

**T.C.**  
**ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**DEFIANT MEDUSA GAZE IN GILLIAN FLYNN'S *GONE GIRL* AND STIEG  
LARSSON'S *MILLENNIUM TRILOGY***

**THESIS**

**Özlem KOYUNCU ÖNCEL**

**English Language and Literature Department**

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**SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**English Language and Literature Department**

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**Thesis Advisor: Professor Dr Gillian M. E. ALBAN**

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

*To my still 33 years aged father,  
and his unlived youth,  
To Mehmet Kadri KOYUNCU*

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis. (18/09/2020).

**Özlem KOYUNCU ÖNCEL**

## FOREWORD

“And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. ... Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you. ... I write woman: woman must write woman.”

Helene Cixous, *Laugh of the Medusa*

I owe many thanks to my most beloved supervisor, Professor Dr Gillian M. E. ALBAN as she introduced me feminism and the power of Medusa Gaze, and she sparked me to take control of my life as an active woman. I am proud to express my sincerest thanks to my dearest Professor ALBAN, who has never let me down, encouraged me and guided with her profound knowledge, inspired and motivated me whenever necessary, and consistently pushed me to complete this study.

I am honoured to express my sincere gratitude to the precious Professors of the thesis committee: Professor Dr Işıl BAŞ and Assist. Prof. Dr Nur Emine KOÇ.

I am delighted to express my eternal gratitude and deep love to my most precious mother, Sacide KOYUNCU, who was not allowed to go to school after the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, married without being asked her consent at 15<sup>th</sup> years and raised three young children alone when her husband was killed when she was 28, and whose greatest desire in this life is her daughters' achievement in the academic field and who supports me the most in every sense. I owe so much thanks to my siblings Özgür and Öznur Berçem.

Mostly, it is a privilege to thank my gorgeous and smart babies, my son Muhammed Aras and my daughter Masal Sahra, who are the most valuable part of my soul. It is a pleasure to thank my husband, Osman ÖNCEL, for his supportive existence in my life. I would like to thank my cat Mia and my dog Hermione for their pure love and loyal friendship, which helped me to understand nature and life better, and above all, my own self, and made me become a better person.

*This is dedicated to my beloved father, Mehmet Kadri KOYUNCU.*

**September, 2020**

**Özlem KOYUNCU ÖNCEL**

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**DEFIANT MEDUSA GAZE IN GILLIAN FLYNN'S *GONE GIRL* AND STIEG  
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**ABSTRACT**

In traditional accounts, the female monster symbolizes an evil character, and she does not have an agency. The monster becomes a monster because of being cursed as a punishment. However, in contemporary novels, powerful women take this curse and use it as a weapon against the oppressing patriarchal mindset. In modern literature, women manage to control their lives by taking the monstrosity from negativity and turning it into positive for themselves and doing it knowingly and willingly. Contemporary writers introduce females who have taken their own initiative in their own hands rather than punishment and who get their agency in the patriarchal society by taking back the monstrosity from the patriarchy. The Amazing Amy of *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn and Lisbeth Salander of *Millennium Trilogy* (*The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest*) by Stieg Larsson, surpass their gender by petrifying the 'Male Gaze' of patriarchal ideology through their 'Medusa Gaze'. Rather than be the victim and the object of tyrannic male subjectivity, Amy and Lisbeth defy the traditional passive woman archetype by transcending their destined victimization as challenging monstrous women. As a femme fatale archetype, Amy Elliot Dunne deconstructs the portrayal of the 'angelic' wife expectations of the readers after having been abused by her husband's egocentric male subjectivity and her parents' plagiaristic parenting. Lisbeth Salander stands as a revengeful castrator of physical and psychological abuse since her childhood. This thesis aims to provide a new critical understanding of the contemporary powerfully monstrous woman archetype in modern popular culture, by reading of both texts through the lens of the notions of Barbara Creed's 'Monstrous Feminine', Julia Kristeva's 'Abjection' and Gillian M. E. Alban's 'Medusa Gaze'.

**Keywords:** *'Monstrous Feminine', 'Medusa Gaze', 'Male Gaze', 'Femme Fatale', 'Female Objectivity', 'Male Subjectivity', 'Abjection'*.

**GILLIAN FLYNN'İN KAYIP KIZ VE STIEG LARSSON'IN MILLENYUM  
ÜÇLEMESİ'NDEKİ MEYDAN OKUYAN MEDUSA BAKIŞI**

**ÖZET**

Geleneksel anlatımlarda, dişi canavar kötü bir karakteri simgeler ve bir ajansı yoktur. Canavar, ceza olarak lanetlendiği için canavara dönüşür. Ancak çağdaş romanlarda güçlü kadınlar bu laneti alır ve onu baskıcı ataerkil zihniyete karşı bir silah olarak kullanır. Modern edebiyatta kadınlar, canavarlığı olumsuzluktan alıp kendileri için olumluya çevirerek ve bunu bilerek ve isteyerek yaparak hayatlarını kontrol etmeyi başarırlar. Çağdaş yazarlar, cezadan ziyade kendi inisiyatifini kendi ellerine alan ve ataerkil toplumda canavarlığı ataerkillikten geri alarak etkinliğini kazanan kadınları tanıtır. Gillian Flynn'in *Kayıp Kız* romanının Muhteşem Amy'si ve Stieg Larsson'ın *Milenyum Üçlemesi* (*Ejderha Dövmeli Kız*, *Ateşle Oynayan Kız*, *Arı Kovanına Çomak Sokan Kız*) romanının Lisbeth Salander'ı; ataerkil ideolojinin erkek bakışını kendi Medusa bakışlarıyla karşılaştırarak cinsiyetlerini aşıyorlar. Amy ve Lisbeth, zalim erkek öznelliğinin kurbanı ve nesnesi olmak yerine, kaderlerinde olan mağduriyetlerini zorlu canavar kadınlar olarak aşırıp geleneksel pasif kadın arketipine meydan okuyor. Kocasının egosantrik erkek öznelliğinin ve ebeveynlerinin intihal ebeveynliği tarafından istismar edilen Amy Elliot Dunne, ölümcül kadın arketipi olarak okuyucuların melek eş beklentilerinin tasvirini bozuyor. Lisbeth Salander, çocukluğundan beri fiziksel ve psikolojik istismarın intikamcı bir hadım edeni olarak duruyor. Bu tez, Barbara Creed'in 'Azman Kadın', Julia Kristeva'nın 'İğrençlik' ve Gillian M. E. Alban'ın 'Medusa Bakışı' kavramlarının objektifinden her iki metnin de okumasıyla, modern popüler kültürde çağdaş güçlü azman kadın arketipinin yeni bir eleştirel anlayışını sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Azman Kadın, Medusa Bakışı, Erkek Bakışı, Ölümcül Kadın, Kadın Nesnelliği, Erkek Öznelliği, İğrençlik.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

“But first it must be said that in spite of the enormity of the repression that has kept them in the “dark” - that dark which people have been trying to make them accept as their attribute - there is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman.”

Helene Cixous, *Laugh of the Medusa*

The portrayal of women as the anti-hero and anarchistic protagonist at the centre of a wealth of fiction works have re-emerged in recent decades. No longer are the nations' bookshelves lined with princesses' stories, and the Austen ideal of femininity, but instead the world of literary fiction now brings to light the desires and frustrations of women living with patriarchal system's oppressive dominance. Darkness is terrifying, dangerous, and mysterious. Helene Cixous mentions the darkness of the female power in her article “Laugh of the Medusa” by saying:

“... you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so, we have internalized this horror of the dark.” (Cixous, 1976, pp. 877-878).

But Cixous argues that the darkness of the woman is no longer dark by saying:

“*The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable.* -It is still unexplored only because we've been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss.” (Cixous, 1976, pp. 884-885).

Thus, a woman living in the white continent which is constructed for women by the expectations and rules of the patriarchy, and which borders her power, captures her identity, and makes her the passive gender, the Other One and the victim of the patriarchal ideology; gets her power and identity back and becomes active by crossing the dark side which is forbidden by the patriarchal norms. The patriarchal

ideal of the traditional passive woman is surpassed through contemporary authors' works, such as Gillian Flynn and Stieg Larsson. However, these characters have not been critically understood regarding their sub-demographic stance within literary fiction. The monstrous feminine archetype has been criticised in recent analyses throughout literary, television, and film portrayals. The evolution of the traditional passive woman archetype will be re-analysed into the monstrous feminine archetype by using two renowned stories of this century and evaluating Amy and Lisbeth as contemporary independent women (Goddesses). However, the similarities between Medusa story, a gorgon-goddess figure turning viewers to stone with just a glance, and how Amy and Lisbeth are portrayed concerning the male antagonists of their stories, demands a critical evaluation. Using the characters of The Amazing Amy in *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn, and Lisbeth Salander in *Millennium Trilogy* (*The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest*) by Stieg Larsson, within this thesis, it is intended to provide a critical understanding of the contemporary femme fatale archetype and the power of 'Medusa Gaze' in popular culture.

The woman has various characteristic features inside her that could allow her to stand out. The perception of women's characteristic features inevitably contributes to either good or evil, the view from culture. Simone de Beauvoir insists on the two types of women: "the Good and the Evil" (Beauvoir, 1949, p.206). The good woman archetype is generally portrayed by saintly characters such as angels, fairies, submissive wives, respectful and passive daughters, or the wisely knowledgeable older women. The evil women might, in comparison, be portrayed by certain characters, including the sly wife, the witch or the deadly woman. The main female characters in the books mentioned in this thesis show how a woman can be powerful, planned, and vengeful when she is provoked and adopts the monstrosity wilfully. Although somehow, these female protagonists fall into the category of the Medusa and the monstrous feminine, they bring some significant changes into these theories by taking their own initiative to have their agency throughout the novel.

*Gone Girl* is about Amy, the cunningly revengeful wife who suddenly disappears and wilfully frames her husband for her mysterious disappearance by providing specific evidence. *Gone Girl* is written exclusively in two perspectives: the male and the female. It starts with the passionate attraction between Amazing Amy Elliot and Nick

Dunne. How the femme fatale archetype came to life is never really explained in any traditional myths. In this thesis, Amy's character is interpreted as an archetype depicting how the femme fatale character came into being. The femme fatale has been an outstanding figure throughout literary works, and most artists show her as a sexually desirable female. She is portrayed in literature and films as a stunning yet lethal character. Although Amy Elliot Dunne is defined as lethal, she has certain personality traits, purposes, and motivations. The femme fatale is a typical tragic character, who rejects being trapped in the male-dominated order and the traditional system as a female subject and causes the tragedy for men. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the femme fatale archetype is a charming woman whom men consider physically enticing yet who causes them difficulty or frustration (*Oxford Dictionary*).

Furthermore, according to the Urban dictionary on the internet sources, the femme fatale archetype is a brilliant, beautiful, and alluring female who appears to use men for sex, wealth, assistance, affection, support in many ways (*Urban Dictionary*). In short, the femme fatale is the woman considered to bring bad luck and demise to the man. There are several features of how females are classified as the femme fatale: they have an attractive look, and they are the best manipulators. The femme fatale has the potential to seduce the man with her appearance, attractiveness, and beauty to have sexual intercourse with her that might subsequently lead the man to his own demise by being murdered. Hence, the trademark of the femme fatale is to be attractive, seductive, and intelligent who can plot insidiously.

In conclusion, the femme fatale, as the lethal woman, has evolved in the field of literature through the years. She strives for what she has been looking for with her unique traits, and she aims to get power, independence, and wealth. She is utterly deadly and willing to accomplish her goals even if it includes murdering the males. Perceived by the oppressive culture as the bad woman, the femme fatale stereotype refuses to yield to patriarchal hegemony. Females are imposed on thinking that their options are limited, and they can be either good or bad. Thus, the figure of the femme fatale threatens to smash the patriarchy's dichotomy. Neither is she of the contrast; she is not entirely evil, but she is not good, either. In all traditional myths, the story is started directly with the femme fatale, but it is not told in detail how the woman turned into a femme fatale. In this context, Amy's unique but complex character symbolises how the femme fatale archetype originated in the first place because she

has her own understandable underlying reasons for her lethality, and these reasons will be analysed in this thesis. Amy, who chooses to be a monstrous feminine on her own initiative, actually expresses the femme fatale archetype's emergence and the woman's transformation into the femme fatale.

Psychoanalytic writings note that the horror genre enriches intense hatred of females and the dread of their imaginary castrative powers. The monstrous feminine distorts the borders between logical and illogical; imaginary and symbolic boundaries of integrity and order, and thus her evil force and terrifying power are viewed as the essential part of her woman's nature and feminine essence. Within each part of the critical review and textual analysis in this thesis, it is aimed to examine how the monstrosity of women is associated with their reproductive capacities and procreative sexual organs through the artificial insemination of Amy's pregnancy and her imaginary self-rebirth of her Real identity on her own circumstances. The horrific nature of woman's blood is connected to the possession of the mystical abilities and supernatural powers of her reproductive functions which refer to the female representation as abject and monstrous in history and mythology. The monstrous-feminine is viewed as an abject object because the androcentric symbolic system gets disturbed with the threat of her terrifying female reality.

