

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The concept of social role explains that individuals occasionally acquire the intercorrelation between personal characteristics and the roles of the individual in society. Since the roles occasionally construct their beliefs through correspondent inference (Diekman et al., 2005). Taking the concept, individuals tend to employ their beliefs on others by constraining the other's behavioural option that confirms actual behavioural confirmation based on their gender stereotypes (Skrypnek & Snyder, 1982). Given this information, gender is a term examining the social construction categories based on sex. Coates (2016) argues that gender is a plural conceptualism that interconnects directly with the range of femininity and masculinity from the utterance in a moment. In line with this circumstance, most societies attempt two genders to designate the range of masculinity as indicated precisely by male characterisation, and femininity is direct to female characterisation (Coates, 2016).

Following the social role theory, society builds gender roles to expect people to have stereotypical characteristics and behaviours based on sex. It must be concerned that the male is associated with masculinity in behaving with independence and strength while the female is associated with femininity acting as dependent and nurturant. Femininity indicates that women are conventionally regarded as adequately "conforming, affectionate, kind, warm, sympathetic, gentle, and nurturant" (Skrypnek & Snyder, 1982). Thus, female characterisation is

configured in social construction to be represented as a “good” woman, which means women must play the chosen role based on this traditional stereotype (Tso, 2012). One of the stereotyped roles for being a “good” woman is being obedient and nurturant to be a mother in her household. In other words, female characters have been defined by the traditional stereotype only to be the stereotypical good woman. Therefore, women have two preferences most likely to be a “good” woman with the obedient characteristic or a “mad or bad” woman with the intolerable characteristic. There are many possibilities for women to behave with intolerable characteristics, which are absent of being a nurturant and caregiver.

Focusing on the preference of a “bad or mad” woman, it refers to a woman who was unsuccessful in accurately representing femininity within the stereotype. To achieve its stereotype’s aim, women must submit to disciplinary action and punishment disguised as rehab or treatment to achieve its regulatory aim (Ussher, 2006). The significant reason for this circumstance is that a woman has the capability of a natural reaction to a threatened breakdown, which means losing the distinction between subject and object or between self and other (Kristeva & Roudiez, 1982). Creed (1993) argues that the monstrous woman is associated with her maternal reproductive role, notably with her sexual differences. In line with this concept, motherhood or being a caregiver potentially creates a castrated side for women since they are restricted within tight boundaries (Gatrell, 2011; Riad, 2007; Thanem, 2011 cited in Vachhani, 2014). In conclusion, this signifies that castrated women are associated with being as monstrous since they are absent of being nurturant and caregivers.

The probability of being monstrous must be considered; the monstrosity side of women is possibly provoked by being objected to as desire and lust. Since it is reasonable to consider feminine monstrosity considering women have already been portrayed as powerless personalities in conservative societies (Ussher, 2006). In this case, the monstrous feminine was established as a term coined to investigate women who manifest the castrated and abject based on their behaviour and characteristics. This circumstance has been assumed as monstrous feminine by some feminist theorists, which was proposed by Barbara Creed (Naples, 2016). Her book "The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis" has categorised into seven types of female monstrous such as "archaic mother, monstrous womb, vampire, witch, possessed mother, femme castratrice, and castrating mother" (Creed, 1993). Creed analyses the abjection behaviour through the seven types of the monstrous feminine found in the horror film by employing a psychoanalytic approach and social context in her works.

Based on the previous assertion, it must be concerned that the monstrous feminine concept has transformed into a contemporary study among contemporary researchers and practitioners. Despite being seen as a mad figure, some theorists claim that the monstrous feminine is a straightforward way to comprehend the side of being a "monster" (Creed, 1993 cited in Naples, 2016). Female monster particularly has been perceived as the "other" by the reason that female has been presumed as the secondary sex in social construct (Tso, 2012). Moreover, the monstrous feminine has also attracted much consideration to feminist critique in literature. In addition, many authors have intended to adopt female catastrophe characterisation in their imaginative writings, specifically horror, to represent the

monstrous feminine by adapting myth characters such as vampires, witches, and other maleficent characters. In every production of horror literature, numerous dreadful female characters are primarily defined as the most catastrophic creatures.

