aforethought, either express or implied by law" (Card, 2006).

"Motive" is central to police investigations. Although a conviction is possible without a motive being discovered, finding a specific reason makes it much more likely. Yet, finding a motive for murder does not go far enough to explain it.

In *Sharp Objects*, the main objective for Camille and detective Richard was to find the murderer of the two pre-adult girls, Ann Nash and Natalie Jane Keene, who was found killed with their teeth pulled out and them being groomed and dressed up like dolls. Throughout the story, every character was a suspect, especially since the murdered girls were not "good girls" instead they were "tomboys" and "vicious" themselves. In an interview, Flynn talked about the murdered girls and said "I didn't want these doomed girls to be just flashes of dimples and hair ribbons. That would be too easy" (Flynn, 2016). She continued by quoting Poe as she said:

As Poe said "The death of a beautiful woman is a poetic thing" and the death of a pretty girl is more so – considering the current media madness surrounding JonBenet and other lost girls, the murdered girls of *Sharp Objects* are not doll-like victims; they have vicious streaks themselves; they were fighters. (Flynn, 2016)

Ann Nash was hated by her neighbours for killing their bird while Natalie was bullied because of an incident where she stabbed her classmate's eyes with a needle in art class. The girls were bullied and made fun of by most of the young adults especially Amma and her friends. "They cornered Natalie in the bathroom after school one day ... and cut her hair," Mimi sobbed... "They

made Ann show her ... privates to the boys,” said Angie. “They always picked on those girls, just because they were different,’ Katie said...” (Flynn, p. 171).

At some point in the novel, we notice that all eyes of the town citizens and the detectives were pointed to male characters and the first suspect was Natalie’s brother as Chief Avery said to Camille “it’s always the family”. He was right, it was always the family but he got the wrong family. The real murderers of the novel were both females of the same family, Adora and Amma. Adora killed her daughter Mariane years ago by poisoning her because of her Munchausen by Proxy. Which, in one way or another, played a big role in the birth of a cruel serial killer, Amma. Adora, however, does not accept the fact that she killed Marian and makes it seem as if it was Camille’s fault, to begin with, because if Camille let Adora poison her, none of this would have happened. Even in her diary, which was found by the police in the novel, Adora describes the problem perfectly while not understanding that she is the problem, she describes how much she “hated” Camille for not letting her poison her and how she “adored” Marian and Amma for being “obedient” and letting her “take care” of them. Her need to be seen as a perfect mother greatly shadowed her wanting to be a perfect mother. She used her daughters as social pons in a game they never consented to play. As for Amma, after Adora was detained for the murder of her daughter and the two girls, Amma went back to live with her sister Camille and they had the perfect relationship. Not after a new “friend” of Amma was murdered, Lily Burke. And just like the other girls, Lily Burke’s teeth were pulled out. And here “Wind Gap’s Serial Killer” was back. After confirming it was Amma who did it, she tells Camille that she had fun with the violent little Ann and Natalie and that they killed a cat together. However, at a certain point, the two girls started hanging around her house too much, asking too many questions about Amma’s mysterious illness. And what was worst was that the girls started getting too much attention from Adora, which was triggering and “annoying”, Amma wanted all her mother’s attention to herself. Jealousy was her motive and partially because she’s been wrapped up by being poisoned by her mother her whole life.



Often children who have been subjected to Munchausen by Proxy have a hard time distinguishing what constitutes real violence and separating the idea of pain and affection. “A child weaned on poison considers harm a comfort” (Flynn, p320). Regarding Lily Burke, Amma killed her in part because she thought Camille preferred her to her. You can, of course, make 4,000 more educated guesses as to why Amma did it, as Camille noted. The truth is that Amma relished inflicting pain. “I enjoy violence, she yelled at me. My mum is to blame. A youngster raised on poison views injury as a form of comfort” (Flynn, p. 320).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In Flynn, Gillian. *Sharp Objects: A Novel*. New York, Shaye Areheart Books, 2006, Flynn demonstrates how women are just as strong as males and are capable of murder, torture, and poisoning. She demonstrates how a mother may be as sickly as Adora, poisoning her kids while denying that she killed her daughter and helping to create a nasty murderer.