The monstrous woman alludes to the symbolic system's vulnerability and the patriarchal moral order's frailty through her evocative existence of nature and its horrific bonds with the transformation from the womb to tomb for all living creatures. The portrayal of the monstrous-feminine as a grotesque being in both the traditional philosophy and the modern structure of the patriarchy is seen in the ideological agenda of the horror genre - an agenda to reinforce the illusion that the horrific essence of women is inextricably related to their sexual difference from men which symbolises women as 'the Other' -second- gender identity of men and an abject being. Freud asserts that woman is terrifying because she is inherently castrated. Creed disputes Freud's so-called female castration concept that women indeed terrify since patriarchal ideology enriches her with "imaginary powers of castration" (Creed, 1993, p. 87). The central question of patriarchal discourses and psychoanalytic criticism about whether a woman is castrated or a woman castrates will be analysed through this study. Therefore, it is essential to understand the political, sociological, and cultural trends that have occurred in the last half-century.

To understand the contemporary world in which such characters came to be, it is essential to understand how Amy and Lisbeth take their own initiative and how their agency is essential throughout the novel.

Also known as the Feminist Perspective of the Self, the female agency is defined as the capacity of making choices, using free will and acting on those choices as a woman. The subject of the self has been essential in feminist theory for many years since feminism needs to answer concerns regarding selfhood, the body, social structures, and agency. Simone de Beauvoir's challenging statement, "He's the Subject, he's the Absolute – she's the Other," points to how central the self is for feminism (Beauvoir, 1949, p.283). Being the Other means becoming the non-subject, the non-agent, which means being an insignificant item. Women's selfhood has been subjugated regularly or indeed ultimately dismissed by patriarchal rules, traditional procedure, and societal norms. Women have been classified throughout history both as inferior forms of men and as their exact contrary, distinguished by supposed distinctions from men, in both situations, women have been belittled with these perceptions. The schema of the self which has achieved supremacy in Western philosophy and modern culture is inherited from the male archetype, as women are portrayed as lower forms of the men. Feminists argue that the history of men, primarily white and heterosexual, predominantly economically privileged, with societal, financial, and political power, and overwhelming the culture, literature, the media, and academia have been regarded as universal and ideal. Consequently, feminists assert that the self is a philosophical question and a moral, epistemic, political, and social issue.

As emotional and unprincipled women, traditional ideology argued to limit women to the domestic sector, in the role of an empathic, loving wife, helpless sex partners and caring mothers. Their voice could be neutralised and even turns them into virtues. Women who were associated with bodies rather than minds were assigned the task of maintaining their own bodies and the bodies of others in a gender-based classification of labour (*SEP*, 1999). Historically the separation of ideals along binary gender categories has been related to the importance of male and female stigmatisation. The patriarchal sphere of logical selfhood has been historically associated with moral virtue, regard for responsibilities, and cautious common sense (*SEP*, 1999). Nevertheless, femininity has been related to an interpersonal bond that

admires and compromises principles of loved ones. Similarly, femininity is correlated to the isolation in the unstable family circle's personal domestic needs, and the masculinised self is a reliable, strong shield of dignity within the public sphere as a respectful citizen. The self is regarded as essentially male, and in nature, the male self is viewed as moral and rational. The self-concept is known to be gendered, and thus the mind and purpose are male coded, while the body and the feelings are female coded. The legal principle of coverture operates that her husband takes over her identity, her autonomous self when a woman gets married (McDonough, 1996, p. 21). The presumption of her husband's legally sacred surname has been the symbol of the self-denial of the wife's individual identity.

Moreover, coverture strips the wife of her right to sexual dignity, as rape and other abuses are not regarded as crimes in marriage (McDonough, 1996, p. 21). The reconceptualization of the self is divided into at least two directions. To consider the self's characteristics that have been historically ignored along with interdependence and insecurity, the self must be accepted as culturally positioned and interpersonal. To consider the self's ability to distinguish and overcome established social norms, the moral issue should not be limited to the power of reason. In feminist theory, to accept self-dependency is not to belittle the self's value, but to respect weakness and challenge the relative free will, which is ostensibly associated with a male stereotype. Still, reassessing dependence may risk preserving critical aspects of women as victims and men as representatives or reinforcing a gender dichotomy that separates values and power into male and female. In modern feminist philosophy, women's portrayal as abjected victims of the patriarchal family has been challenged and modulated. Feminists claim that conception, formation, and motherhood show the essential characteristics of the self, particularly those who do not have such interactions themselves (*SEP*, 1999).

In feminist theory, much of it is about the way females get regarded as the 'Other' and become objects, while males are socially acknowledged as their subjectivity. Since different cultural backgrounds worldwide impose restrictions on women's rights and agency, either unwittingly or intentionally, women are supposed to internalise the shortage of choices and fail to seek an effective alternative to their oppression actively. With a sense of an insufficient agency, correlative processes in line with intent start to operate, resulting in the feeling of a lack of agency. In

anticipation of permanent, and apparently overwhelming sexist problems, women with no female agency begin to restrict their own rights. Agency and feminist empowerments are the keys and persistent subjects in the realm of women's identity. These supply a critical theoretical context to analyse women's lives, history or herstory and social background in the past, both individually and in conjunction, which express systemic challenges to patriarchal hegemony, social order, the political process, and status quo (Lee and Logan, 2017, p. 1). The conception of agency gives a precious stance and critical approach to female history theorisation because it illustrates the contextual dilemma between personal actions and cultural norms (Lee and Logan, 2017, p. 1). Nonetheless, agency and advocacy tend to include essential tools to research women's experience and their relationship in the patriarchal society. It has shown that female agency has struggled with and subverted the limitations of wealth, social class, certain cultural concepts, and gender that ameliorate but not inherently significantly impact getting their rights, female power, and control (Lee and Logan, 2017, p. 4). The female sexual organisation has proven to be an essential crossroads between both the personal and the general, as well as a position where broader cultural, governmental, and academic forces have been challenged. The female agency, advocacy and association are, therefore, directly or indirectly, often politically ideological (Lee and Logan, 2017, p. 4).

The confluence of the female agency with dangerous women archetype has been essentially analysed. The research about the dangerous woman archetype, her societal perception and individual experience is a fundamental approach to show how gender differences and cultural roles form sociological theories and patriarchal values (McDonough, 2017, p. 158). It can be argued that women are unfairly excessively subjected to men's stereotypes as brutal oppressors and women as their passive, innocent victims. Through social, cultural, and political discourse, women are not often regarded as the dangerous subjects and violent sources of ferocious force because their potential capacity to challenge conventional femininity is precisely the most significant part of what makes them threatening and terrifying. For the destructive females such as the femme fatales and the monstrous women, characterisations are also controversial; media portrayals and popular culture of ambiguous women are exceptional cases by embodying the woman as men-controlled monstrous sexual predators or by trying to reason other justifications to

verify their misdeeds. The political, cultural, social, and ideological reasons women participate in violence appear to be darkly unexplored and mysteriously unknown (McDonough, 2017, p. 160).

Female stereotypical portrayals of media illustrate female violence by supporting the traditional myth that women are inherently nonviolent. Some scholars have acknowledged that violent women's agency is ignored because the reluctance and inability of women to perform terrorism and commit atrocities is the central necessity to preserve their existing idealized notions of women and femininity (Tervooren, 2016, p. 13). Feminist criticism of formal and informal dichotomy exemplifies how female abusers oppose the conventional paradigm of gender stereotypes. Carole Pateman (1989) and Sherry B. Ortner (1998) address how the distinction between individual and general domains also implies a division of the patriarchal and the feminine realms. Pateman focuses on the point that women are systematically and traditionally confined to the personal, domestic, and masculine worlds based on the distinction between political and economic influence and patriarchal control within the family and the society. The agency of women has a significant meaning in specific and technical language.

For this reason, females engaged in belief systems of religion and its practices that, according to the Western point of view, are considered to be repressive, should not be generally described as non-agents of their ethnicity, social class, and gender (Tervooren, 2016, p. 18). Building on this strict perception of women's agency can strengthen gender roles, as they reassert violent behaviour as a masculine genetic trait (Tervooren, 2016, p. 23). This view contributes academics to focus exclusively on the current dichotomous paradigm that has enabled women to be subjugated and aims to make it an instrument to be exerted to attain female political liberation with an ostensible feminist strategy.

Simone de Beauvoir addresses the idea of the female gender as a construction more complicated than the body that is born with destiny on gender identity or biological sex. Instead, Beauvoir asserts that male-dominated cultures have seized the female procreative features as the inherent determinant of the female integrity and woman identity, through which the symbolic order has reached the body of the fetishized and Othered woman. In the second book of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir clarifies that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 283). In her gender



argument, Beauvoir differentiates between the body of women and the gender of women - the body stands as a symbol where gender and sexuality are attached, and the set of indicators wherein the body is born predetermines this gender. Considering the difficulties faced by feminist literary critics to justify the biased essence of the female sexuality, it is evident that, femininity provides females limited rights and often impedes females' active presence in the patriarchal symbolic order as an essential characteristic of their female identity. Beauvoir notes that, in her struggle with this reality and herself, a woman is confronted with the feeling of ambiguity and uncertainty which results from the notion of the Other, the feminised other; moreover, the Other, the othered-object is embodied in her relationship with men, the subjects (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 163). The male identity personifies the subject through which he has been privileged, whereas the female identity signifies the Other, the second sex, the object marked as nonessential for the persistence of masculine symbolic culture.

According to Freudian and Lacanian theories, the object tends to be related to the femininity, passivity and the lack of control suggesting the association between the image of passive woman archetype and subjectivity in phallogocentric viewpoint (Alban, 2017, p. 22-23). In other words, the object is generally related to the femininity, 'the Other' whereas the subjectivity is associated with the masculinity according to the critics. 'The Other' is manifested by the female entity that encourages a predator's impulses in the phallic system, the subject who tries to dominate and own the fetishized feminine object. Not only the fetishization but also the othering is the patriarchal mechanism of eliminating the gazed object's (woman's) agency —a system of imposing one's (man's) own fetishized ideals on the object (woman). The phallic authority's suffocating perspective recognises the woman as the abjected and Othered second sex who manifests the 'lack' of meaning. Lacan builds on the Freudian argument by claiming that the castration complex does not assess the biological gender roles as the essential nature of femininity and masculinity. Instead, the interaction of the subject to the phallus symbol defines gender. In Lacanian theory, the phallus as signifiers and the genitals are distinct entities; the phallus functions as the image of power, control, force, and potency, which is always erect. In Lacan's reading of Freud's Oedipus hypothesis, the phallus is the primary construction of the boy's desire, and the paternal figure becomes its

possessor while the mother is seen as its manifestation (Lacan, 1973, p. 180). Lacan maintains that the boy disguises his control of possessing the phallus to become the object of the female desire, but the phallus is still elsewhere for him. On the other hand, the girl eventually aligns herself with her first rival, her mother, to become the phallus and hence the object of male desires. The girl denies her own self-image, to place the mask that she is the phallus and thereby the ideal signifier of the Other. This concept is central in analysing the formation of feminine darkness and even androcentric oppression in fetishizing the object of desire. “Objet petit a” is an object of desire (Lacan, 1973, p. 182). It identifies the real self on frustration and meaninglessness, and makes the subject forget the attraction of absolute pleasure; moreover, it transforms the particular and the meaningless into the meaningful and universal. The construction of the ‘objet petit a’ is a metaphorical transformation taking place at the symbolic level.

Nevertheless, Lacan declares that this object -objet petit a- is symbolically phallic, and the woman, masking her reality to possess the idealised and fetishized phallus, has no symbolic mechanism to embody herself as a woman. There is no conceptual characterization of femininity in the whole structure determined by the patriarchal perspective through which the woman may portray herself and whereby the male identity project his phantasy of the idealized femininity on her. The illusion and concept of femininity is essential to the voyeuristic - scopisic impulse and critical to the construction of the ‘objet petit a’, which, as claimed by Lacan, signifies the “presence of a hollow, a void” from which the voyeurs may “phantasize the magic of any presence” they desire (Lacan, 1973, p. 180-182). Thereby also, the ‘objet petit a’ serves as the grounds for gaze concepts, mainly Laura Mulvey’s interpretation of cinematic gaze, implying that the look is driven by a sexual urge seeking for pleasure from the unidentified object of desire partly manifested by the Other. The ‘objet petit a’ cannot be achieved from the object of the Other, and there is indifference between the drive of the ‘objet petit a’ and the urge of the object of the Other. The object merely uncovers other impulses as well as another desire for fulfilment (Lacan, 1973, p. 181). Any ultimate expression of the ideal Other encompasses the opportunity to reach the ‘object petit a’, while the ‘objet petit a’ is the driving force of the desire. In Lacan’s view, the sexual force for the ‘objet petit a’ is driven by the perception of lack induced by the castration or its anxiety in infancy. Besides that, even if imitating

biological functions, it is not genetic and primarily differentiates between genders depending on physical gender. Early assumptions of physical and conceptual castration are indeed the part of slipping into traditionally more dominant gender norms. Unlike the monstrous woman archetype, a traditionally typical girl tends to embrace the stance assigned to the possessors of a phallus, accepting her lack of a penis and that it provides the phallic qualities. The gender difference between the man and woman is self-evident here: man, owning the penis, embraces the dominant stance and the active status widely incorporated with masculinity, whereas women represent femininity's passive characteristics and submissive features.