Given this information, Jack Ketchum, an American author, published a psychological horror story entitled *The Girl Next Door* in 1989. This story has become one of Ketchum's greatest widely known psychological horror works since it was inspired by an actual criminal incident in Sylvia Likens' tragedy in 1965. Ketchum has been acknowledged through his contemporary horror fiction since he mainly developed horror and tragedy story from his surrounding environments in his works. *The Girl Next Door* (1989) narrates a young woman named Margaret or Meg who moved her life with her sister to live in her aunt's house. It becomes the greatest nightmare for her since she is tortured for no apparent reason and humiliated Meg as a woman in front of her cousins by her aunt. Furthermore, this thesis will explain the extensive detail concerning one of Ketchum's works, *The Girl Next Door*

Palmoski (2021) explores *The Girl Next Door* (1989) through the lens of torture porn that targeted Meg Loughin. Palmowski (2021) incorporated Steve Jone's torture porn film philosophy, emphasising that kidnapping, castrating, prison sentences, and brutality are focused on either psychologically or physically. Since the research utilises a novel version rather than just the film adaption for the corpus, Jack Ketchum matches two prescribed standards of torture porn. Thus, it clearly illustrates that Ketchum constructs his storytelling so that something that generates the category of terror might accomplish his readers' desires and guarantee financial achievement. In addition to this, Jack Ketchum carefully wrote this work, not

purposing to disgust the readers by simplifying the torture as a representation of the actual crime story of Sylvia Likens.

Apart from torture porn, many researchers have investigated monstrous feminine through female characters in contemporary literary work. Efthimiou (2012) and Talafuse et al. (2014) exemplifies monstrous femininity in female protagonist through young adult literature. The findings of these studies are the complication of monstrous femininity and revealing societal and cultural dispositions to femininity and the evolving women's body. Similarly, Bo Tso (2012) investigated monstrous femininity through the female characters as the antagonist in three popular children's literature. Tso (2012) explores similar representations of selected female characters, showing a blurry borderline between life-death, human and non-human, and masculine-feminine. In a brief assertion, this research was conducted at the numerous approaches in which the following chosen characters characterised the monstrous feminine virtue.

Unlike the monstrous feminine through literary work, Vachhani (2014) explores the monstrous feminine and maternal embodiment in the workplace. The objectivity of this article is to assert the concept of woman-as-monster and its connection to maternity and monstrous bodies, as well as the possibilities for workplace equality and diversity. The research designed the social and psychoanalytic viewpoint to indicate how a particular monstrosity manifests through maternal tension. The study emphasises and complements to develop studies on the complexity of monsters, as well as expanding on a disregarded subject of the feminine and maternal characteristics among these relationships and the implications this entails for the workplace. This research implies that

exemplifying the monster has consequences, and therefore varied arrangements of the monstrous maternal are essential for workplace equality and diversity.

The studies above have discussed the complexity of monstrous feminine characteristics presented in different aspects through the concept from Barbara Creed (1993) and Julia Kristeva (1982). Given this information, those studies most likely examine the selected female character who has abjection and castrative behaviour. Thus, this research will examine the representation or portrayal of the monstrous feminine in Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* (1989) since no research examines the monstrous feminine from Ketchum's writings. This examination will focus on the selected female characters in *The Girl Next Door* (1989), written by Jack Ketchum. Furthermore, this examination employs critical literary studies with feminist criticism of the concept of monstrous feminine theory by Barbara Creed (1993) and Julia Kristeva (1982), along with the psychoanalytic approach.

1.2. Research question

Hence, the researcher has the intention to examine in further the phenomenon of the monstrous feminine in Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* by following this question:

1. What faces of monstrous feminine that are represented in *The Girl Next Door* by Jack Ketchum?
2. How *The Girl Next Door* reveals the complex of the monstrous feminine?

1.3. The objectivity of the study

This study aims to examine:

1. The face of the monstrous feminine is represented in *The Girl Next Door* by Jack Ketchum.
2. The portrayal of the complex monstrous feminine in *The Girl Next Door* by Jack Ketchum.

1.4. The significant of the study

The significance of this study is an in-depth understanding of the monstrous feminine issue in literary works by implementing a psychoanalytic approach and understanding the alterity term in the context of literary criticism. This research will be beneficial in providing comprehension about how monstrous feminine is revealed in literature, specifically for English Department students who intend to extensively comprehend the monstrous feminine issue through *The Girl Next Door* (1989), which employs a psychoanalytic approach by Simon de Beauvoir.

1.5. The scope of the study

This research focuses on analysing the narration and dialogue between the selected character of *The Girl Next Door* (1989) by Jack Ketchum, identifying the monstrous feminine behaviour of the selected character by employing psychoanalysis by Simon de Beauvoir.