

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter will be divided into research background, previous studies, statements of problem, research purposes, research significance, clarification of key terms, and organization of writings.

### 1.1 Research Background

Horror genre is used to attract human's emotion, mostly their fear. H. P. Lovecraft (2006), stated that "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." Furthermore, he also explained how this most ancient emotion affected men's as stated:

Man's first instincts and emotions formed his response to the environment in which he found himself. Definite feelings based on pleasure and pain grew up around the phenomena whose causes and effects he understood, whilst around those which he did not understand—and the universe teemed with them in the early days—were naturally woven such personifications, marvellous interpretations, and sensations of awe and fear as would be hit upon by a race having few and simple ideas and limited experience (Lovecraft, 2006).

The horror or the use of fear can also be sensed in mythologies. World mythologies are filled with terrifying women as we know from Greek mythology with Medusa; The White Lady, and witch in western mythology; *Kuntilanak*, *Wewe Gombel*, etc. in Indonesian mythology and many more. In one of few article about female ghost, there is an interesting article by Brunton (2018). Brunton informed us some mythological female ghost that was long told by human in various countries, they are: La Sayona from Venezuela, La Llorona from Mexico, Kuchisake-Onna from Japan, The White Lady from Netherlands and Brazil, La Siguanaba from Central America, Mae Nak from Thailand, The Lady in Red from Europe and North America, and The Brown Lady from England (2018).

The background stories of these ghosts which Brunton summarized are victims. La Sayona and The White Lady as the victim of envious man, La Llorona as the victim of man negligent, Kuchisake-Onna as the victim of beauty stereotype, Mae Nak as the victim of poor healthcare, The Lady in Red as victim of envious, etc. Some of these stories shared similar core stories as what Indonesian mythologies owned. The White Lady, Brunton stated as women whose deaths and hauntings relate to their status as married, or almost-married, women ... seeking vengeance on the jealous nobleman arsonist responsible for her death. Similar stories as what Sundel Bolong in *Beranak dalam Kubur* movie which originated from Indonesian myth. She is told as a female ghost in white wardrobe who seek vengeance on men responsible for her death.

Sundel bolong, explained by Zidan and Genta (2019), is referred from the word “*sundel*” which means “bitch” or female prostitute and “*bolong*” which means perforated in Javanese language. By means, Sundel bolong is a perforated female prostitute ghost manifested as a beautiful woman with long hair wearing all white gown and perforated backbone covered by some of the hair (2019, p. 50). La Llorona is said to be a lady who have been left out by her lover which caused her depression that led to throw out her child and drown herself. She was told to always wail “*Mis Hijos*” and snatched away the children of others (Brunton, 2018) which share the same traits as what Wewe Gombel is told to be.

Agita stated that Wewe Gombel,

*di daerah Jawa dipercaya ... menculik anak kecil karena suka dengan anak kecil dan dijadikan sebagai anaknya. Akan tetapi, di beberapa cerita yang tersebar di daerah Sunda khususnya daerah Kabupaten Garut terdapat kepercayaan bahwa hantu Kalong Wewe menculik anak kecil karena tidak suka dengan anak kecil karena kematiannya tersebut disebabkan oleh anak kecil<sup>1</sup>(Agita, 2019).*

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<sup>1</sup> In Java, it is believed [that *Wewe Gombel*] ... stealing children because [she] loved kids and treated them as hers. However, in folktale spread around Sunda regions, particularly Garut, it was believed that *Kalong Wewe* kidnapped kids because [she] did not like them as her death caused by them.

In conclusion, Wewe Gombel and La Llorona are female ghosts who like to snatch other's children.

Furthermore the researcher found a serious conversation with my a feminist, that the ghost actually has deeper story than it seems. She argued that these female ghosts represent that women endure inequality and is receiving lack of access to some public facilities and common human rights. It was proved by the telltale of losing a child and died in deliverance which showed that they received less access to health facility when they gave birth. The issue of female ghost who seek vengeance to men is deep rooted from how patriarchal belief shaped women.

Talking about patriarchy, Simone De Beauvoir (1989, p. 29), stated that men are oppressing women by characterizing them in every level as Other. Women, if they want to be labeled as good, they must obey men, being submissive and as well satisfied to be the second sex. As women urged to obey, they are not quite allowed to oppose men's will. Remotivi in one of their analysis video stated that ... *perempuan tidak diperkenankan untuk melawan*<sup>2</sup>(Remotivi, 2021).