Jacques Lacan states that the psychosexual process has three essential stages: The Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic (Lacan, 1966, p. 310). The Real reflects the point where the infant is on an equal term with animals and nature. The child does not yet sense its ego, which has not yet been developed, as differentiated from those around its body. Since the Real cannot find the representation by the Symbolic order, it resists meaning (Lacan, 1981, p. 53-54), and it can only be interpreted by psychosis (Macey, 2000, p. 324) and alienation or jouissance (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). The other phrase of these three stages is the Imaginary, which itself is associated with the mirror stage. And when the infant sees herself in a mirror image and manages to identify herself in the reflection, she takes the first move toward stepping away from her surroundings and distancing her ego from them by othering the ones around her. Lacan underlines the assumption that the mirror image illustrates "an imaginary ideal image of the self", which tranquillizes the anxiety resulting from being a fragmented identity and gratifies the ego with the soothing fantasy of wholeness and interactivity (Lacan, 1966, p. 95).

Nonetheless, the infant's identification is indeed a misinterpretative awareness of her real self because the actual, real child does not reside in the mirror image and it is just a reflection (Macey, 2000, p. 255-256). Therefore, there is a permanent struggle between the imaged ideal self and the real physical self (Lacan, 1966, p. 95). The subject is exposed to the language, which is the Symbolic Order, and thus the individual passes to the Symbolic stage, and it also includes the systematic adoption of culture, language, and the repression of nature (Lacan, 1966, p. 277). After the subject enters the stage of meaning, she learns to define her identity by othering those surrounding her. The mirror image "ideal-I" (95) as a recognition of the

identity and the construction of the ego is now substituted by the societal norms and culture (Lacan, 1966, p.96), which has the same misconception of the imaginary ego image, impression of identity and isolation. Lacan claims that the Symbolic order cannot be distinguished from the patriarchal hegemony (Lacan, 1966, p. 278).

In this thesis, it is intended to deconstruct the traditional passive woman archetype by deepening the monstrous-feminine archetype and giving dimension her with the female agency of the apotropaic Medusa gaze. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the patriarchal symbolic order's voyeuristic - scopic desire for gazing at the female body. In "Virtual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), Laura Mulvey articulates her feminist film criticism on traditional Hollywood cinema. She claims that women characters are passive and to be stared. According to this conception, a woman is just a sexual object for the patriarchal eye through which masculine power has control over women. Mulvey claims that the irony of phallogentrism in all its forms is that it is up to a castrated woman to give her world order and purpose (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). The image of a woman is the central pillar and a theoretical force for the system: the penis as a meaningful identity is created by her lack, her urge to alleviate the pressure resulting from the absence that the penis signifies (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6).

The role of woman in shaping the masculine unconscious is double: firstly, it signifies her actual penis lack as the threat of being castrated and, secondly, her infant, therefore, transforms into a symbolic object (Mulvey, 1975, p. 7). When this is accomplished, its significance in the process finishes, but only as a memory, which vacillates the recollection of motherly wholeness and the perception of absence (Mulvey, 1975, p. 7). Mulvey asserts that they are placed on nature (or anatomical state) in Freud's well-known phrase. The desire for a woman is related to her identity as the carrier of bleeding injury, and it can only exist as a result of castration (Mulvey, 1975, p. 7). Mulvey maintains that biologically castrated woman transforms her infant into the representation of her own need to have a penis (the state of the symbolic entrance, she conceives) (Mulvey, 1975, p. 7). On the other hand, Cixous refutes the assumption that a woman desires to have a phallus and envies man because of her penis lack.

Mulvey asserts that the cinema provides a variety of possibilities, one of which is scopophilia (gazing joy). There are times where looking is a matter of pleasure, just like it is a pleasure to be looked at in the opposite way (Mulvey, 1975, p. 8). Freud identifies scopophilia as a part of sexual impulse that operates autonomously of the erotogenic realms (Mulvey, 1975, p. 8). Mulvey claims that Freud correlates scopophilia to seizing others as objects and exposing them to a both ruling and fascinating look (Mulvey, 1975, p. 8). Mulvey asserts that Freud's specific exemplifications focus on children's voyeuristic actions, the urge to see it and to ensure the personal and banned passion about the genitals and physical processes of others, the existence or lack of the phallus and, in turn, the primordial moment (Mulvey, 1975, p.8). According to Freud's interpretations, scopophilia is functionally active. Mulvey stresses the pleasure of the look -scopophilia- as the primary impulses of sexuality, which Freud claims, and she compares it with the power of the look and the recognition of others as objects (Mulvey, 1975, p.8). Whereas the impulse is altered by certain aspects, especially the formation of the ego, it remains the erotic source to get pleasure in gazing at another human being as an object of the subject (Mulvey, 1975, p.9). Mulvey attests that it can eventually be linked to perversion creating paranoid voyeurs, perverts, and paedophiles whose only sexual pleasure will derive from an active manipulating and objecting view of another (Mulvey, 1975, p.10). In the film, the spectators' stance suppresses the performer's exhibitionism, voyeurism, and reflecting the oppressed desire. Lacan explains that when a child sees its own reflected self-image, its integrated mirror image is vital in the process of ego's development to repair its distorted self-image and its fragmented identity. Misunderstandings then juxtapose recognition: the identified image is assumed of as the self's reflected body, but its misperception as the better schemes itself to be an ideal ego, an alienated subject that, reintroduced as an ideal ego, sets up the means of identifying the self with others later (Mulvey, 1975, p.11). Mulvey claims that gratification through looking was divided between actively independent men and passively dependent women in a society structured by gender differences (Mulvey, 1975, p.12).

In *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir defines the female body as a field of uncertainty that should be used to defend her subjectivity whereas being objectified by societal symbolic order, applying her own meaning to it, partly acting with an expectancy of

her displaying her femininity. John Berger argues that the image of the female body and her nudity in art expand our way of perceiving femininity and visualizing woman within the reality of the modern world, and it functions as the symbol of the social enslavement of woman and female abuse (Berger, 1972, p.47). Berger clarifies the process of the male gaze concept that in visual arts, the man acts, and the woman appears, the man stares at the woman, and the woman watches herself being gazed (Berger, 1972, p.47). Berger underlines how the woman's position in the nude relates to her consciousness of being watched - she is nude, so the audience stares at her, that is why her nudity becomes her self-awareness (Berger, 1972, p.50). Furthermore, the woman thus realizes that her worth rests on how male eyes, patriarchy, masculine sexual desire, the men see her if she demands to succeed or to exist in the phallogocentric symbolic order. In visual arts, Berger concludes that the ideal viewer is generally expected to be male, and the female portrayal is intended to develop his sense of self-integrity by flattering him (Berger, 1972, p.64).

Mulvey articulates that the masculine cinema has created a gaze structure through which the male identity (the subject) turns his eyes to the woman (the Other, the object), in which woman gets materialized and sexualized for the sexual pleasure of the spectator (Mulvey, 1975, p.12). Mulvey's argument also gets reinforced by the statement of Lacan that at the scopophilic stage, one does not exist anymore at the stage of demand, but of desire, the Other's desire (Lacan, 1973, p.104). The look depends on the appetite, which encourages the spectator's imagination of sexual desires. When the reality disrupts the fantasized image, desire transforms or disappears and the look -the imagined illusion constructed by the viewer- disintegrates. Even if the male subject's agency leads the action, the male engine that gives the momentum is vulnerable: When the focus shifts to him, which results in a distortion of the gaze – because the observer does not direct his attention, he becomes her object, he cannot bear the weight of his own sexual intention of objectifying woman as a sexually fantasized body (Mulvey, 1975, p.8).

Nonetheless, female roles serve as the passive objects that hinder the advancement of the male subject, and this process mainly results from her otherness signified by her so-called lack. In cinema, the male gaze functions as an aspect of systematised aggression or abuse against the Other, the feminised object, the female body. According to Mulvey's analysis, the male gaze's potency manifests as a mechanism

of misogynistic functions and activities, and it operates as the patriarchal apparatus of fundamentally phallogentric symbolic ideology. The establishment of a masculine media industry has beyond question culminated in the fictional structures in which the overwhelmingly male filmmakers' aspirations are fulfilled and their masculine virtual objects' reluctance to address self-analysis by objecting to their own bodies. Mulvey puts together the Lacanian phallic model of the woman who appears as the Other in the film, an attractive entity, an objectified appearance, and femininity, but not a living reality.

In the next part of this thesis, the Medusa gaze theory and the female gaze notion will be analysed deeply.

## 2. MEDUSA AND FEMALE GAZE

Gillian M. E. Alban responds to Mulvey's Male Gaze notion through the female and Medusa Gaze power which Alban deepens in her last book, *The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Petrifying, Maternal and Redemptive*.

The survivor who has been sentenced to the punishment of what is being imposed on her is a very typical story and familiar experience for the victims, who are still vulnerable to sexual harassment and persecutory resentment worldwide, whereas the guilty men of such atrocious crimes may go free. Alban maintains that sexual abuse and violence is a classic theme euphemised by either concubinage or matrimony in the Greek mythology; and the furious Athena transfers her rage on Medusa instead of Poseidon (Alban, 2017, p.1). The Medusa legend explains how she was the prey of Poseidon's abusive sexual desire. Poseidon rapes her violently in Athena's sanctuary, hence why Athena, Zeus's right hand, charges her with committing sacrilege and dishonouring her temple. The asexual Athena curses Medusa by transforming her lovely hair into snakes.

As the writer of *Melusine the Serpent Goddess in A. S. Byatt's Possession and Mythology*, Alban alleges that both Melusine's snake tail and Medusa's snake hair is a blessing rather a curse, which empowers them divine competence beyond the limitations of natural forces and human power (Alban, 2017, p.2). The mighty hair snakes enable the mythical Medusa the petrifying, and hence frightening gaze power which immediately transforms the ones daring to confront her into stone. The goddess Athena carries the Medusa's evil eye power as a means of protection and an apotropaic force to defend herself in battles and ward off the evils. Alban asserts that Medusa's tale has many dual facets; in fact, she is both the queen and the monster. Embodied both as a victim and a perpetrator, Medusa's utterly terrifying eye and "petrifying gaze" ruins, on the other hand, it defends with her strong but sometimes vulnerable power (Alban, 2017, p.2). In her book *Whence the Goddesses: A Source Book*, Miriam Robbins Dexter builds on the myth of divine power of Goddesses. Alban interprets Dexter's claim about Medusa's supernatural force that her blood not



only destroys but also saves, which already includes a cure of her own toxin (Alban, 2017, p.2). Once considered both a female survivor and a mysterious, terrifying object, Medusa's thrilling image has been reborn as an overwhelming force that reflects the female gaze's transformative strength, allowing women to overcome injustice persecution by motivating them (Alban, 2017, p.2). Within the myth of Medusa, the undignified Perseus takes the road to Medusa in the security of being armed thoroughly and so protected to bring Medusa's cursed head to Polydectes, doing this task with Hermes and Athena's omnipotent assistance which gives him the power through their blessings of a specular aegis to confront the lethally devastating gaze of Medusa. The winged horse Pegasus and the warrior Chrysaor are born in the decapitation of Medusa's head. The beheaded Medusa's destructively impellent gaze keeps its destructive power and stands as a deadly force deflecting Greek mythology enemies. Medusa's multi-dimensional character possesses the ultimate force of both darkness and light, and she bequeaths her superior divine power to women, as her influence continues to exist in mythology, literary works, artworks, and objects. Athena puts the severed head of Medusa on her war aegis to defeat enemies and to get triumph in combat; and thus, Medusa image is positioned on the temples, aegises and tombs to turn away the whole deadly power she embraces and ward off the evil as an apotropaic evil eye (Alban, 2017, p.3). That is why, Medusa icon exists as a spiritual emblem, able to deflect the destructive energy from its owner and protect the ones putting themselves under the powerful gaze of her defensive talismanic evil eye. Because her terrifying gaze petrifies, Medusa has been undervalued and characterized as the vagina of the horrible mother by psychoanalysts after Freud asserted the severed head as a symbol signifying the absence of a female penis, even though the snakes residing on her beheaded head signify the penis stiffening the ones facing her (Alban, 2017, p.3).

Hélène Cixous replies to Freud's point by stating that Medusa's gaze power is both sexually enticing and monstrously fatal, somehow, like the femme fatale being argues that women need to use this force for themselves. Cixous demonstrates women, inspired by the Medusa's metaphorical power, turn their challenging laughter back on men and terrorize them before "the jitters that gives them a hard-on" rather than point women inadequate by a lack or weakened by castration (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.3). Cixous confirms that women have the potential to exist as the

ultimate subjects when they assert their own self-appraisal (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.23). Cixous releases women from the patriarchal chains by claiming that: “we are black, and we are beautiful [...] we're not afraid of lacking” (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.23). Cixous reveals how women are weakened in a society that ignores respect for their opinions, emotions, and perspectives, placing them beneath “second-hand imprints of others” (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.23). Alban addresses that emphasizing the innate dignity and external status of women which depend on their physical values and their sexual attractions, Cixous enables women to attain the liberation of the “marvellous text” of themselves, to embrace themselves and to construct themselves by their own unyielding and passionate drives (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.23). Cixous views women as possessing powerful strength and laughing force on their own sides: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful, and she’s laughing” (qtd. in Alban, 2017, pp.23-24). Cixous emphasizes the power of women to portray themselves sexually, mentally, emotionally, and textually when Cixous relates this situation to her invention of the term “sexts”, which encourages women to make men tremble at the exposure to women’s sexts (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.24).

