

# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER FOUND IN GILLIAN FLYNN'S SHARP OBJECTS

*by* Mega Fadilla

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# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER FOUND IN GILLIAN FLYNN'S *SHARP OBJECTS*

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## *Abstract*

*Sharp Objects* is a novel by an American writer Gillian Flynn. The novel has a protagonist named Camille Preaker — a young reporter who must return to Wind Gap to uncover a murder case. It was not easy for Camille to return to Wind Gap, because she had post-traumatic experience caused by her mother and the death of her younger sister. As a writer, Gillian Flynn included elements of sex, psychology, and the activity of drinking alcoholic drinks in her novel. The purpose of this study is to determine post-traumatic symptoms, causes, and post-traumatic effects experienced by the main character. This study uses library research and researcher applies psychoanalysis theory, because this theory is concerned with the suffering accomplished by Camille Preaker. The results of study found by researcher is Camille Preaker suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder for the sake of death of her sister, also she has an unhealthy affair with her mother. After her little sister's death, it was discovered by Adora — Camille's mother had never cared for or even taken care of Camille, which made Camille lose the figure of a mother and trigger herself to do self-harm, so that she had a trauma. Thus the researchers uncovered the symptoms, causes, and consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Camille Preaker. The finding of this study can be formulated as follows. First, the symptoms of Camille Preaker's PTSD. Second, the causes of Camille Preaker's PTSD. Third, the effects of Camille Preaker's PTSD that affected her life, both in terms of social and personal life.

**Keywords:** PTSD, symptoms, causes, effects

## INTRODUCTION

Life is a series of incidents. Those incidents could be a good or worse memory for everyone. Those occasions can lead them to the incident that makes them have trauma. There are several reason the causes of trauma, one of those reasons is losing someone because of death. Spiegel (2013) states that the substance of traumatic strain is weakness, which he describes as “a loss of control over one's body”. It means that when people got PTSD—they will lose their mind and unable to control their emotion. This condition will lead them to things that related to the past that causes of their trauma.

There are several types of trauma, but this literary work *Sharp Objects* by Gillian Flynn will be focused on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a mental health condition that is caused by terrible occasions. Furthermore, many traumatologists behold uncertainty toward the syndromic credibility of PTSD as determined by a vicious program to mute the people of people who remain to alive (Rosen, 2004).

In literary work—*Sharp Objects* tells about young woman reporter name Camille Preaker who has to go home to her old place—Wind Gap to interrogate the execute of two pre-teens girl. It is not easy job to do for Camille, because she has trauma with her old hometown. Also, she has barely talked to her mom—Adora Crellin, for eight years. Camille has to be strong enough to deal with her past if she wants to survive in Wind Gap and get the story of two pre-teens murders.

It is shown that Camille Preaker has PTSD, since she comes back to Wind Gap—she has sleeping problem, avoiding to go back to Wind Gap because she tries to avoid things related with traumatic events—her mom and her little sister's death. Whenever she feels the pain, she used to cut her skin with sharp objects around her, mostly with razor blade.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is fascinated in discussing Post Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Gyllian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*. Particularly, the writer is fascinated to know symptoms, causes, and effects of Camille Preaker's trauma.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature is a output of individual reflection. It can be misrepresented by the surroundings of the writer; in fact it could hold the writer's habit of activity. Although, lots of humankind reckon that literary works are resemblance of human growth. Specifically, literary works are worn by writers for convincing what they sense and witness and what they deal in a society habit affect human activities. That is why; literary works are always admired by public around the world in seeking out the aesthetic side and seeking out the engaging affair. A lot of informations can be established from those works of art, but these information can be acknowledged frequently by examination and appreciate the works. It cannot be caught in a simple way and directly. Even, the style of the authors itself in writing should be derived, therefore the main theme and significant information can be found by the readers. It is about the foreground of the author and the setting of place and time that should be known to support the comprehension of specific works.

Psychology and literature has wide association in human being. Both of them deal with the individual demeanors, interpretation, understanding, and catalyst. "Psychology, mostly defined characterize, is the objective study of conduct, both external appreciable movement and subjective thinking (Wortman, et.al., 1999:4). Psychology is able to analyze and elaborate things and experience of humankind activity by handling the assumption of psychology in the literary work.