Women are not allowed to fight against men's will when they still alive. Thus, women fight for the injustice and seek vengeance on what they suffer once they lived in form of female ghost or as stated by Remotivi (2021), ... *dan perlawanannya dengan bentuk yang mengerikan*<sup>3</sup>. The portrayal of female ghost is drawn to be grotesque, monstrous and far from the image of their living stereotypes. This female portrayals are what Barbara Creed then named as monstrous feminine (1993) in her book under the same name.

This psychoanalyst argued that all human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject (1993, p. 27). She linked this representation by Freud's theory which implied the man's fear of woman to his infantile belief that the mother is castrated (1993, p. 27). Creed argued that Freud's man fear of woman as seen in Medusa was caused

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<sup>2</sup> ... women are not allowed to resist

<sup>3</sup> ... and their resistance in grotesque form

by their fear of being castrated or being the same as a woman, penis-less. The possession of penis is a symbol of their possession of power, thus, getting castrated means they lost their power, Remotivi explained it as ... *kecemasan akan hilangnya kuasa lelaki*<sup>4</sup>(2021). She implied that man reaction after seeing Medusa's eyes which was becoming a stone or statue is still linked to man possession of penis. The effect (being stiff) is the proof that they still have a penis, and is linked to man having an erection. Furthermore, Creed stated that:

As with all other stereotypes of the feminine, from virgin to whore, she is defined in terms of her sexuality. The phrase 'monstrous-feminine' emphasizes the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity (1993, p. 33).

Creed's analysis picked some previous researches to show that monstrous feminine in films (*Aliens* (Cameron, 1986); *The Hunger* (T. Scott, 1983); *The Brood* (Cronenberg, 1979); *Dressed to Kill* (Palma, 1980); *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992); etc) is showing male perspective of woman. She also stated another researcher, Gerard Lenne, argument on how a woman should never be pictured to convey the feeling of a sheltering peace that he said to be an unreasonable representation.

From their argument, the researcher proposed that that may be another probable movement made by woman to portray their everyday discrimination through some narratives. Them using man portrayal of monstrous feminine, which previously had negative connotation, to be a form of their fight of inequality to show people what was actually happened to them before death. The researcher will borrow Creed's monstrous feminine to describe the grotesque portrayal of female ghost to ease people understanding on such notion. The form of fighting by women through monstrous feminine portrayal will then written as women resistance as it is telling about women fight (resist) towards inequality and men's domination and oppression.

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<sup>4</sup> ... the fear of losing man power.

Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe Chisale (2017, p. 18) in her thesis quoted De Hernandez *et al* assortment,

“they (African women) look unblinkingly at the challenges they confront while also creating visions of a more positive future, using writing to bear witness to oppression, to document opposition struggles and to share successful strategies of resistance. (2010, p. 3)”

Although the books told about African women, the idea of resisting men’s oppression through writing their own voices also applicable to women in general. In understanding writings, James Scott dedicated his analysis on it in his book, *Domination and The Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, here, he differentiate the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominates as public transcripts (1990, p. 2), and hidden transcripts as to characterize discourse that takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by powerholders (1990, p. 4). We need to understand the hidden transcripts agenda because it is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations (1990, p. 2).

According to those explanation, the researcher concluded that monstrous feminine as women resistance as the way female ghosts (monstrous feminine) are aiming to deliver the message that they are fighting (resist) for the discrimination they felt in life that we can see from the public and hidden transcripts. In order to analyze this thesis, the researcher would like to compare the portrayal of monstrous feminine in two different cultures, namely American and Indonesian culture. As Bassnett (1993, p. 1) statement that comparing literature are concerning in patterns of connection in literatures across times and spaces, thus, the researcher aim to analyze content in similar times across the spaces. The researcher also aim to analyze women resistance, the object must be fitting to the objection of women’s hidden transcript. Scott stated,

“The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail. In the short run, it is in the interest of the subordinate to produce a more or less credible performance, speaking the lines and making the gestures he knows are expected of him. (1990, p. 4)”

From this definition, hidden transcripts simply means what is really happen behind or without the dominant's monitoring.