**Chapter Three: A comparison between the novel and the  
mini-series of *Sharp Objects***

### **3.1 Introduction**

Due to the abundance of adaptations emerging from both mainstream and independent film companies in recent years, film adaptations—especially those based on literature—have been expanding quickly. Best-selling books from the 2000s like *The Hunger Games*, *The Twilight Saga*, and *Harry Potter* are frequently used in film adaptations because they have a clear literary style that lends themselves to the medium. There are instances where the adaptive process has produced a completely different conclusion, though. This chapter will focus on highlighting the differences between Gillian Flynn's 2006 book *Sharp Objects* and the HBO miniseries adaptation of the same name (2018).

### **3.2 the formal differences between the novel and the mini-series**

In novels, readers typically get a better understanding of characters through the narrative than through what the characters say. In books, the narrator uses his or her point of view to interpret what is written, whereas, in movies, the narrator mostly vanishes. Sometimes a voice-over is used to maintain the narrator's point of view, but normally the director, cast, and crew must rely on the other film tools to replicate what was experienced, imagined, and depicted on the page. This was the primary distinction between *Sharp Objects* the novel and the miniseries. Flynn's novel is told in the first person through Camille Preaker's viewpoint, but the program has the option to periodically allow viewers to see what transpires.

### **3.3 The difference between characters of the novel and those of the mini-series**

In the novel, Camille is sent to investigate and report the unusual death of a young girl and another's disappearance in her hometown which she has been avoiding for numerous reasons.

Although her family belonged to the local elite, life at home was anything but pleasant. Her mother disapproves of her. Even with his presence, the figure of her father still feels absent. She does not know her half-sister Amma. Meanwhile, memories of her favourite sister Marianne are everywhere, appearing in every dream. Overall, the story touches on three mysteries:

- Who are the murderers of the two young girls?
- What caused the death of her favourite sister?
- Camille's ability to escape the dysfunctional family.

The greatest way for readers to understand people in books is typically not through what they say, but rather by what they are thinking or what is mentioned about them in the narration. While in movies, the narrator generally vanishes, a narrator mediates the meaning of what is read through his or her point of view. The director, cast, and crew occasionally employ voice-overs to maintain the narrator's point of view, but most of the time they must rely on other film tools to capture what was experienced, imagined, and depicted on the page. The main distinction between Flynn, Gillian. Sharp Objects the novel and the miniseries were this. The show has the leeway to occasionally let viewers witness what happens, unlike Flynn's novel, which is told in the first person by Camille Preaker.

The appeal of the series is to find out who was behind Wind Gap's bloody reign of terror, and the many reasons behind Camille's very obvious trauma which has led to her long history of self-harm. For those who have read the novel Sharp Object, it is easy to assume that the answers to these questions follow the novel's outline step by step. After all, Flynn is the executive producer of the HBO thriller. However, this was not the case. The revelation of Munchausen by Proxy was the biggest difference between the book and the television adaptation because, in the book, Camille goes to great lengths to uncover her family's darkest secrets: Her mother Adora, who is portrayed by actress Patricia Clarkson, killed her daughter Mariane, played by actress Lulu Wilson.

Before reaching her decision in the book, Camille looked for references and combed through a vast number of materials. Later on, it is made obvious that her detective love interest Richard, played

by actor Chris Messina, believes Adora is also responsible for the new killings of the young girls and uses his friendship with Camille to dispel his concerns. The major revelation of chapter fifteen is that Adora has Munchausen Syndrome by proxy, meaning she purposefully makes her child ill to arouse pity from others. Adora slowly poisoned Marianne and then did it again with Amma, who, unlike Mariane, was aware of what was happening. Adora then used this against Amma so that she would receive all of her mother's attention and care by pretending to be ill when, in some cases, she hadn't even actually taken the pills. In this way, she always appeared to be the "good" and "obedient" daughter, which was a cover for her true nature as an "In essence", Camille and Richard are each pursuing their ravenous probes of Adora.