Alban’s Medusa interpretation and Creed’s viewpoint contradict the Freudian theory of the castration complex. Freud refers to Perseus and Medusa’s myth to justify his assumption that the terrifying and even petrifying female genitals are castrated. In ‘Medusa’s head’ article, Freud asserts that Medusa’s severed head, with its twisting snaky hair, clearly represents the castrated genitals of woman (Freud, 1922, pp.273-4). Freud believes that even after reaching the desired object if anxiety persists, it becomes neurotic anxiety, and thus the subject starts to suffer from the pathological anxiety of the imaginary absence of the desired object (Freud, 1909, p.25). Furthermore, Freud states that his infantile patient, the little Hans, suffers from the anxiety of his repressed yearning for his mother, and this anxiety is typical of all childhood traumas by being “without an object” to start (Freud, 1909, p.25). Freud claims that in the anxiety’s construction, at first, the infant does not realize what to be scared. Anxiety only becomes fear once an object is found to be associated with the anxiety (Freud, 1909, p.26). Freud declares that the Medusa’s snaky hair, which functions as both the priapic serpents likely to attack and the maternal hair, operates as a contradictiously binary mechanism in the symbolic order. Even if they might be

terrifying by themselves, they undoubtedly alleviate the terror by substituting the penis whose 'lack' tends to cause brutal horror and fear leading to castration complex (Freud, 1922, p.273). In other words, Freud gives double aspects to the Medusa's head that the terrifying head of the petrifying Medusa is indeed a classical fetish object, which reinforces the absence and the presence of the female phallus, the maternal symbolic penis (Freud, 1922, p.273). Freud protects the phallic by differentiating its essence from the terrifying vagina, in the same way, he disregards the sexual image of the snake's vaginal nature. Freud's assessment manipulates the patriarchal psychoanalysis, suppresses the active, frightening characteristics of the female sexual organs, and thus, conceals the reality of their castrative powers. Freud, indeed, disregards a critical element of the Medusa myth in describing his claim. Freud accepts the Medusa's petrifying power of turning the spectators to stone as a symbolic erection. Freud insists that getting stiffened signifies the sexual erection, and in this way, it primarily relieves the viewer's anxiety because the act of the stiffening consoles him that he still possesses his penis (Freud, 1922, p.273).

Moreover, Freud neglects the metaphorical significance of the writhing snakes' horrific jaws with their sharpened fangs and open mouths. Creed maintains that the myth historians also regard the terrifying and petrifying Medusa as an unusually grotesque reflection of *vagina dentata* "with her head of writhing snakes, huge mouth, lolling tongue and boar's tusks" (Creed, 1993, p.111). In its "devouring aspect", Erich Neumann believes that the Gorgons represent a maternal divinity (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.111). Neumann also maintains that the monstrous Medusa's "womb-gullet" is embodied through her frightening look with its "gnashing teeth" (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.111). Creed clarifies that the Freudian theory is the patriarchal "wish fulfilment par excellence" because it insists that the Medusa's decapitated head signifies woman's horrific castrated genitals, including that the snakes mean her fetishized and soothing symbolic penis (Creed, 1993, p.111). Creed even defies that "the Medusa's entire visage is alive with images of toothed vaginas, poised and waiting to strike" (Creed, 1993, p.111).

Alban claims that Medusa's castrative and weakening gaze power makes her the mythic monstrous predator. Medusa has such a mighty spirit that her snaky, irresistibly castrative gaze preserves its powerful force even after she is destroyed (Alban, 2017, p.5). Targeted and threatened by oppressive patriarchy, women now

embrace the dominant Medusa's evil eye while possessing their own female agency. Alban, thus, defines Medusa gaze power as a female force. Alban alleges that the Medusa archetype is the woman who asserts her power to turn her Medusa gaze on others, against the enemy forces of anyone who is threatening to overpower her (Alban, 2017, p.5).

Alban interprets Jean-Paul Sartre by claiming that Sartre defines the other's look only as of the Medusa stare, as the appearance of the other's gaze converts the subject into an inanimate entity, a passive object and shames the gazer as the gazed one casts her own gaze back upon the gazer (Alban, 2017, p.6). Exposed to this weakening stare, the only defence that the subject can utilize is the apotropaic reversal of the gaze to redeem her own identity from being objectified, on the other hand, the objectification of women through gaze power mostly ruins women. This stare locks the subject and the object; in other words, both the gazer and the gazed one, in a specular and debilitating process like a chain trapping them. The stare, gaze, eye, or look exists as a significant autonomous control and power that a woman can exert to ward off all the hostile forces and to have her own agency. Alban asserts that women take "the double-edged Medusa gaze" within an intensely active self-affirmation required in cultures that suppress them, and thus this makes women monstrous (Alban, 2017, p.7).

In her last book, Alban builds on some feminist female writers such as Angela Carter, Toni Morrison, A. S. Byatt, and Jeanette Winterson through the female and Medusa gaze notion. Alban promotes that these writers exemplify in various activities that their protagonists, either a human being, an animalistic creature, or a mythological entity, exceed social values and defy the traditional, psychological, and biological norms (Alban, 2017, p.8). Despite their apparent differences, these writers of the twentieth century have highlighted both the misery and the powerful forces of the women they pose, who have been motivated by their circumstances, regardless of whether encouraged or devastated by the challenging obstacles they face.

Alban concludes that throughout history, women have encouraged literally as holy goddesses, yet also they have been regarded as monstrous (Alban, 2017, p.12). In splendidly shaping their own force and authority by exerting the power of their own Medusa gaze, female protagonists of the contemporary literature manage to break the abusive chains of authorized phallogocentric identities. Alban asserts that when a girl

grows older, reaches maturity, and separates herself from others surrounding her, and she also shapes her own self either consciously or unconsciously; on the other hand, she becomes the subject of others' objectification who dominate her through their weakening and controlling gaze (Alban, 2017, p.15). Alban, thus, claims if a girl succeeds in taking control of her own stare, she may manage to return her Medusa gaze towards others; meanwhile, she may debilitate or paralyse them with her apotropaic evil eye while claiming her own power (Alban, 2017, p.15). Once a girl views herself through others' frames, she deeply comprehends herself and understands her own positives and negatives, her pros and cons in her life; the power and weakness she possesses. The reflected impressions that represent the object's perceptions of the subject and transmit the changed picture to the first onlooker are an essential component of the experiences whereby a girl constructs her self-image and develops her unique identity. The subject builds up her integrity and ego through these interactions; on the other hand, her sense of uniqueness gets susceptible to abuse by others' control and force. Society typically devalues women in a minor eye, gives the least attention to them, and subordinates them under patriarchy's imperious male eyes. The omnipresent stare assesses women to an attractive point as an entity, a creature, or an item through almost desirable male attention. Being independent for a woman is the essential point to get rid of such patriarchal perceptions and the male gaze. Women must claim their autonomous independence and subject the phallogocentric ideology to their beliefs if they do not want to be degraded and devalued to an item to be gazed at or to be controlled. Women's worth is often classified in terms of their physical image. Women in these communities exist as the abased gender beneath others' eyes, even if they can take control of their powerful stare and motivate themselves. By focusing their autonomous eyes on others, women can be independent of the social restrictions and cultural norms controlling their identity.

Alban interprets Lacan's "Looking-Glass Phase", which is explained deeply in the introduction part of this thesis, that by appreciating her reflection in the mirror, a child learns to differentiate between her inner stimuli and the "m(other)" supporting her (Alban, 2017, p.17). Therefore, indirectly the child starts to discern and differentiate the relations and differences between her self-image and her 'm(other)', and between her internal and external experiences since she gets a sense of individual

independence and integrated identity. Lacan challenges that the personality and the ego arise from self-perception that is outwardly obtained from others, instead of regarding the ego as an inwardly generated being. Lacan declares that the ego is formed by others, stressing the vital function of the interactions with others while the ego gets objectified in the dialectical association with another. If there is no such actual item like a mirror, the other one acts as a reflector. Such a mirror allows one to obtain insight into one's own nature and embrace one's surroundings' characteristics. The one learns to identify herself and to shape her personality by gazing at her own mirrored vision, recognising herself in those around her. It explains how the personality of one is constructed through one's experiences of her all senses, such as seeing and hearing. Thus, one may get the self-perception of her integrity through others' perceptions about her identity like the reverted reflection of the mirror. Alban outlines that the child develops an imaginary identity with those around, specifically the mother, which allows the child to fantasize about her mother as the primary object of desire (Alban, 2017, p.20). Meanwhile, the child associates with another's self-image; she gets a distorted sense of her own self-image and appreciates the Other's ideal-I.

Sartre claims about gaze theory that one gets interwoven with one another, causing the gaze violence while one becomes the passive victim of the active other's stare. Alban builds on the gaze violence notion through Melanie Klein's "depressive position" term: "Either the other kills me or I kill the other." (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.20). Alban promotes that to be exposed to the eye of the Other violates one's nature since one's independence gets objectified and restricted (Alban, 2017, p.20). According to Sartre, the reciprocal gaze generates a struggle between oneself and the Other, and in this tension, either one must surpass the Other or permit the Other to transcend oneself (Alban, 2017, p.20). Sartre alleges that conflict is the nature of the interactions among collective consciousness, subjective experiences, and the states of mind (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.20). Sartre abstracts that the gaze, stare, and look expose the existence and the reality of the Other: "I am stared at; therefore [I realize] you exist" (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.20). Sartre argues that if the Other looks against the stare, the subject may lose the dominance, influence, and the authority she possesses; moreover, the Other may take control of gaze power by objectifying and oppressing the subject. Sartre maintains that the gazer may get embarrassed and

devastated with guilt and disgrace once caught under a third person's eye. Sartre states that once the observer is noticed in watching, both the gazer and the gazed one get paralysed, humiliated, and objectified, and hence, their autonomy gets grasped by the stare of the third one (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.21). Therefore, Alban addresses Sartre's gaze theory by claiming that the most effective relief from this position is to aggressively revert one's eyes and focus on the other actively to objectify them.

In Medusa myths, the petrifying evil eye of Medusa, the Gorgon, is competent in destroying anyone who stares at her. Dexter discusses how Medusa, a mighty mask, and a powerful shield at first, has also been considered as a terrifying monster, meanwhile a sacred divine or a ruling queen who dispenses justice for the sake of the women under harassment (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.21). Alban describes that Medusa's vitalizing and killing force is portrayed in the snakes encircling her head and body, and in her blood, which has both destructive and restorative power (Alban, 2017, p.21). Furthermore, though Medusa has been decapitated and executed by Perseus, this beheading cannot annihilate the petrifying power of her devastating look. Both literally and symbolically, the evil eye, which is the essence of her destroying stare, ruins the ones she stares at (Alban, 2017, p.21). Alban articulates that the divinely mighty Medusa's protective head retains such a powerful influence that she has been used as an apotropaic tool on shields, graves, doorways, and stoves, serving as a defensive barrier to turn the hostile force away from these kinds of items (Alban, 2017, p.21). Therefore, Alban claims that Medusa's overwhelmingly deadly look protects as a talismanic evil eye and diverts the violent energy from those she defends (Alban, 2017, p.21). Alban alleges that although Medusa has experienced the extreme violence performed on her own body such as rape, execution and beheading, Medusa's apotropaic head diverts threat by turning it back onto the Other; and even after her brutal demise, she manages to exercise this petrifying and redemptive power through her defiant gaze (Alban, 2017, p.21). Alban argues that consequently, the talismanic Medusa becomes a defensive threat, an evil eye, or a protective amulet, from becoming an endangering threat, employed to ward off the gaze's powerful control and influent authority and to safeguard the subject from danger when the gazer and the gazed one gets confined into a relationship of reciprocal mirror image: "as gazer and gazed-upon are locked in a dialectic of mutual reflection" (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.22). Alban reiterates that although Medusa has also been described as

a hostilely heartless monster, her petrifying force shields those armed with her destroying gaze, which functions as a protective talisman that safeguards them from violent injustice and encourages them to debilitate their enemies (Alban, 2017, p.22). Alban suggests that women, who are publicly humiliated, besmirched and reduced like the monstrous Medusa, can assert Medusa's terrifying force, her omnipotent power, and her challenging eye for themselves (Alban, 2017, p.22). In that sense, based on her own initiative defence, it can be interpreted that Lisbeth uses the archetypal and mythical Medusa's apotropaic force and grasps her own female agency to petrify the debilitating look of the patriarchy.

In the next part of this thesis, Barbara Creed's monstrous-feminine notion will be analysed deeply.



### 3. THE MONSTROUS-FEMININE

Barbara Creed claims that she uses the phrase “monstrous-feminine” rather than the term “female monster” not to sound the reversal of the term “male monster” because of the specific differences between the ‘monstrous-feminine’ and ‘male gaze’ (Creed, 1993, p.3). The term ‘monstrous-feminine’ highlights the significance of gender in composing her monstrosity (Creed, 1993, p.3). In her, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* book, Creed outlines the monstrous feminine as “the amoral primaeval mother, vampire, witch, woman as monstrous womb, woman as bleeding wound, woman as possessed body, the castrating mother, woman as beautiful but deadly killer, aged psychopath, the monstrous girl-boy, woman as non-human animal, woman as life-in-death, woman as the deadly *femme castratrice*” (Creed, 1993, p.1).

Creed alleges that female monstrosity is regarded as part of the male monstrosity by the critics (Creed, 1993, p.3). Creed thus asserts that both the theorists and the critics regard women as terrifying figures if the woman is personified “as man’s castrated other” (Creed, 1993, p.3). Rather than her being the real monster, a woman is sentenced to be always depicted as the naturally passive prey and the innocent victim who is violently and atrociously abused by mostly of a male monster. Gerard Lenne’s claims about the female monster concept in his essay, ‘Monster and Victim’ by saying that it is more reasonable to represent women merely in “their ‘natural’ role in life” rather than portray women as terrifying, horrific, shocking, and abject (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.3). Lenne asserts that the female monster concept may ruin the mother and the lover stances of women by altering the sense of her protective peace concluding men as the great monsters (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.3). Lenne’s patriarchal ideology views woman as a victim and man as the monster in horror movies: “Perfect as a tearful victim, what she does best is to faint in the arms of a gorilla, or a mummy, or a werewolf, or a Frankensteinian creature” (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.4).