Based from Brunton's article, the researcher would like to analyze about one of the myths stated in there. The researcher chose movies as it was one particular way to deliver stories. Stephen Shaviro stated that film is a medium to talk about the way to arouse desire and fear's corporeal reactions and also of disgust and pleasure, shame and fascination (1993, p. 33). The researcher googled the best horror films and it recommended some horror films across the time.

The top of the list is entitled *The Curse of La Llorona* (Chaves, 2019), an American horror film based on Mexican mythology about weeping lady named La Llorona. This 2019 film is talking about a family who are haunted by a woman ghost who cries a lot. Using 1970's setting, this ghost shared similar story as the legend La Llorona who chased after the woman's children and trapped them in another world. Looking for the help of religious leader, the woman then found out that the said weeping woman was died of suicide after killing all her sons after getting abandoned by the woman's husband for another younger woman.

The rage and injustice that she felt for her husband, made her took out her rage upon the sons. She then took the children out to a river and then drown them. Realizing that it's not a right thing to do, she desperately look after her children in the river but always come back empty handed. After long searching, she was found died drown in the river while looking for her dear children. The soul then trapped in between two worlds haunted people and chasing other's children with the wailing or crying that become her icon.

As comparison, the researcher aim to analyze similar story based from local urban legend in Indonesia. Thus, the researcher look for it in the google under *film horror urban legend Indonesia*<sup>5</sup>keyword which lead me to an article by Erika F entitled *Top 10 Film Horror Indonesia yang Terinspirasi dari Urban Legend*<sup>6</sup>(F,

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<sup>5</sup> Indonesian urban legend based horror film

<sup>6</sup> Top 10 of Indonesian Horror Film Inspired from Urban Legend



2019). The list is topped by *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (Umbara, 2019), an Indonesian horror movie based from Jakarta's urban legend about the red ghost who haunted Ancol Bridge. The movie was produced in 2019 which fits perfectly for the time coordination with the previous one. The story is talking about Maryam who died after being chased by her husband's debt collector for being his debt repayment. Remotivi also quoted one of the most iconic Maryam's dialogue "*dunia ini jahat pada perempuan, perempuan hanya dapat disegani jika sudah jadi hantu*"<sup>7</sup>(2021)".

As the researcher would like to compare the character and their resisting effort, character as we already know is one of intrinsic unsure in prose (in this study would be visualized in movie) also the resistance as what we will know from understanding the message of the said prose. Thus, this study is included into the literature study area.

## 1.2 Previous Studies

Previous study is needed by researchers' to ease their research and also prevent them to plagiarize the research, consciously or unconsciously.

1. Remotivi's *Analisis Film Horror: Mengapa Hantu Perempuan Lebih Seram?*(2021).

Remotivi is a media studies and monitoring institute which scope of work includes research, advocacy and publishing. One of its famous segment is talking about public phenomenon under the mainstream media exposure entitled *yang tidak media katakan*<sup>8</sup>. There, Remotivi analyzed Indonesian horror genre which picturized more about women ghosts in many media scopes such as, cinema, movies, *indigo's* advices, etc.

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<sup>7</sup> The world is evil to women, women only being respected if they have become ghosts

<sup>8</sup> In which are not exposed by the media

Remotivi highlighted Barbara Creed's monstrous feminine as their core of analysis towards Indonesian women ghost phenomenon then divided it into 3 narratives in women positioning: (1) the victim of gender based violence which highlighted women's trauma, vengeance and rage of the victim which never yet voiced which contributed by the social structure, mindset conservating gender inequity. These mindsets, Remotivi said, was caused by the objectivication of women and the reductive social role only in domestics, and men's sexual servant.

(2) Resistance, remotivi mentioned 2 women ghosts, Astari and Maryam from two different movie entitled *Terowongan Casablanca* (RS, 2007) and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (Umbara, 2019) as women ghosts who fight for men made norms which caused them to be killed and haunting men. From the phenomenon given, they stated that those narratives implied that women should never resist anything. Ironically, women who was not resisting men's will also victimized and utilized as a tool for men's benefit as seen in *Mangkujiwo* (Lubis, 2020)'s Kanti women ghosts. This act showed that everything women's done is always framed as wrong by men's narratives. Remotivi highlighted that *hantu perempuan*= *perlawanan*<sup>9</sup>.