However, on the show, Richard alerts Camille by leaving Marian's medical records in her car, leading Camille to ask Adora's former best friend Jackie for information. In the novels, Camille realizes this herself when Adora used "The Blue" on her and it made her sick after the conversation she held with Amma about "The Blue" she got her suspicions higher and asked confirmation from Jackie, which led her to extract Marian's medical records herself instead of getting them from Richard.

Another difference was Calhoon day which was a nonexistent festival that no one mentioned in the novel. While on the show, it's the day Adora looks forward to all year. This festival, a creation for the HBO miniseries, is also a disturbing celebration of sexual assault and the Confederacy at the Preaker-Crellin estate. A disturbing Southern party reminiscent of the Civil War city's history, never actually happens in the novels. Calhoon Day, hosted by Adora, "celebrated" the story of a young Wind Gap woman named Millie Calhoon who refused to reveal her husband's whereabouts to federal soldiers even after they brutally raped her and resulted in a miscarriage. But in the end, the party was mostly an excuse for the Wind Gap folks to gather on Crellin's lawn for drinks and gossip. Bringing all the characters together in one place for such an elaborate campaign leads to some interesting developments that don't happen in the novel: Bob Nash and John Keene get into a fistfight, Amma retreat and flees from the party, and Adora tells Richard about Camille's past.

When Camille returns to Wind Gap in the novel, no one can stop talking about her glorious life in Chicago as a reporter for the city's third most popular newspaper. But on the show, although Camille writes for Midwestern urban newspapers, she no longer lives in the big city of Chicago. Instead, she lives and works in St. Louis, Missouri.

It was also clear on the show that they had a message for changing Curry's little family from being both him and his wife, Eileen, both being described as working middle-class whites to them being People of Color as the role of Eileen was played by actress Barbara Eve Harris. In making Currys' People of Color, the Sharp Objects team drew a greater contrast between Camille's hopeful and more progressive city life and the claustrophobic, almost federally white Wind Gap.

Another difference involving Curry is when he went himself to Wind Gap on the show to help and make sure she was okay, he also convinced Chief Vickery to search Cerllins' house while in the novel Curry never goes to Wind Gap. However, both in the novel and show, Camille moves to live with Curry and his wife after both her mother and sister were arrested.

The position of Camille's scar "vanish" is another clear difference as in the novel, the scar is written on her neck. A lot of time is spent explaining the location of the scar. In essence, Camille has been hurting herself by etching every inch of her skin for over a decade, and she's holding that spot for her last words. She created "vanish" scars before she checked herself for self-harm at a rehab centre. When on the show, in the final scene of the series premiere "Vanish" we see the word written on the side of Camille's forearm. None of the above contexts gives a thought process for Camille's specific expression of self-harm. Instead, the moment is used to simply reveal how Camille hurt herself in the first place.

While in the Novel, each chapter is numbered and straightforward. On the show, we can think of each episode of Sharp Objects as a chapter in the saga of Camille. Each of these chapters is more than just a number. Instead, each of them is named after one of Camille's scars, caused during her history of self-harm.

In the Novel, numerous occasions were spent describing how stunted — both emotionally and physically — the siblings of Anne Nash (Kaegan Baron), one of the murdered Wind Gap girls, appear. However, In the Show, all three kids seemed to be normally developed. Little interest is shown in the trio.

One of the novel and the show's big scenes is Camille's meeting with Jackie as many secrets were revealed through the conversation held between the two. In the show, when Camille begins to find out that Adora is responsible for Marianne's death, she goes to Jackie to confirm her worst fears. It is even clearer how much Jackie knows that Camille is mad at her for not stepping in to save Marianne. The show also added new details about Jackie showing Adora cremating Marianne with her coffin open after a very public funeral, leaving Camille in a bind. As for the novel, Camille's conversation with Jackie was much calmer, somehow, she never got mad at Jackie. While the scene in the show ends with Jackie yelling at Camille for not understanding her, the scene in the novel ends with Jackie encouraging Camille to leave Wind Gap and save herself.