### Theory of Psychoanalysis

Since the 1920s, expansive psychological literary criticism has come to be recognized as psychoanalytic critique. In psychoanalytical literary criticism a few of the methodologies of psychoanalysis are applied in the analysis of literature. As the *Random House Dictionary of English Language* puts it, Psychoanalysis is a methodical organization of approach regarding the connection of attentive and senseless psychological mechanism. Psychoanalysis begins as a cure for mental disorders and might be this is the logic that it is often defined as a assemble of healing (Barry, 2002: 97).

### Theory of Trauma

According to Michelle Balaev—The enlargement of trauma theory in literary criticism could be accepted in circumstances of the developing psychological interpretation of trauma as good as the semiotic, articulate, and social involvement which are element of the consideration of trauma in literature and society. The charm of the paradigm figure happen in the combining of neurobiological understanding with reference to the mechanism of the perception and recollection well-organized with semiotic theories about the cases of expression, connections, and representation. Starting with from a distinctive psychological opening mark for representing torture than that settled in the traditional access thus grants authority a revived focal point on trauma's particularity and the action of celebrating. Knowing trauma, for example, by settling it within a largest theoretical groundwork of social psychology theories in extension to neurobiological theories will crop a specific psychologically advise approach of trauma that defend the align of dependent factors that indicate the amount of the background. This posture might so that grant arguable the affirmation of trauma's intrinsic disjunction.

### Theory of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

To figure out further about the causes and effect of traumatic incident, the writer uses Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD can be defined as convulsed and constant disorder that generally coexist with another disorders including other anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and substance use disorders (Brewin, Dalgeish, and Joseph, 1996). People who suffered from PTSD commonly feel uneasy—they often worry about something like places or people which related with her trauma. Her emotion easily to switch when they recall about memories that related to their trauma. They usually lack of sleep and haunted by nightmare from their own mind, therefore these things make them to take medicine without any doctor's prescription.

## Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

### a. Intrusive Thoughts

In deeper to apprehending, figure, harmony, flavor, and senses of a specific horrifying event can also encroach seriously about a person with PTSD. People with PTSD are blown in the remembrance and time during that they qualified the moment and are inattentive to their current life.

### b. Avoiding Reminders of The Traumatic Event

Perform an achievement to eliminate from absolute direction which carry toward body-level afflict of trauma-related symptoms. We can also view these manifestations as the life that people employ in to inhibit other classes of dreadful experiences. For detail, practicing alcohol or other drugs can be an enterprise someone appoints in self-medicate afraid feelings.

### c. Negative Thoughts and Feelings

May consist continuing and gnarled beliefs toward oneself or others (e.g., "I am atrocious," "No one can be credible"); continuing angst, horror, indignation, disgrace or guilt; much less enthusiasm in movement formerly appreciated; or feeling isolated or divorced from others.

### d. Arousal and Reactive Symptoms

Arousal and reactivity are feasibly the most mundane syndrome association of trauma-related symptoms. In films and in literature, individual with PTSD or other trauma-related issues are characterized by the definite symptoms of anxiety, alarming, and being on edge. These symptoms often very sensitive.

### e. Self-Injury

Self-injury is now universally identified as an arrangement of presence in its own right, distinct from other enterprise such as self-harm and pursued self-destruction. Primarily, self-injury is best regarded not as suicide but as a peculiar way of grapple with personal frustration.

## Causes of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

The causes of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder might be from various incidents, such as; car accidents, losing someone or death of someone, being abused or bullied, sexually assaulted, and another traumatic events that might cause PTSD.

## Effects of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

There are several effects of PTSD might occur to someone, such as;

### a. Effects PTSD on Families

PTSD can generate someone demanding to live. Breathing with someone who is efficiently frightened, someone who often brings bad dream when she/he sleeps, somebody who experienced from PTSD will detached theirself from social contact.