(3) Women Ghost highlighted Creed's Monstrous Feminine narratives. They stated that the fear of women ghosts is a specific type of fear. The fear of monstrous feminine caused by the unconscious belief that women can seek vengeance by castrating men. They served data seen in *Suzanna: Beranak dalam Kubur* (Shahab, 1971) which the ghost came in where disguise to lure men's desire before killing them; in *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (Umbara, 2019) the monstrous feminine killed men with exposed genitals; in *Mangkujiwo* the monstrous feminine pervaded woman who is raped and killed the rapist; in *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30SPKI* (Noer, 1984) when Gerwani castrated General's genital in a fictional scene.

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<sup>9</sup> Woman ghosts=resistance



Remotivi highlighted that these acts showed women's attacking men's fragile condition when their genitals exposed or erected.

Remotivi then concluded that it showed women in social structure tend to be more susceptible of violation and are not allowed to resist for their own safety.

2. Female Monsters: Figuring Female Transgression in *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009) and *The Witch* (Eggers, 2015) (Chusna, Aidatul; Mahmudah, 2018).

This paper has examined the depiction of the *monstrous feminine* in two horror films, *Jennifer's Body* and *The Witch*. The paper investigated how horror films confront transgression through the construction of woman as monstrous figure. The findings were Alternate View towards Gender Identity in *Jennifer's Body*: The analysis stated that the film was challenging the idealization of gender roles by presenting woman to be violent, ruthless, and powerful (2018, p. 18).

Construction of Abjection in *Jennifer's Body*: The film was reserving Jennifer as an abject by figuring her as a zombie-like creature with inhumane secretions like a thick black vomit, etc. The abjection is what made Jennifer able to assert power to dominate the victims (2018, pp. 12–13). The Monstrous Feminine as the Abject in *The Witch*: The witch was showing terrifying figure who loves to do something witchcrafty. It was not only visualizing the witch in appearance but also visualizing it in her actions, like sacrificing a baby for her benefit. Moreover, it is also giving the spectator the abjection of self from religious perspective, Puritans.

The abjections showed from the interpretations of Adam and Eve's story where Eve was always being subjected as the sinner, the lustful, the evil of mankind. Thus, the representation of Eve is the abject itself where it should be removed, detached. Thomassin's father fear that his daughter may joined witchcrafty or becoming a sinner is addressing her as an abject (2018, p. 14). The Transgression in *The Witch*: The transgressions showed in here

was presented by the disobedience of Thomassin. As Puritans, one may not pursue sexuality outside marriage, that sexuality is not only allowed after marriage, not in a casual loving relationships, thus, her pursue of sexuality is a form of transgressing.

The conflict between Thomassin and her mother implied stereotypes, as a good Puritans woman and the bad Puritans woman. Thomassin who's body became an object of sexual that 'seduce' men and stripped them off their 'purity'. The objectification of women body by the men was metaphorically used as the representation of Adam and Eve's story. After objectifying the body of Thomassin, Caleb, her brother, then trapped on his desire and lose himself in the forest to look for an apple. He, then vomitted an apple in a prayer after came back naked from the forest to pray for salvation and died (2018, p. 15).

3. Drawing Dangerous Women: The Monstrous-Feminine, Taboo and Japanese Feminist Perspectives on the Female Form (Sylvester, 2020)

The analysis was focusing on female-led representation in many narratives and perspectives around the world. The object of the study is Megumi Igarashi or Rokudenashiko's graphic memoir *What is Obscenity? The story of a good for nothing artist and her pussy* (2016). The analysis linked the second-wave feminism thought to be the biggest influence in Japan. The thought which particulary specialized on women representation in art and art history.

Moreover, it focused on the female body. Female body become a discourse that being discussed by many scholars, some of them are Barbara Creed with her *Monstrous-feminine*, Wilke in her representation of the naked female body, etc. Wilke point of view that addressing nude body as the omnipresent for her work which expose personal and political view. Rokudenshiko used her works, as well as what Wilke did, as a form of protest of objectification of female body where she made it especially to define the problem of women in a cute graphic novel. Her representation of

herself and Ms. Manko, a character that she made, was finely articulated in the graphic novel.

4. Woman Resistance Against Nazi Regime Reflected in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005): A Liberal Feminist Theory (Windratama, Farras; Yeni, 2019)

The article specifically told about the resistance of Liesel Meminger, the main character of Markus Zusak's *The Book of Thief* who described as someone living in Nazi regime era. Meminger attended school where she's been unable to catch up by the progress that her classmate's made that made her being bullied and humiliated for not able to read and write. Yet, this motivates her to learn twice as hard as other might be. Her foster father, Hans Huberman, also taught her how to read by understanding word's meaning. He also taught her about friendship and kindness. Through his teaching, Meminger learned hat the jewish man that was the object of Nazi should not have been murdered and that she should coare people without discriminating anything.