Another important scene was when John Keene got arrested. In the novel, John was tracked down simply because his mother told the police he never came home the night before. While in the show there were much more details that make even the viewers believe he was the killer as Natalie's bike was found in the pig farm where he used to work which made the police look for him and finally find him in the hotel room with Camille.

In both the novel and the show, Alan Crellin is delineated as soft and rather obsequious, a line to no matter what can build Adora happy. As a result of the novel being told from Camille's perspective, the reader solely is aware of the narrator's assumptions concerning Alan and Adora's wedding. Which principally confirms Camille's belief that there's a lack of physical intimacy between her mother and stepfather. Once Alan tells Adora that perhaps he ought to pay the night together with her once she injures her hand, she in cold blood replies, "That won't be necessary." On the far side, the miniseries additionally provides a quick glimpse into Alan's frustration together with his home

life as he steps outside to muffle a scream. Alan's frustration together with his home life is far more apparent within the miniseries than within the novel, showcased by his stepping outside to muffle a scream at one purpose. It is additionally clearer within the miniseries that he's awake to Adora poisoning their kids, and whereas he appears conflicted concerning it, he allows her actions by turning a blind eye on multiple occasions.

Camille oftentimes reflects on her painful adolescence as a way of attempting to create a sense of what she needs to know in her life. The flashbacks square measure crucial to understanding why she currently lives a largely isolated life, and her history of self-harm in the novel. While within the show, it's clearly shown how a young Camille was suffering from Marian's death. Few details are given regarding Marian's funeral within the novel, however, within the show, Camille is shown having a meltdown attempting to wipe the lipstick off her sister's body, and has got to be carried out kicking and screaming. On the opposite hand, Camille's traumatic memories of early sexual experiences and her frustration with not knowing something regarding her biological father are huge elements within the novel, however, have yet to essentially be addressed within the show.

A major roadblock to Camille's coverage within the novel is that Natalie's parents, intelligibly, don't desire to talk with her concerning their daughter's death. Camille gets shouted at many times on the phone, once soliciting for quotes, or when Mrs Keene hears what Camille plans to print. Within the show, Camille overtly talks about the circumstances of Natalie's murder with Mr Keene at the wake and hasn't interacted with Mrs Keene at all. Finding out who carried out Wind Gap's terrible reign of terror and the numerous causes of Camille's trauma, which led to her long history of self-harm, are the appeals of the series. It is simple to presume that the answers to these questions will closely resemble the plot summary of the book *Sharp Object* for those who have read it. Flynn is after all the HBO thriller's executive producer. This wasn't the case, though.



The biggest difference between the novel and the television adaptation of *Munchausen* by Proxy is how the plot is disclosed; in the novel, Camille takes great pains to uncover her family's darkest secrets: Adora, played by actress Patricia Clarkson, killed her daughter.

In the series, the relationship between Camille and Amma is presented as growing in closeness. Amma seems to look up to her older sister, remembering Camille's reputation as a cool, popular person. In turn, Camille admires Amma's confidence and is very taken in by her sister, even though she will never be as close to Amma as she was to Marian (her favourite sister, long-time deceased). While there are moments within the novel where Amma and Camille appear to bond, there's a lot of a feeling that Amma is extreme and a bit off. Once Amma and Camille get hurt and Amma's chest bleeds, Amma takes a swab of her blood to wipe across Camille's lips. Later, once Camille gets custody of Amma, she talks about how exhausting Amma is, how needy, and the way unsure Camille is concerning being a guardian. There are parts of this within the film, however, the extremes are not caught.

In the novel, Amma befriends and kills a woman named Lily, not Mae, when she moves in with Camille. Lily's body is found next to a dumpster with six teeth forced out, and once Camille determines that her mother remains at home, solely then will she notice that Amma is hiding something. She turns the dollhouse upside down and discovers the teeth.

Also, there is no contestation that Amma is crazy, however within the series, she's shown to be an astute psychopath who will act unbelievably contrite, sympathetic, and normal once she desires to. Within the novel, however, she's never anything but egoistic and twisted. She revels in cruelty and does not see others as people, simple objects. Case in point: once Amma kills Lily, she uses her victim's hair to braid a miniature carpet for her dollhouse, because the hair matches the colour of Camille's recent carpet in real life.