### b. Effects PTSD on Someone who is Dealing Relationship

Trauma survivors with PTSD may have trouble with their close family relationships or friendships.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies qualitative research to find and understand symptoms, causes, and effects of Camille Preaker in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*. This trend has roots in the development of the New Leadership School, (Conger, 1999; Hunt, 1999), on the recent emergence of an approach to leadership that views it as a relational phenomenon (Fletcher, 2002), and on the increased recognition of the strengths of qualitative inquiry generally. This method is relevant for this research because it is appropriate to explain PTSD that appear in Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### The Symptoms of PTSD suffered by Camille Preaker



In order to analyze Camille's symptoms of PTSD, the researcher uses the theory of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder in this section. According to Camille's past in Wind Gap, the researcher finds the symptoms of Camille's PTSD.

The first symptom of Camille Preaker is avoiding reminders of the traumatic event. Camille Preaker has to go back to her old hometown—Wind Gap—to investigate the murders. She is not only dealing with her assignment but also she has to face her past. Camille barely talks to her mother after Marian's death and she never talks to her mother for a few years. His boss—Cury asks Camille to go to Wind Gap, because Camille is from there also Camille is such a good reporter, therefore Cury trusts her to find out the murder.

1 "Cury loved to drill reporters on any topics he deemed pertinent—the number of murders in Chicago last year, for some reason, the story of my hometown, a topic I preferred to avoid." (Flynn, 2006: 06)

From that quotation above, we can learn that Camille doesn't want to recall or remember about her past that makes her think about Marian's death and her mother. Curry forces her to go back and stay with her mother, but Camille doesn't want to tell him further about her mother. She would rather keep it for herself than tell it to Curry.

The second symptom that appears in the novel is Camille Preaker shows her negative thoughts and feeling. Camille hates Wind Gap and she hopes that she never comes back to her old hometown and meet with her mother. She starts to think about the worst scenario that might happen in Wind Gap, and therefore she doesn't have to do her assignment for Curry.

5 "I sat silent, cataloguing various disasters that might have befallen Wind Gap. It's one of those crummy towns prone to misery. I was also sulking a bit." (Flynn, 2006: 07)

From that situation, we can infer that Camille is uncomfortable to talk about something that related to Wind Gap. Her mind is fulfilled by her persistent negative emotional states like anger and fear. Camille is inability to feel peace or happy about Wind Gap.

The third is arousal symptoms. The author finds that Adora Crellin doesn't like Camille—her own daughter. Since Camille was kid, she never close to her mother—even after her little sister died. Her mother always shows her reaction that she hates Camille and avoids Camille's appearance as much as she can. It makes Camille feels unworthy and loveless by her mother. Camille was supposed to get any attention and affection from Adora, but Adora was being ignorant to Camille and it got Camille into serious mental problem—trauma, and she is diagnosed got PTSD.

1 "I still did not want to go. So much so, apparently, that I'd wrapped my hands around the arms of my chair...." (Flynn, 2006: 09)

The traumatic event is still haunting her. Camille is unprepared to face her problems that related to her past. She is scared—whenever she heard someone says about Wind Gap, her reaction proves that she is uncomfortable about it and starts showing her anxious.

The fourth is intrusive thoughts. Camille Preaker decides to take that job and she goes back to Wind Gap. She is convinced by Curry that she can handle the job well than the others, also Curry promises her to protect Camille whenever Camille gets in trouble at Wind Gap. When she arrives at Wind Gap, Camille finally meets again with Adora—her mother. Adora welcomes her, but the way Adora looks at her is stiff and unpleasant.

The next day, Camille tries to seek out and investigate the murder at Grove Street. Turned out, she still familiar about her hometown and she remembers all the detail about it. Grove street is two blocks behind her school, whenever she hits that place, suddenly all her memories about old stuff comes to her mind, it makes her trauma gets stronger.

<sup>1</sup> “I still remembered the way to Groove Street. It was two blocks behind my high school, which served every kid within a seventy mile radius....” (Flynn, 2006: 27)

The writer finds that Camille is still haunted by her past. Her emotion is still unstable and it is described by her reaction and her acts towards her memories that still linger on her mind.

The fifth is self-injury. Camille Preaker got suffered by PTSD—she gets her trauma since she was kid after Marian’s death. It is getting worst when her mother was being ignorant to her. Camille carries her trauma with her until she grows being adult. She spends her time mostly lock herself in the bedroom and whenever she is in pain, she will hurt herself and makes some marks and cutting in her body (self-harm).