Meminger and Max, the Jewish man that saved by her foster father was then became closer with her as he taught her reading and also giving her presents. Windratama pointed out Meminger's action as a form of resistance because it contained resistance indicator such as, having different ideology as Nazi regime, making an ally with the Jewish man, Max Vanderburg, her expreience in humiliation and how she resolved that, and also the empathy that was growing towards races. The resistance grew bigger as she began to steal propaganda book from bonfire. Her resisting the regime removed women's discrimination in gaining equality and claiming human rights.

### 1.3 Statements of Problem

Monstrous feminine was the most common things represented in world's myth, and it was often used to portray death caused by inequality or great

suffering. Enticingly, the motives, character and characteristics of these monstrous feminine are usually similar. Therefore, the researcher aims to answer these questions:

1. What are the characteristics of monstrous-feminine showed in *The Curse of La Llorona* and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*?
2. How are their characters attempt to show women resistance in *The Curse of La Llorona* and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*?

#### **1.4 Research Purposes**

According to the problems, this research is purposed:

1. To acknowledge monstrous-feminine characterization showed on *The Curse of La Llorona* and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*.
2. To acknowledge the issues that showed on *The Curse of La Llorona* and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*.

#### **1.5 Research Significance**

This research is aimed to appreciate people in film industry who had making move on representing woman. The representations hoped to lure more people on appreciating woman and literary works and also to help end woman discrimination in life.

This research hopefully become a new way of understanding woman resistance through films by comparing how two different cultures representing it. Through popular literature and subtle messages people could understand something they barely feel.

Practically, the researcher hopes for people bearing another masterpiece on pointing out female representation to be less-monstrous and more humane. Moreover, the researcher hopes that this research will show people about

inequality and help woman end their everyday discrimination by showing how would happen after life if what woman through now left untreated.

## 1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

**Monstrous Feminine** is a term first introduced by Barbara Creed in her book *Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993). The term is to name phenomena in which woman and its femininity described as monster or any terrifying things presented in film.

**Women Resistance** is a term to address how women fight for the injustice and oppression that they experienced.

**The Curse of La Llorona** is an American horror movie based from Mexican myth about *La Llorona* or the weeping lady. The film was using 1970s Los Angeles background. Taken from the Rotten Tomatoes (Fandango, 2019), the film was rated R for violence and terror under horror, mystery, and thriller genre. The film was directed by Michael Chaves and was released at April 19th, 2019.

***Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*** is an Indonesian film based on the urban legend of *Si Manis* who haunted the society at *Jembatan Ancol*. The horror film (Umbara, 2019) was using 1973 Jakarta background and is a remake of a 1973 film under the same title. Taken from Imdb (2019), the script was written by Isman H. S, Anggy Umbara and Fajar Umbara and was directed by Anggy Umbara and Bounty Umbara.

## 1.7 Organization of Writings

This paper is divided into several chapters, they are:

- Chapter I Introduction, the chapter discussed the background of the research where the researcher given a phenomenon that was emerging and why this research needed to be done. Research reasoning formed along with the hypotheses based on theories. This chapter consists of research background, statements of the problem, research purposes, and research significances.
- Chapter II Theoretical framework, the chapter was written about several theories related to the research such as feminism and its categories, monstrous feminine and its type, character and characterization, resistance and its type, etc. The researcher wrote comparative literature theory of Susan Bessnett as the core theories of the research.
- Chapter III Research method, in this chapter, The researcher describes the research method taken and how to solve statements of the problem and deliver the results in a relevant and sustainable manner based on statements of the problem. This chapter consists of research design, data, data of source, technique of collecting data, and technique of analyzing data.
- Chapter IV Research findings and discussion, this chapter focuses on the analysis of all data found linked to the theories that the researcher have chosen in chapter III. This section was talking about the monstrous feminine in the



said movies and also the kind of resistance that both of them told to the audiences.

## Chapter V

Conclusion and suggestions, this chapter tells about the brief summary of the research, including the results of findings and discussion that was mentioned at chapter IV.