A benefit of reading the novel is that not only are we made aware of Camille's interior world, but we also find out what happens next to Amma after the series ends with Camille discovering

Amma's violence. Amma is locked up, and Camille visits her sister often. Camille is even closer with Frank (her boss) and Eileen (his wife) Curry in the novel, and they take her in after all the tragedy she suffered. They try to make up for how she grew up by treating her with kindness, even kissing her on the head at night. Camille is worried about turning out like her mother, or that she is already like her mother. Presented as a daily struggle, she is trying to be kind.

Gillian Flynn insists she never even considered changing the ending of Flynn, Gillian. Sharp Objects, 2006 to shock faithful readers who had tuned in to the show. The novel was published over a decade ago and its double-twist ending probably wasn't well-known; some authors might jump at the chance to have another go at their first novel. But Flynn kept the bones of the story intact.

### **3.4 conclusion**

Most other shows will have a good story, good plot twists, good acting, and good narration but Sharp Objects, for whatever reason, just stands out. It all just fits together like a puzzle, it is not a TV show, and it is like a novel-tv hybrid. The atmosphere portrayed is quite overwhelming and will hold you tight until the very end. It is incredibly sad, illuminating, healing, raw, clever, and comforting yet disturbing. This show sinks its teeth into you right away. The actors did such a great job since people identified so much with the main character and stayed captivated by the rest of the cast in a great way.



## **General Conclusion**

Child abuse, sexual assault, bullying, cruelty to animals, murder, and many other topics covered in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* are social phenomena that are widely recognized as crimes with harsh punishments. Even a mother meant to be the embodiment of love, care, devotion, and safety is now viewed as a danger to her kids. Friends kill one another out of envy, while school bullies sexually abuse their peers just for pleasure and to demonstrate their dominance and might.

The social problems portrayed in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* are all recognized as crimes with severe penalties. Even mothers, who are supposed to represent love, care, dedication, and safety, are now seen as threats to their children. While school bullies sexually assault their students for fun and to show off their power and authority, friends murder one another out of envy and many other issues are social phenomena that are commonly acknowledged as crimes with severe penalties and are all handled in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*. It has come to pass that even mothers, who are supposed to be the epitome of love, care, devotion, and safety, are seen as threats to their children. In contrast to school bullies who sexually assault their peers for fun and to show their power and authority, friends who are infatuated with one another often kill one another. Child abuse, sexual assault, bullying, animal cruelty, murder, and many other issues are social phenomena that are commonly acknowledged as crimes with severe penalties and are all handled in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*. It has come to pass that even mothers, who are supposed to be the epitome of love, care, devotion, and safety, are seen as threats to their children. In contrast to school bullies who sexually assault their peers for fun and to show their power and authority, friends who are infatuated with one another often kill one another.

Throughout the novel, the toxicity and darkness of this family are brought out in portions. It starts by showing Camille's psychological problems and her hatred towards her hometown, her weird relationship with her "mother" Adora and the fact that she was not a welcomed "visitor" at home. Once back home, Camille was always going into an argument with Adora who didn't like the fact that her daughter was investigating the story of the death of two girls. Through the heated arguments between the two, it was clear that Adora did not care for anything

much more than her image in town as one of the richest women there she had to stay up to the standards of the title of an elite.

While investigating the death of the two girls with Detective Richard who was “also” considered an outsider from Wind Gap, Camille exposes some of the secrets about Wind Gap people knew. Such as the story of the two women who were lovers and committed suicide or as she named it “murder-suicide” where it became clear that Wind Gap was a town that did not accept “different” people, a town where women discriminated against each other labelling other women “tomboys” and “lesbians” who were not accepted. Which was also the case of the two dead girls that were exposed later on in the novel.

The murdered girls were not normal little girls of ten and thirteen years old, instead, they were “vicious” and “problematic” tomboys who were bullied and not accepted by other young adults in the town. Both were bullied and harassed continuously, even when Amma treated them as “friends” it was because she enjoyed their violence which was shown when she told Camille “We once killed a cat together”. However, this friendship didn’t last much and it turned into “jealousy” and “hatred” because of the attention they were getting from Adora.