“I am a cutter, you see. Also a snipper, a slicer, a carver, a jabber. I am very special case, I have a purpose. My skin, you see, screams. It’s covered with words—*cook, cupcake, kitty, curls*—as if a knife-wielding first grader...” (Flynn, 2006: 96)

Self-harm or self-injury is usually a feeling to an awful background or set of involvement, with sexual injustice and agony of death of somebody being the most frequent provoke. One review examine, for example, established which a lot of humankind who self-harm on a regular basis had qualified child injustice, exceptionally sexual abuse. Based on the National Center for PTSD at the Department of Veterans Affairs, self-harm is bizarre but not extremely.

#### **The Cause of PTSD suffered by Camille Preaker**

One of the causes Camille Preaker got suffered by PTSD is she saw Marian was dead. She had knew that her little sister was already dying for such a long time. This was her experienced to lose someone who she loves the most. Camille tries to put herself together and tries not be shocked and surprised. After Marian is gone, she does not to be loved by anyone, especially her mother and never talk to her until now. Because after all these times her mother never love Camille, she is only love Marian. Then, when Adora decides to marry with another man, she loves Amma the most than Camille.

<sup>1</sup> “Marian died when I was thirteenth birthday. I woke up, padded down to the hall to say hello—always the first thing I did—and I found her, eyes open, blanket pulled up to her chin. I remember not being that surprised...” (Flynn, 2006: 98)

Camille Preaker’s PTSD still related to Marian’s death. After Marian’s death, she becomes introvert and finds pleasure to heal her pain. She is undeniable deal with her emotion, she is broken inside and no one cares about her including her mother. On that day, Camille got her first period and she wants to get pleasure and really curious about sex, therefore she plays with herself. Then, she can forget about her wound inside temporarily.

#### **The Effect of PTSD suffered by Camille Preaker**

The writer finds that Camille Preaker’s PTSD has effected in her life. She is unable to think peacefully. Camille looks normal like other people if we <sup>9</sup>ke a look from the outside, but deep down inside—she is fragile. Curry asks her to go back in her hometown and stay with her mother until her job is done. This is the time where Camille is facing with her past again.

Camille's past has haunted her again—it makes her frightened in her daily life while she is doing her job in Wind Gap. Her unwelcoming mother—Adora Crellin doesn't want to Camille to stay with her for a long time.

Camille decides to sleep in her old bedroom. She starts dreaming that makes her unbearable.

<sup>1</sup> "Four hours of threadbare sleep, like lying in a bathtub with your ears half submerged. Shooting up in bed every twenty minutes, my heart pounding so hard I wondered if it was the beating that woke me..." (Flynn, 2006: 43)

From that quotation above, Camille Preaker is lacking of sleep. She often gets nightmare that related to her past. Her mind is still linger on to her past about Marian's death in summer time when she was thirteen. Camille brings her mind everywhere until she sleeps.

## CONCLUSION

The first problem is about symptoms of Camille Preaker's PTSD as the main character in the novel. There are five symptoms that researcher has found in Camille Preaker. Those five symptoms are avoiding reminding of the traumatic event, negative thoughts and feeling, arousal and reactive symptoms, intrusive thoughts, and self-njury. She gets those symptoms because of her little sister's death—Marian and day after Marian's death, Camille's mother never treats her better.

The second problem is about causes Camille Preaker's PTSD. She gets PTSD after she dealt with loosing Marian. Not only losing her little sister, she is also losing her mother. After Marian's death, her mother named Adora married again with another man named Alan and had a beautiful daughter named Amma. Adora really loves Amma, but she is out of love to Camille. Camille is feeling loveless by anyone. She feels lonely almost all the time. When she grows adult, Camille decides to leave Wind Gap and find a new life and job as a reporter in Chicago.

The third problem is about the effects of Camille Preaker's PTSD. Because of her PTSD that she got since the age at thirteen, it makes Camille has trust issue with people. She is unable to trust with somebody, except Curry—his boss that always helps her whenever Camille needs a hand. Also, Camille spends her time alone that is why she is withdrawn from society because she is uncomfortable enough to hang out and be surrounding among people.

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