James B. Twitchell disclaims “the female psychopath as ‘mannish’” by excluding all types of aggression and monstrosity from the femininity (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.5). Creed states that the critics, evaluating gender-based monstrosity’s nature, use the Freudian perspective that woman terrifies as she is castrated (Creed, 1993, p.5). Stephen Neale emphasizes Laura Mulvey’s hypothesis of the male gaze and male castration anxiety in his book, *Genre*, by his claim that male monsters of horror movies portray castration merely to remove the sense of deficiency through filling the lack and to deny castration, and thus, give pleasure to the male audiences by easing their castration fear or anxieties (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.5). Women as a castrator represent the monstrosity’s most critical image in cinema, and the traditional mythic perception of patriarchy that women terrorize is challenged by the belief that women mainly frighten because they may castrate. In other words, women are not castrated, but they are the castrators. Creed provides, with a feminist-psychoanalytic viewpoint, of the seven faces of the monstrous feminine describing the woman as a demon regarding woman “as archaic mother, monstrous womb, vampire, witch, possessed body, monstrous mother and castrator” (Creed, 1993, p.1).

The ancient patriarchal myth traditionally claims that women terrify because of the teeth in their vaginas and thus women need to be domesticated, or their teeth need to be pulled or suppressed by softening the teeth – often a hero – before sex occurs safely. Susan Lurie challenges the traditional Freudian statements in her article, ‘The construction of the “castrated woman” in psychoanalysis and cinema’. Lurie contradicts the standard Freudian stance by asserting that women are feared by men rather than women being castrated, “but because they are *not* castrated” (Lurie, 1981, p.54). Lurie concludes that what is terrifying in a woman is her state of not being castrated. The woman has all her erotic abilities and sexual powers biologically whole, healthy, intact, and inherently untouched. Man fears that a woman may not only psychologically but also literally physically castrate him. Man assumes that the penis vanishes somewhere within the “devouring mouth” of a woman and his intercourse might be his real castration, mutilation, and distortion by a woman’s devouring vagina (Lurie, 1981, p.55). The terror of female genitals’ imaginary castrating power spreads through the legends, traditions, and myths in different cultures’ history. “The vagina dentata or toothed vagina” signifies the threat to female sexuality in the ideological culture of the myths (Creed, 1993, p. 105). The

misconception of woman, as the castrator of the patriarchy, explicitly refers to male prejudices and delusions of castration anxiety about regarding the female sexual organ as a trap, a dark hole which frightens men with the threat of literally consuming them and cutting them down asunder. The vagina dentata, a mouth signifying female genitals, is a deadly terrifying entrance opening to a dark infinity of unknown. The vagina dentata masks its devastating sexual trap and sinister desires of violent intentions. The blocked and destructive entry is also a visual symbol linked to the vagina dentata. To rephrase it within Creed's own words: "The vagina dentata is the mouth of hell – a terrifying symbol of woman as the 'devil's gateway'" (Creed, 1993, p. 105). In masculine culture, the vagina dentata additionally refers to the duplicity of woman pledging symbolic Elysium to entrap her male victim.

Creed disputes both Freud and Lacan's arguments about the vagina dentata notion. In Freudian philosophy, it is the father who threatens to castrate rather than the mother, and the paternalistic symbolic order thus possesses the power of castration. The son, who adores his mother intensely, starts to perceive his own father, the paternity leader, as a challenging threat having the potential to castrate his genital organ. His great passion for his mother causes the boy to envision and believe that the father may punish him by cutting his penis and turning him into a castrated being like his mutilated mother who is silenced, castrated and lack of her own agency. Creed interprets Freudian theory that in this way, the father, therefore, gets the status of being the castrator, the man castrating the sexual organs (Creed, 1993, p. 109). The anxiety, resulting from the fear to be castrated by the father's sadistic potential and devouring power to castrate, forces the son to repress his desire for his mother and gradually to reject his repressed desires believing that ultimately, he will acquire his father's authority inherently and have his own wife. As Freud notes, the body image of the boy's mother triggers the fear of castration, and somehow her vagina still lacks the threat to castrate. Freud's argument demands a critical analysis that the genital organs of the mother construct the terrifying fear of castration unintentionally and passively, in other words, the castration anxiety and its devouring fear is directly related to the image of female genital, which signifies the brutal castration has already been used (Creed, 1993, pp. 109-110). Lacan lays even more emphasis on the concept of female castration in his revision of Freud. In Lacanian philosophy, the 'lack' of the woman's genitals constructs the male genital -the penis- as the symbol

signifying the intactness, wholeness, fullness, the ideal perfectness, and the integrity of males; that is why the phallus of the patriarchy appears as a symbolic force which is the primary essence for the survival of the masculine authority (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p. 110). Groz claims that with the identification of the penis (even if imaginarily), the genitals of woman are perceived as mutilated, and she is treated as a castrated object who is doomed to live with her lack from birth to death. Within Groz's own words "Because the penis and the phallus are (albeit illusorily) identified, women are regarded as castrated." (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p. 110). Because woman is known to be castrated by birth, she is defined as deficient bearing her natural flaw of possessing the 'lack' of a phallus in comparison to the symbolic order; on the other hand, man inherently claims his right to embody the order. Creed interprets that Lacan believes the woman's negativity to be a symbolic bodily requirement; in other words, Lacan states that the deficiency about being a woman is not to possess the symbolic corporeal functions which he terms as the 'lack' of woman (Creed, 1993, p. 110). The Freudian assumption that woman terrorises because her sexual organ seems to be castrated is the central argument of the castration complex. The challenging criticism that the genitals of woman terrify (and even petrify through her Medusa gaze) because of her potential power to castrate contradicts the Freudian or Lacanian point of view and its identification with the patriarchal symbolic construction. Creed challenges the assumption that the terrifying genitals of woman are castrated by claiming that instead, women are the castrators.

In her article, "When the woman looks", Linda Williams claims that the portrayal of the beast in horror is crucial to women's "power-in-difference" (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.6). Williams argues that classic horror movies mostly reflect a remarkable similarity and connection between monsters and women because the look of the woman exposes her in a similar status in the realm of patriarchy (Creed, 1993, p.6). Both the women and the monsters stand as natural creeps whose existences and bodies reflect a frightening and menacing aspect of sexual desires, and this implies significant consequences for the woman spectator. Thus, the woman's look at the beast often acknowledges its identical position and potential as powerful menaces threatening the fragile masculine power and dominance (Creed, 1993, p 6). Critics approach women as victims and survivors of the monsters, abusers and especially men in the horror film, except for Williams (Creed, 1993, p.7). The main trigger of

this is because most scholars accept Freud's assumption that women terrify since they are castrated; therefore, they are already survivors, sufferers, and victims of patriarchal ideology in that sense. Freud describes the proper and acceptable features of male and female roles in adverse forms. Freud portrays masculinity as being the active subject who possesses the phallus; on the other hand, femininity is characterised as being the passive object (Freud, 1923, p.145). Freud also defines the female genitals as the shelter for the phallus. In other words, he maintains that the vagina is now appreciated as a safe h(e)aven, a protective habitat and a relieving refuge for the penis; it penetrates the womb's heritage (Freud, 1923, p.145). Creed discusses that Freud tends to assume the psychoanalysis to recognise the natural construction of the female genitals as a sheltered spot – "home sweet home"- and this sanctuary vagina becomes a fetishized phantasy of the patriarchal symbolic order (Creed, 1993, p.115). Creed articulates that the monstrous feminine appearance in the modern horror film reveals more about patriarchal anxieties than the female agency, female subjectivity, or female sexuality. Creed challenges the view that the masculine viewer is often in an actively aggressive stance, and thus feminine viewer in a passively self-destructive role (Creed, 1993, p.7).

### **3.1 Abjection**

Julia Kristeva, the French-Bulgarian analyst, terms abjection as fluid crossing a border, a barrier, or a threat, and yet, it upholds uncertainty because it does not drastically cut the discussion off by releasing a lock, on the contrary, abjection appears to know it is in permanent risk (Kristeva, 1982, p.1). In her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva describes subjective horror, abjection as not respecting borders, roles, stances or laws and distorting existence, self, identity, rules, norms, and the system (Kristeva, 1982, p.1). Julia Kristeva describes femininity as a societal system, marked by ineffectiveness within the oppressive phallic background. Kristeva describes abjection as "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady" (Kristeva, 1982, p.4) and provides it several appearances to exemplify this: "a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you" (Kristeva, 1982, p.4). Kristeva connects the metaphorical Other to the interpretation of physiological otherness, and thus she emphasizes the correlation between the

female symbolic otherness and the female abject manifestations. The abject is what disrupts personality and cultural order in Kristeva's notion, it does not value boundaries, roles, laws; and it is the infinite obscurity, the undefined, the complex, the in-between and the ambiguous. Hence, it is not the lack of purity or health that creates abjection, yet disturbing identity, system, and order. "What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva, 1982, p.1). The abject tends to manifest in the subject's physical reaction of the repulsion and fear upon facing the non-symbolic signifiers. The body itself reflects the vulnerable boundary between the subject and the other, both within and without, inward and outward (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3).

The theory of abjection develops on the traditional psychoanalytic principles of Freud and Lacan. Kristeva improves the insights and concepts of Lacan which are described in the introduction part of this thesis and reflects the cases and the complex contexts where the reality transforms into the Symbolic stage. Kristeva builds on Lacan's notion by affirming that the Real tends to explode into the Symbolic order. The abject is abjected as it crosses the border, which separates the Real and the Symbolic in the process of abjection.

Primarily the consideration of Kristeva's development of abjection in the biological system and human individual is based on her notions of (a) the boundary line, (b) the semiotic bond and the relationship between mother and child, and (c) the female body itself (Creed, 1993, p.8). Creed claims that this section cannot be overlooked because what is evident in Kristeva's reading is that the characterization of the monstrous, as they are formed in the contemporary horror text, is founded on the archaic religious and cultural concepts of abjection, especially as regards the following religious perversions and disgust: "sexual immorality and perversion; corporeal alteration, decay and death; human sacrifice; murder; the corpse; bodily wastes; the feminine body and incest" (Creed, 1993, p.9). The zone of the abject is the spot where everything loses its meaning, and the subject of 'I' is not there. The abject endangers life, and it requires to be thoroughly excluded (Kristeva, 1982, p.2). Abject's place is where there is no meaning as it collapses; the abject resides in the place where 'I' do not exist. The abjection is life-threatening; it needs to be driven away from the living subject's place essentially, removed from the body and placed across the fictitious border separating the self from what threatens it (Kristeva, 1982,

p.2). Whereas the subject should preclude the abject; it somehow needs to be accepted because the abject helps to identify life and the self, although it poses a threat and terrorizes to ruin the life and destroy the self.

The abject can be suffered in different ways, one concerning physiological and biological corporeal operations, and the other in a metaphorical (spiritual) financial system (Creed, 1993, p. 9). Abjection can exist in many different structures and processes, like food loathing or the abhorrence of the corpse (Kristeva, 1982, pp.2-3). For example, Kristeva suggests that food disgust may be the most fundamental and ancient mode of abjection. However, food gets abject only if it indicates a boundary between two separate existences or zones (Kristeva, 1982, p.3). Unlike an encephalographic image, the corpse is not a metaphorical image of death. The corpse is more than just a symbolic metaphor, and it is a physical death process that reflects the difference and the relation between humanity and nature. Human beings can be regarded as an essential component of nature when they turn into a corpse. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the subject to free herself from nature and step into the Symbolic. Thus further, Kristeva challenges the traditional systems by her concept of abjection in hypothetical rhetoric: “How can I be without the border?” (Kristeva, 1982, p.4). Subjects or objects crossing the border or threatening to cross the border are abject; thus, the abject needs to be held away from the subject, as when the border is transgressed and collapses, then Kristeva’s question arises, how the subject can be without the border.

Abjection excites the desire and stimulates the curiosity; on the other hand, it is still essential for the abject to be resisted and dismissed to self-preserve the subject. The abjection is regarded as a female peculiarity: the abject resides in contrast to the masculine characteristic, which is regulated by patriarchal symbolic rules and laws (Kristeva, 1982, p.4). The abject signifies what destroys personality, disorders the law, and threatens the system. The abject core examines how the “clean and proper self” is created by withstanding against the imaginary border of abjection where consciousness and all meanings break down (Kristeva, 1982, p.5). In the creation of the identity, the abject needs to be removed or rejected. Kristeva stresses that within the construction of the self-integrity, symbolic order requires the exclusion of the abject (Kristeva, 1982, p.5). The masculine system’s subject is required to expel or curb any behaviour, expression or form of view perceived as inappropriate,

unsuitable, improper, unjust, immoral, or unclean, to access the symbolic order of patriarchy.