Jealousy is considered one of the main reasons for the birth of a murderer as Amma killed the girls because of her jealousy of them getting too much attention from the people who are supposed to like only her. However, the main reason for the birth of a criminal is the crime itself. Adora became a criminal who killed her daughter because she was raised by an abusive mother who suffered from Munchausen by Proxy herself. Amma became a violent child who enjoyed harming others because she was raised on poison; “A child weaned on poison considers harm a comfort” (Flynn, p320).

Child abuse and sexual harassment are considered the “parents” of Crime. A child growing up in an abusive environment develops different types of psychological disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Munchausen by Proxy (MBP) or Munchausen, self-harm and many other problems. While the worst result is that child abuse and sexual harassment are the major reason for the birth of abusers, psychopaths and criminals.

# **BIOGRAPHY Gillian Flynn**

The author of the international smash *Gone Girl*, which spent more than 75 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list, is Gillian Flynn. Her works have received several cinema adaptations and have been published in 40 different languages. Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike starred in David Fincher's adaptation of the book *Gone Girl*, which received nominations for several accolades, including an Oscar and a BAFTA. Flynn's work most recently returned to the New York Times bestseller list thanks to the HBO adaptation of *Sharp Objects*, which starred Amy Adams and Patricia Clarkson and was published in the summer of 2018. Together with Oscar-winning filmmaker Steve McQueen, she co-wrote the 2018 thriller *Widows*, which starred Viola Davis and Liam Neeson. *Sharp Objects*, winner of the Dagger Award, and *Dark Places*, Flynn's earlier books, were both New York Times bestsellers. *Sharp Objects*, a literary mystery by Flynn published in 2006, was the first book to ever win several Dagger Awards in a single year and was a finalist for an Edgar Award. The movie rights were sold. *Dark Places*, Flynn's second book and a 2009 New York Times bestseller, was named a New Yorker Reviewers' Favorite as well as a Weekend TODAY Top Summer Read, Publishers Weekly Best Book of 2009, and Chicago Tribune Favorite Fiction. The rights have been sold, and *Sarah's Key* director Gilles Paquet-Brenner will helm the film. Flynn, her spouse, and their son reside in Chicago.



## **Synopsis of Sharp objects**

The protagonist of *Sharp Objects* by Gillian Flynn is Camille, a Chicago-based crime reporter. In Wind Gap, Missouri, where Camille is from, a young girl goes missing. Camille's supervisor convinces her to return home to report the disappearance. She hasn't been back to her hometown in almost ten years, so she is apprehensive about going, but she wants to please her boss, so she goes into his requests. The majority of the story takes place in Wind Gap as Camille struggles to stay away from her past while trying to link the specifics of the missing child's abduction to an earlier murder. The plain and even profane grammar, which is told from Camille's perspective, shows both her training as a journalist and the cynical attitude she holds toward her surroundings.

Although Camille is seated in her Chicago office at the *Daily Post* when the book officially opens, the action starts when she arrives in Wind Gap. Wind Gap appears to be a typical tiny Midwestern town, but it soon becomes obvious that Camille and her community have a lot of sinister secrets in common. When Camille returns to her hometown, she immediately starts drinking and does so throughout most of the book. Her compulsive drinking reveals her attempt to put her past behind her. Camille struggles to reconcile her feelings of scorn for her mother, her small half-sister, and her little sister, who passed away from an unknown illness. It has been found that Camille once used sharp items to engrave phrases on her body. Although Camille's internal conflict forms the novel's core, the exterior plot centred on the Wind Gap child murders propels the story along. Each chapter closes with Camille learning the truth about the crimes—her mother progressively poisoned her little sister to death, and her half-sister killed the young girls—by speaking with a variety of people, including police detectives and her old friends and acquaintances.

Furthermore, the main plot is a simple murder mystery, and the numerous side stories, such as Camille's developing romance with the out-of-town detective, complicate the story and show Camille's character development. Camille begins the novel as a secretive and self-harming character, but towards the end, she has learned to love herself and accept love.

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