Kristeva acknowledges that the semiotic is the language prerequisite, and it is essential for the structures of the language (Kristeva, 1982, p.72). Kristeva separates both the semiotic and the symbolic language from each other by setting apart the femininity and masculinity on opposing sides. Kristeva regards the semiotic language as a characteristic feminine language, and she puts the symbolic language on the masculine side; nevertheless, “the semiotic/feminine and symbolic/masculine” components of language are available and accessible irrespective of one’s gender identity (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.38). The maternal identity gets ignored inch by inch as she drives to reflect the semiotic term’s time that the paternal symbolic order presents as abjection (Kristeva, 1982, p.72). The notion of a boundary, a line, a border is the essential element in constructing monstrosity in horror films and scary movies. Creed addresses the abject theory by Kristeva as it offers a significant theoretical basis to analyse the monstrous-feminine image in horror films regarding the reproductive and maternal roles of women (Creed, 1993, p.14). Creed describes that abjection itself, however, is vague, as it is repulsive and appealing in nature. To conclude, Creed underlines again that she sees the imaginary connection of motherly and procreative roles of fertilizable women with abject as the construction of traditional norms of patriarchy (Creed, 1993, p.83).

### **3.2 Archaic Mother**

Creed claims that the ‘archaic mother’ archetype gives birth just with her own agency and power: “Procreation and birth take place without the agency of the opposite sex” (Creed, 1993, p.17). Creed maintains that the idea of the parthenogenetic, archaic mother brings a new aspect to the mother image and provides another approach of thinking about how the traditional culture of patriarchy operates to ignore women’s ‘difference’ in their cinematic portrayal (Creed, 1993, p.20). Creed defines that the father is totally removed in this process; here, the archaic mother is the primary origin, only parent and “sole life support” breaking all her dependency on the opposite sex (Creed, 1993, p.18).

Creed maintains that once Freud addresses female castration anxiety, this hypothetical situation comes in the shape of losing her precious assets, and beloved



ones, particularly her kids; the infant grows up, deserts her, refuses her, maybe dies (Creed, 1993, p.22). In that sense, according to Freud's "female fetishism" assumption, the mother continues to fetishize the infant by putting her up and feeding her regardless of her growing age, by literally getting "another 'little one'", in an attempt to postpone and disaffirm the split she has indeed accepted (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.22). Therefore, one component of feminine fetishism can be perceived as an effort to preserve the phallus and adopt a good position compared to the symbolic. Creed suggests that naturally, these two facets of female fetishism are the concepts of the sexist system and traditional culture unable to cope with the challenge of sexual inequality since femininity is expressed "as archaic mother and as castrated other" (Creed, 1993, p.22). Creed outlines that, nevertheless, the Freudian hypothesis of the fetish is insufficient since it neglects the probability that woman additionally terrorizes; after all, she poses a threat to castrate (Creed, 1993, p.22).

Creed alleges that the archaic mother's primary aspect is its absolute commitment to the generative concept of procreation (Creed, 1993, p.27). The archaic mother is the primary parent, the sole origin of generation and the Goddess of all fertility conceiving the whole productivity independently. The morals and the law of the patriarchal authority are beyond the monstrous archaic mother within the same situation of Kristeva's abject notion. Conclusively, Creed summarises that the image of the archaic mother cannot be isolated entirely from certain facets of the maternity: "the maternal authority of Kristeva's semiotic, the mother of Lacan's imaginary, the phallic woman, the castrated and castrating woman" (Creed, 1993, p.27). The terrifying image of the grotesque female; in other words, the monstrous feminine emerges from the integration of all facets of the mother figure as one. Meanwhile, in the traditional horror films, the horrific female portrayal of the archaic maternity, phallic form, castrated figure, and castrating mother is described to be merged as a single identity.

Creed abstracts that the reproductive archaic mother, created in an oppressive patriarchy, signifies the primal "black hole" generating all lives (Creed, 1993, p.28). Creed promotes that the uterus of maternity, the womb of the generative mothers, cannot be mutilated or destroyed as deficient as the lack of the castrated penis, unlike the female sexual organs (Creed, 1993, p.28). The procreative uterus, the conceptive womb, the black hole where life begins, is not the spot to be terrorised with the fear

of castration. Instead, the womb implies adequacy, darkness, total absence, or nothingness; nevertheless, it still signifies a criterion on its own. On the grounds of this, Creed stresses that it is necessary to equip the maternal figure with additional archaic aspects; inasmuch as, the archaic mother provides for independent femininity not relying on the male existence to have a meaning or to survive in the masculine authorisation (Creed, 1993, p.28).

### **3.3 Monstrous Womb**

Creed articulates that in horror films or the psychological thrillers, the womb is featured from at least two primary perspectives: metaphorically in “intra-uterine settings” along with mentally and emotionally in the feminine form of a woman’s physical body (Creed, 1993, p.53). In certain scenes of horror films or the psychological thrillers, the demon performs her or his horrific actions in a womb-like place. Such symbolic vaginal surroundings comprise darkened, narrow, restricted, twisting entrances heading to a central hall, basement, or many other emblematic birthplaces. In several horror genres, the monstrous womb refers to a feminine monster or a female entity who appears to give birth to a grotesque creature, some dreadful species, or aliens.

Women have a mystical and robust bond with the realm of nature owing to their generative potential to reproduce and to create. On the grounds of that, within the phallogocentric culture, women’s female reproductive features place them on the abject side and men on the proper and clean side of the imaginary border that separates maternity from paternal symbolic order. The female womb is a source of fear as it bleeds, that is why the blood flowing from the inside of the female body and her procreative sexual organs are known to be abject. The infant becomes a transparent image and a visual symbol of maternal desire. Abjection emerges as a hereditary disease transmitted from mother to daughter because of their female gender of being a woman in the patriarchy. In other words, the debilitating instincts of women seem to be inherited from their mothers that paternal symbolic order regards the woman as the victim and the object of abjection. However, in contrast, each woman inherently donates her daughter with the destructive female gaze power and reproductive capacities. Women’s maternal role is incorporated with abjection because women’s generative functions connect her with nature and its life cycle of “birth, decay and

death” (Creed, 1993, p.47). Creed claims that the masculine authority is aware of women’s reproductive bonds with nature, and thus, this connection symbolises men’s mortal existence in the realm of nature and the vulnerability of fragile symbolic male order (Creed, 1993, p.47).

Kristeva compares the portrayal of the woman while giving birth, as impure and unclean to the concept of impurity and uncleanness in the Bible. To be able to reflect the symbolic order, the body needs to be unmarked, clean and pure. Within Kristeva’s own words: “The body must bear no trace of its debt to nature: it must be clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic” (Kristeva, 1982, p.102). Woman’s genetic roles of reproduction give her a real, all-powerful maternal identity in nature itself instead of an imaginary representation in the symbolic order. Thus, a woman’s association with abjection through her bodily functions emerges in the patriarchal symbolic order. A wound, a scar or a cut infringes the body’s integrity, and thus it violates the wholeness and the purity of the body. The birth act of the creation phase mutilates the body of the mother by cutting her skin, violating her purity, and rendering her flesh “an open wound” which bears the “debt to nature” (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.48). Kristeva refers to “the fantasy of a self-rebirth” that the subject who imagines of giving birth to herself delivers this phantasy to sever her bond with either her biological or symbolic mother while delivering her new-born identity (Kristeva, 1982, p.102). In other words, the subject phantasizes to castrate rather than being castrated by cutting her tie to the open wound symbolizing the debt to nature. The imaginary mysticism of horror films focuses on the womb which literally symbolizes house, basement, hallway, room, or any surrounded and enclosed place. Creed states that horrific acts or expressions are used in the images of horror films, which signify a reconstruction of the self-rebirth scene that is illustrated as a terrifying experience: a secure space, triggered by an outbreak and so replaced into the unknown or improper (Creed, 1993, p.56). Within paternalistic ideologies, the inherently terrifying womb is used to reflect women’s bodies as marked, unclean and belonging to the realm of both nature and animal world. The concept of the female body is the primary source and the critical factor of abjection for Kristeva. Within the patriarchal discourses, the androcentric body implies the proper form and the pure integrity which separate him from nature and maternity; on the other hand, the fertilizable female body does not possess such symbolic features. Menses and

childbearing are considered the primary issues in a woman's life, which put her on the abject side; on the other hand, women still possess the all-powerful life cycle of menstruation, pregnancy, and birth despite the imaginary patriarchal symbolic order. That is why, in the phallogentric culture, it is the generative feminine body that associates her with nature itself, undermines the legitimacy of the patriarchy, and endangers the symbolic male integrity. Kristeva emphasises that the abject resides inside of the horrifying maternal body through her inherently reproductive functions and her mysteriously monstrous womb (Kristeva, 1982, p.54).

Creed indicates that Freud's argument about the "uncanny (*unheimlich*)" refers to the vaginal visualization and the symbol of the monstrous womb in horror films (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.53). Creed interprets Freud's notion of uncanny that he describes the uncanny as what is unquestionably linked to the terrifying and causing fear and anxiety (Creed, 1993, p.53). The trauma of castration anxiety and the fear of this threat in Freud's uncanny principle is generally emphasised in criticism. Creed claims that Freud does not refer directly to the outer surface of the female genitals, he assigns the womb, "the former home" of the subject, to a crucial focus (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.54). Creed refers that in Freud's theory, the uncanny is the repressed phase from past and known for a long time, from which the subject is expelled by self-oppression (Creed, 1993, p.54). Indeed, it is this old-known sense which seems to be fundamental for the existence of the uncanny.

Creed maintains that the fertilizable female womb, which solely woman possesses, including her various breeding sexual organs – means sexual difference, corporeal differentiation and holds inherently the potential power to both terrify and petrify males (Creed, 1993, p.57). Creed emphasizes that it is noteworthy to analyse the reasons why psychoanalytic critics still continue to focus on women's allegedly castrated sexual organs, the external surface of the female genitals, as the horrific, terrifying, and monstrous symbol of her sexual difference despite her reproductive sexual difference (Creed, 1993, p.57). In other words, the monstrous womb theory signifies that the nature of childbirth is horrific since the skin of the body is no more intact, flawless, and unclosed; moreover, the body appears to be torn apart with the act of exposing its deepest and darkest dimensions besides opening out its limitless inner world.

### 3.4 The Lesbian Vampire

The lesbian monstrous-feminine archetype is regarded as abject in phallogentric symbolic culture because the woman may prefer to accept her own sexual gender as a sexual partner if she desires to embrace female sexuality rather than males. Creed interprets Zimmerman's argument about the lesbian vampire that by representing the lesbian archetype as the rapist vampire abusing and destroying her female victims, patriarchal symbolic ideology minimizes men's anxieties about the potential lesbian desire which may establish a new paradigm and alternative sexuality for females (qtd. in Creed, 1993, p.61). According to Creed, the monstrous female vampire is terrifying and abject— and yet sexy — threatens to destroy the social, traditional, formal, extremely symbolic, and informal ties between woman and man that are vital to the continuity of the traditional society of patriarchal system (Creed, 1993, p.61).

Besides turning her prey into a blood-sucking abject vampire who goes out at nights within the hunger of sexual lust, the lesbian vampire attempts to seduce her victims and dares to corrupt paternal order's daughters away from their traditional gender roles of being classic proper girls. Within Creed's own words: "Once bitten, the victim is never shy" (Creed, 1993, p.61). The female victim loses her purity and timidity when she is bitten. An inherently lesbian vampire sucks her blood; subsequently, the feminine prey willingly follows her feminine predator and the new-born female vampire crosses to the abject side eternally by ignoring the real world's proper sexual norms. The female vampire archetype emerges as the most prominent challenge for the heterosexual system in horror films because the female vampire is represented as the abject lesbian preying on her own gender and sucking women's blood within the gesture of making oral sex. Both the female vampire and the lesbian monstrous-feminine are expelled to the abjection side in masculine authority because her lust for her sexual desires drives the lesbian monstrous-feminine, and her thirst for blood drives the lesbian vampire. The female vampire is critical because the vampire sometimes allows some of her victims to be re-born as vampires themselves; therefore, a mother and her child relationship occur between the female vampire and her prey. Significantly, the female vampire's picking a lover and converting him or her into a vampire creates an incestuous relationship when considering the female vampire as both the mother and the lover of her afresh vampire filial (Creed, 1993, p.70). Furthermore, the lesbian female vampire archetype is deemed as abject and

thus monstrous because she disrupts the integrity of the order and the masculine identity, she does not recognise and comply with the authoritative rules of the patriarchal laws regulating appropriate sexual intercourse acts for the system of heterosexuality on behalf of holding control of sexuality for their male desires.

#### 4. GONE GIRL ANALYSIS

- *Amy Elliot Dunne*

*And they lived happily ever after.* Synonymous with fairy tales, this term indicates the protagonists' accomplishment of a better life after their trials. However, what does it mean to end with happiness? In many of the most famous fairy tales with women characters such as Snow White or Red Riding Hood, the protagonist gets away an appalling scenario in a beneficial marriage by the help of some supernatural beings or by the active involvement of a male character. The character may be capable of surmounting a villainous stepmother, an oppressive patriarchal authority, or even her own identity, however, this can be done if the female protagonist acts actively, decides to do something about herself and utilizes the Medusa Gaze power of her own agency. On the contrary, the classic fairy tales' heroine never takes an active role and only surrenders herself to her destiny. Only fate becomes responsible for any good or evil that might happen to her because the story's female protagonist is portrayed as the most passive character in fairy tales and she never takes the initiative and never controls her own life.

Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* is all about Amy and Nick Dunne's lives, and it focuses on how she goes so far as to perform her own disappearance. Both are the embodiment of the ideal couple to everyone, however when Amy vanishes one morning, all changes. At first, Amy attempts to blame her spouse for her disappearance and so for her supposed murder, but eventually, she prefers Desi Collings as the ideal scapegoat since he was obsessed with her because of his psychiatric disorder. Amy Elliot Dunne stands as the protagonist and co-narrator of the novel. The narrative, narrated by Nick and Amy in the first-hand including Amy's diary entries, uncovers both angles of Amy's story, her disappearance and the couple's standpoints; Amy's description of their matrimony makes her look more joyous and more sincere than Nick portrays her. Nick's account illustrates her as an extraordinarily obstinate middle-aged woman. In contrast, however, Amy's portrayal of their marriage makes Nick appear more aggressive than he claims to be in his story. *Gone Girl* narrates

each detail of an ostensibly perfect marriage based on both Amy and Nick's dishonesty and manipulation. Amy is missing, and thus Nick becomes the primary suspect of her disappearance on the fifth anniversary of their marriage, which is essentially already emotionally over. In the next half of the novel, the readers discover that both Amy and Nick are untrustworthy narrators, and that all information is not provided to them. Nick has been cheating his wife by having an affair with one of his students, Andy, who is younger, more beautiful, sexier, and less intelligent than Amy Elliot Dunne. Amy goes missing, and she carefully screens all to frame Nick for her death and to charge him with her ostensible murder. Amy's diary incorporates the essential aspect of her manipulation and lies. Her competence in deception and manipulation ties Amy with the abject and so renders her as the monstrous feminine. Amy fits Kristeva's characterisation of the abject as "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady", as she emerges as an ambitious woman capable of playing with anyone to get what she wants (Creed, 1993, p.232). On the other hand, Amy's manipulative characteristic will be praised in this thesis because she exists as a contemporary Medusa who uses monstrosity to stand in a patriarchal society, takes the initiative, and challenges the passive victim but the ideal female archetype.

With *Gone Girl's* novel, the contemporary woman writer Gillian Flynn has built a terrifying female character who demands a challenging interpretation although Flynn manages to conceal the reality of Amy's terrifying complexity. The book starts with Nick Dunne, the male protagonist, and the other narrator of the story, who is suspected of his wife's sudden and mystical disappearance – a clear proof of a fight, a scene of a homicide, quickly muddled bags of her wife's blood leading Nick to be the suspected culprit. Also, the viewpoint of Nick's first-person analysis is not enough to ease readers' doubts. Via the diary entries of Amy, found by the authorities, readers are shown an ideal figure who tends to personify women's values, a wealthy debutante, an ostensible 'cool girl' and a caring saintly spouse. At the same time, the diary entries clearly reveal Amy's marital breakdown and her despair by her violent and adulterer partner, Nick Dunne. Amy manages to manipulate those around her by deceiving them with her strategic preparation and terrifying techniques. Amy's claims of domestic violence are entirely fictional. On the other hand, her being undervalued is the real abuse that she suffers from and it may not be physical abuse, but it is psychological abuse that she cannot bear



anymore because of her potential power and her self-respect. Amy is always undervalued. Amy is never enough for her family, and she is ignored by her husband. Amy is always in a struggle to be herself, unlike the ideal one, her fictional counterpart the Amazing Amy that is burdened on her like a hunchback.

Amazing Amy has a traditional destiny which is written by the masculine symbolic authority; she signifies an acceptable archetype of woman as an ideal daughter who is perfect in every field for her family and as an ideal wife who never demands more and accepts her husband's ignorance in a passive victim style. In traditional fictional literature, being invaluable for the ones surrounding the passive woman archetype contributes to the dehumanisation of the victim woman that enables her to be used, abused, objectified, manipulated, and dominated either sexually or forcefully for the sake of the patriarchal desires. In *Gone Girl*, Flynn emphasizes that, under any circumstances, the victimized woman can change her life and get the power by terrifying and castrating the patriarchy and by being the monstrous feminine. On the grounds of Flynn's feminist writing style, Amy cannot be the victim of the patriarchal ideology, she struggles to get control of her life; by the same token, she takes revenge from the ones abusing her. At the end of the story, Amy manages to take control of her husband, Nick, by terrifying him, and so he confesses during one of his final lines:

“The fact is, my wife is a murderess who is sometimes really fun...My wife, the very fun, beautiful murderess, will do me harm if I displease her...I am a great husband because I am very afraid, she may kill me” (Flynn, 2012, p. 545).

The main point in this quote is that Amy is a true femme fatale. Amy reveals the process of the femme fatale character's existence because the author somehow justifies Amy's turning into femme fatale by getting the reader to accept the underlying causes of Amy's act of killing.

#### **4.1 Amazing Amy – Lack of Agency**

Amy's personality is based on her childhood influence of *Amazing Amy*, the series of her parents' children's book. *Amazing Amy* outlines the flawless and hyper-fulfilled fictitious figure whom the Real Amy is associated with and so compared to: “my literary alter ego, my paper bound better half, the me I was supposed to be,” (Flynn, 2012, p. 34). Amy thus complains about her fake identity:

“Nick loved a girl who didn’t exist. I was pretending, the way I often did, pretending to have a personality. I can’t help it, it’s what I’ve always done: the way some women change fashion regularly, I change personalities. What persona feels good, what’s coveted, what’s au courant?” (Flynn, 2012, p. 256).

Amy suffers from not having integrity because her integrity gets scattered under the guise of the idealised feminine archetype and the various personas masking her reality: “I’ve already been: Amazing Amy. Cool Girl and Loved Wife and Unloved Wife and Vengeful Scorned Wife. Diary Amy” (Flynn, 2012, p. 266). The monstrous Amy’s Amazing Amy version is like a mirror reflection that is both there and not. It exists just as a fake reflection of her real identity created by the people around her, by her supposedly loving and caring parents. Amazing Amy is a fictitious authority burdened on Real Amy and objectifying her independent identity because her family objectifies her unique personality by deifying their Amazing fictional daughter while degrading their real, alive daughter under her counterfeit alter ego just for money and prestige. That is why Amy has been objectified even by her ostensibly loving and caring family since her childhood because her family materialises her under a false name which strips her self-determination, self-confidence, and any sense of her own integrity.

By leaving everything and everyone behind her on the fifth anniversary of her wedding, she breaks the mirror shadowing her real identity, and so she gets rid of that fake mirror reflection. Amy always lives a fake life and is in the hunger of reality; that is why Real Amy claims her dignity and reality by breaking all the mirrors reflecting her ideal image. While Amazing Amy exists in her perfection, she portrays a passive but exquisite character who does not know how to use her own agency, cannot control her life, and lives the life imposed on her. On the other hand, Real Amy is brilliant, scheming, plotting, vengeful and proudly attesting. Furthermore, above all, the real Amy is a courageous monstrous feminine who can take the initiative and do whatever is necessary for her well-being. Amy observes from afar as her strategically crafted plans come into being, and her partner has been castigated in the public news, on the other hand, she is purified and deified in exchange.

When Nick rejects Amy’s sexuality by cheating her with a younger and more beautiful doll girl (the cool girl who is objectified under the pervert sexual desire and

corrupt appetite of the male gaze) and refuses her passionate femininity as well as her desirable attractiveness by placing her on the other side of their marriage boundary as an abject woman, othered and expelled; Amy becomes the monstrous wife he denounces her into being. Even though Amy is trying to run away and so she is hiding, she proves herself to be able to do brutal atrocity, relentlessly murdering her ex-lover Desi once he tries to patronize and control her. Amy finally frames Desi of abduction and sexual violence after choosing to reappear, turn back to Nick, and save him from the destiny she has designed for him. The irony starts when Nick understands that Amy is right about her claims. Amy maintains that her mediocre husband thinks that he can be happy with a mediocre and simply beautiful girl; on the other hand, it can never be as simple as he assumes. Amy stresses that her husband has been to the hell and seen the darkness, because of that, Nick can be blind to the brightness of a normal girl. Even though Nick articulates that he does not want to be with Amy anymore, he hesitates about his feelings. Nick rejects Amy from one side; on the other hand, he confesses himself the reality that he still goes crazy for this dangerous and monstrous Amy because her violent acts make Nick feel loved and cared:

“I had known Amy only seven years, but I couldn’t go back to life without her. Because she was right: I couldn’t return to an average life. I’d known it before she’d said a word. I’d already pictured myself with a regular woman – a sweet, normal girl. ... I already pictured this sweet and mediocre girl saying something uninteresting like *Oh, nooooo, oh my God*, and I already knew part of me would be looking at her and thinking: *You’ve never murdered for me. You’ve never framed me. You wouldn’t even know how to begin to do what Amy did. You could never possibly care that much.* ... Amy was exactly right. So maybe there was no good end for me. Amy was toxic, yet I couldn’t imagine a world without her entirely. Who would I be with Amy just gone? There were no options that interested me anymore.” (Flynn, 2012, pp. 443-444).

#### **4.2 Cool Girl Amy – Under Male Gaze**

Amy Elliot Dunne of *Gone Girl* again gets objectified under the sexual desires of the male gaze when she starts to stay at Desi’s lake house because Desi imposes his idealised feminine archetype on Amy’s own body. Amy knows the corrupt reality that she has merely a stance with her physical value in the patriarchal symbolic

ideology that she complains about Desi when he gives her ten small Fritos by claiming that he does not like the smell of the chips: “But what he really doesn’t like is my weight” (Flynn, 2012, p.390). Furthermore, Amy realizes that Desi is trying to control her physical body, her self-identity, her integrity, and her female agency under the guise of caring for and loving her: “*Here is a sweater for the cold, my sweet, now wear it and match my vision*” (Flynn, 2012, p.390) Moreover, Desi projects his observing and evaluating male gaze on Amy even when he runs to save her from her abusive husband. And the main problem for the male gaze of patriarchy is that man values woman according to her sexual attraction and physical appearance matching with man’s imaginary ideal woman; Desi expects to see Cool Girl Amy not the shabby but the real Amy who lacks to satisfy his male gaze: “You look *very ... different, so full in the face especially. And your poor hair is-*” (Flynn, 2012, p.362).

Alban outlines that every media apparatus demonstrates the influence of the gaze, every perception of women puts them under judging observation and objectifies them as sexual objects, whether they are praised or discarded as worthless of attention and lack the integrity of the whole individual (Alban, 2017, p.24). Woman gets objectified through the male gaze driven from the phallic desire; she gets appraised for her sexual gender of being a woman instead of being valued as an individual who possesses equal status in the symbolic culture. In a society in which the appearances are sexually admired, women tend to lack self-confidence in their personal values and appreciate themselves physically; thus, according to totally unrealistic beauty expectations. Alban challenges women to assert the petrifying power of the lethally devastating Medusa eyes to embody the terrifying force of the unusually castrative vagina dentata in order to be able to paralyse and debilitate the phallus symbolic ideology (Alban, 2017, p. 24). In visual culture, the hegemonic influence of external views and the supremacy of the outer gaze objectify the female body as well as her fragile self-identity as a materialised object for the sake of sexual appetite of the phallic desires, that is why the woman, lacking sexual attraction and physical beauty, gets regarded as the abject figure not being desired by the erect penis of males.

In this novel, the point that is intended to be emphasized is that society accepts the woman as the second gender, the other one who is either unconsciously or consciously treated to present themselves to men as if they were a delicious cake in the bakery window. Amy is also a real woman who is desired to be a cool girl in her

marriage, and she even tries to pretend to be like that even though she is not, but eventually, she gets bored and tired of it. She pretends to be the cool girl; she pretends to be the delicious and desired cake waiting to be eaten by Nick Dunne in the bakery window at the beginning of their marriage: “That night at the Brooklyn party, I was playing the girl who was in style, the girl a man like Nick wants: The Cool Girl.” (Flynn, 2012, p. 250). Although she looks like she is a cool girl to get what she wants at the beginning of her relationship with Nick Dunne, in reality, Amy is disgusted by this imaginary cool girl myth created by the desires of patriarchal society: “And the Cool Girls are even more pathetic: They’re not even pretending to be the woman they want to be, they’re pretending to be the woman a man wants them to be.” (Flynn, 2012, p. 251). Amy is actually a woman who feels that she has the power to take control of her life on her own, and so in order to get rid of all the selves imposed on her and which she is not in essence, Amy disappears to rebuild herself with her real identity who she is in essence: “I was probably happier for those few years – pretending to be someone else – than I ever have been before or after. I can’t decide what that means. But then it had to stop, because it wasn’t real, it wasn’t me. It wasn’t me, Nick!” (Flynn, 2012, p. 253). Believing that things in her life should change into the way she wants, Amy is a woman who is capable of destroying and recreating everything for this, because Amy is monstrous enough to risk sacrificing others for her own happiness rather than be a victim for the happiness of others in her life, and Cool Amy transforms into Real Amy:

“So, it had to stop. ...there was a Real Amy in there, and she was so much better, more interesting, and complicated and challenging, than Cool Amy. Nick wanted Cool Amy anyway. Can you imagine, finally showing your true self to your spouse, your soul mate, and having him not like you? So that’s how the hating first began. I’ve thought about this a lot, and that’s where it started, I think.” (Flynn, 2012, p. 254).

### **4.3 Gone Girl Amy – Monstrous Feminine**

In the 21st century, Amy outlines the anti-hero personage, yet moreover, she portrays the femme fatale as a more dimensional character. Although Amy is depicted as the anti-hero of the novel, Flynn has portrayed the literary figure in a transformation from traditional femme fatale archetype of past centuries to the modern monstrous

feminine of the 21st century by deepening her in a more in-depth understanding, dimension, and humanity, as well as complex and moralistic reasons.

With her intelligent mind and tactics, Amy adds more to the femme fatale archetype by using her sexuality and intellect, thus turning the typical femme fatale into a real, multi-dimensional character. The monstrous feminine character is the combination of both the body and the mind and the dignity of the character. In that sense, *Gone Girl* Amy gives birth to the monstrous-feminine Amy through her initiative, her determination, her own female agency, and her Medusa Gaze power. That is why, 'Gone Victim Girl' becomes the 'Monstrous Revenant Wife' who gains the battle and gets back her husband, who was actually never her husband. As an archaic mother, *Gone Girl* Amy creates a new version of herself from her own body and her own soul without her husband or her parents' agency during her missing time. Amy creates a new identity of herself in terms of her circumstances.

In so many respects, Amy Elliot Dunne becomes the incarnation of abject and monstrous femininity which Creed categorizes. Through Amy's coming back to Nick at the end of the book, her method of seizing control of him exposes it as being the ultimate symbol of the monstrous womb. Amy artificially inseminates herself with her husband's thrown away sperm sample, guaranteeing her own integrity and safety if the police ever doubt her constantly shifting claims. The monstrous womb is described as uncannily terrifying, and hence the dreadful vagina reflects her horrific essence and grotesque nature in concrete terms. That is why, Nick Dunne becomes terrified with his own child because of her monstrous- feminine wife, Amy's monstrous womb.

To put it another way, Creed articulates that the symbolic authority imposes a division between mother and child that is essential to maintain its legitimacy, authority, and power by building the maternal image as abject (Creed, 1993, p. 69). As it is explained deeply in the monstrous feminine chapter in this thesis, the blood itself is particularly abject because some boundaries are crossed such as a breakdown of distinct boundaries between oneself and others; a potential return into the narcissistic identity; as well as the image of lesbian desire through the female vampire's blood-sucking acts. After quenching her thirst by feeding on her victim's blood, the vampire needs to come back to her coffin, which symbolizes the mother's womb; otherwise, she is doomed to die. Within the same gesture, Amy returns home

after destroying Desi, and she washes her bloody body in the shower -in the womb- to be renewed and give herself self-rebirth. The blood soaked-water bath indicates a symbolic resurrection, a metaphorical self-rebirth, and the desire to the refreshing dyadic bond with maternity. Blood is, indeed, the foetus/vampire's first nutrition. That is why Nick becomes terrified when he learns that Amy gets pregnant through his sperms artificially because his baby is in the abject womb of a monstrous-feminine, and it is feeding Amy's abject blood. Nick Dunne leaves his intention of releasing a book which vilifies his spouse for her multiple violent acts after learning her pregnancy of his baby, and he concludes that "We had spent years battling for control of our marriage, of our love story, of our life story. I had been thoroughly, finally outplayed. I created a manuscript, and she created a life" (Flynn, 2012, p. 462).

The female sex is the creatrix and life-giving, but the male gender lacks giving life. The time when Amy is missing can be thought of as the hibernation of a snake to shed its skin. Amy sheds her snakeskin and recreates herself in a new image. That is why her marriage is renewed in terms of Amy's rules, and she gets life over death. Amy's capacity to reproduce and manage it without her husband's participation so efficiently is an affirmation of the supreme monstrous female agency and horrific woman power. The images in the book and the visuals in the movie version reflect the assertion of Creed that women are not symbols of monstrousness and horror, because of being castrated but being inherently prospective castrators. Based on Creed's assumptions, it can be claimed that the monstrous archaic mother, Gone Girl Amy, and pregnant Amy is mostly a terrifying image not for being castrated but for castrating. At the beginning of both the book and the movie, the loving and caring wife image of Amy is an acceptable figure of the woman for the standards of the traditional culture, on the contrary, in the second part of the story, monstrous Amy symbolises entirely abject wife shape, and she signifies the unacceptable abject maternal form according to patriarchal ideology. The victim Amy signifies an acceptable fetish in the phallogocentric philosophy; on the other hand, the castrator Amy emerges as a fetish of the monstrous-feminine.

The portrayal of the womb as a known and unknown location in a horror film is achieved by applying horrific experiences which are only partially visible or briefly concealed from sight before their terror is completely exposed. Flynn uses the same

womb-like atmosphere in *Gone Girl* so that the protagonist of the story achieves to give herself the self-rebirth symbolically. Once back home, Amy Elliot Dunne cleans her body which is abjected with the blood of her ex-boyfriend whom she kills in a planned manner. Amy washes her unclean, impure, and abject body in the shower signifying the womb because of its enclosed watery atmosphere. In typical horror films, the image of the whole house transforms into a representational space – the starting place of origin, the site of the ultimate self-rebirth, the womb - where uncanny actions are committed. In other words, the house itself is described initially as a shelter in particular horror films. Ultimately, the condition gets reversed, and subsequently, the house that gives the comfort turns into a trap, the site where either the monster or the victim is demolished. That is why, in *Gone Girl*, the house becomes a spot of trap for Nick Dunne since he gets trapped not only in his marriage but also in his house because of his mistakes against his wife.

#### **4.4 Avenging Amy – Abjection**

Amy is the only surviving child of the couple Elliots. She feels incredibly unique and proud of this because she has been the one who manages to survive after seven miscarriages in which Amy's parents refer to them as 'Hope', and who damages her mother's womb so Marybeth can never have a child anymore after Amy: "As a child, I have a vibrant pleasure from this: just me, just me, only me." (Flynn, 2012, p. 249). As the eighth Hope to survive after her mother's seven miscarriages and the first to actually succeed, Amy has always been forced by her parents to be perfect all her life:

"I've always been better than the Hopes. I was the one who made it. But I've always been jealous too, always—seven dead dancing princesses. They get to be perfect without even trying, without even facing one moment of existence, while I am stuck here on earth, and every day I must try, and every day is a chance to be less than perfect." (Flynn, 2012, p. 250).

Amy tries to make herself the best girl, the perfect woman. She feels drained and resides in an environment unconsciously shaped by her parents for her. Her parents' flawless dream life for Amy is described in *Amazing Amy*, a novel her parents compose together. *Amazing Amy* is literally Amy's imaginary better counterpart: "..., I'd never felt like a person, because I was always a product. *Amazing Amy* had



to be brilliant, creative, kind, thoughtful, witty, and happy.” (Flynn, 2012, p. 252). Amy has always been an intrinsically anxious and unhappy person because her entire childhood has unconsciously belonged to her family, and her parents have created an illusory world in which they have raised her ideal literary counterpart, Amazing Amy. Therefore, Amy has been raised as a perfectionist woman, but no matter how perfect Amy is, Amazing Amy has always been more superior, successful, and perfect than Real Amy. In essence, Amy always feels that something is missing somewhere in her because her life is the perfectionist life of a pretentious and imaginary woman that does not belong to her real identity. Amy has been so tired and bored of living in a self that mimics the personalities imposed on her by her closest relatives in her life and she has hidden behind so many masks that when Amy disappears, she retreats to return, having destroyed all these masks.

Real Amy is on the other side of life border or marriage border separating her husband from her identity since her existence threatens his existence, and thus it arises the feeling of abject which makes Amy the monstrous-feminine. Amy thus crosses Kristeva’s imaginary border into the realm of death, mutilation, blood, and horror. When Amy leaves home as the gone girl, she passes through the physical gate of hell and over the invisible threshold between her own state of being and what threatens it. Amy experiences the same story with Desi Collings. As Desi becomes over-controlled on Amy once she settles into his lake house, Amy finds herself again in the abjection. Abjection symbolizes the undesirable, the non-individual, and beyond the boundary to which the individual does not want to belong. The main emphasis here is not the fact that Amazing Amy is abject, but Real Amy feels that the perfect female identity imposed on her is abject. Because abjection is the situation which does not belong to Amy’s identity and does not define her own self-perception, Amy feels trapped in abjection. In other words, Real Amy feels trapped in being forced to be Amazing Amy. Because there is a border between her real-self and the fake identity imposed on her. Desi Collings and the lake house become the border that separates Amy from her real identity and reminds her of the life that she does not want to live. Hence, Amy gets rid of the life she is exposed to accept by force somehow, and she takes control of her life once more by becoming the monstrous feminine and seducing Desi as a femme fatale archetype then drugging him and finally killing him. In that sense, Amy claims her real identity by killing

Desi because Desi is actually an obstacle for Amy to take on her real personality and return to Nick, and naturally, Amy destroys him as a powerful monstrous woman. That is why the Real Amy is a blurred and fluid character who is abject as she crosses the boundaries separating the proper and the improper norms as explained deeply in the abjection chapter within this thesis.

In her all relations, Amy is proffered something that she does not want to have but the desire of someone who exposes her to have it. In her relationship with her parents, Amy is somehow abused to become the Amazing Amy because her family desire her to be the perfect child but not the real child, and literally, the Amazing counterfeit Amy shadows her real identity throughout her childhood. Nick tries to demonstrate that his wife is not the innocent victim whom she pretends to be: *Not Amazing Amy: Avenging Amy* (Flynn, 2012, p. 308). When Nick talks to Amy's ex-boyfriend and finds out that she has imprisoned him for the so-called rape exerted on her body because the man leaves her; Nick gets terrified by the potency of her castrative power and he concludes: "*That's Amy, she's graduated to murder. Holy shit*" (Flynn, 2012, p. 308). In her marriage with her ostensibly loving husband, Amy is abused again and forced to be the perfect passive wife and the object of the male gaze but not the active and real Amy. Instead of becoming the passive girl and accepting what is imposed on her, Amy claims her identity metaphorically and her real self when the Gone Girl Amy disappears and then turns back. Amy Elliot Dunne, who is just Amy but burdening the titles of the patriarchy and the surnames of both her father and her husband, fights between the 'Amazing Amy' and the 'Gone Girl Amy'.

The corpse is the abject because it does not belong to our living life, and it is the expelled one making us feel alive. Amy, thus, transforms Desi to the expelled one, to the corpse to feel alive again when Desi imprisons her in his castle constructed with his control and demands over her. Amy wears the blood of Desi like a fetal amniotic membrane, and then she purifies herself by washing the blood off in her shower with her abusively reckless husband watching and witnessing her re-birth of her real identity in her own circumstances as a monstrous, abject archaic mother giving birth to her real existence and unique integrity without the agency of the masculine ideology or her authoritative parents.

In *Gone Girl* book, Gillian Flynn does not use Amy's bloody scene with a knife in bed having intercourse with Desi and then cutting his throat off. On the other hand, when it comes to the patriarchal media, the book's tone turns more bitter. David Fincher directed *Gone Girl* which is the American psychological thriller with Gillian Flynn's screenplay. The book was written in 2012, and the film with the same name as the novel was released in 2014. Somehow, David Fincher projected Amy as a castrator during the intercourse such as a 'devouring mouth' cutting Desi's throat instead of his penis when his phallus vanishes in her vagina. In that sense, Desi's whole body turns to a penis castrated by a monstrous feminine, Amy Elliot Dunne. Through this literally castration scene, Fincher brings to life the 'devouring mouth' theory put forward by Susan Lurie as explained in this thesis in the monstrous feminine chapter (Lurie, 1981, p. 55). Amy stabs Desi with a knife after he reaches orgasm in the movie, even though she is lying under him and he is on the top during their sexual intercourse. The knife hid under the pillow refers to Amy's "vagina dentata" which she uses to castrate Desi during the coition, and Amy castrates Desi by transforming his body into a bleeding wound. After returning home, Amy washes her bloody body in the shower, signifying the womb as an enclosed watery space. The shower becomes a symbolic space; the place of beginnings and Amy baptizes herself in the blood of her ex-boyfriend, Desi's castration before she can be reunited with her husband. Amy becomes the archaic mother of her own body and her own identity symbolically which is explained deeply in this thesis's monstrous feminine chapter.

Creed emphasises that additionally, female vampire ideal signifies the abjection as she literally passes the symbolic line separating life from death, and humans from animals (Creed, 1993, p. 61). In that sense, Amy represents the abject monstrous-feminine as a female vampire driven for blood because she crosses the emblematic border between life and death by literally castrating Desi and symbolically sucking his blood as a predator preying on her victim. When Amy turns home back wearing the blood of Desi as a shield protecting her from harm, she resembles a warrior coming from the battle rather than an abused female victim. Amy seems to quench her thirst for blood metaphorically like a vampire which means that she appears satisfied with her monstrous acts to punish her husband and to transform her husband into her prey because the death of Desi emerges as a threat to Nick that he may be

her next prey if he does not satisfy his wife and if he provokes her to lose her temper and so she may be a vampire again. In the final analysis, it can be concluded that the vampire figure in horror films is both horrifying and alluring like Amy character, as each abject image is.

Creed points out that castration can signify two different dimensions of the symbolic or the real one as either female and male symbolic castration, or the genital castration (Creed, 1993, p. 107). The horror genre provides many general visions symbolising disintegration of castration. Rarely do victims die quickly or cleanly in horror films. Instead, victims perish in agony and disgusting filth of tragic ends such as chopped flesh, raped bodies, and ripped limbs. If the creature is a devouring monster, the victim's body is ripped to shreds, savaged, and consumed alive. If a psychopath becomes the monster figure in the horror genre, bodies are brutally hacked off, beheaded, dismembered, and disembowelled. Death weapons are commonly knives, specific sharp tools, or any other cutting instruments. In that sense, it clearly indicates that Amy becomes the vagina dentata because of her devouring acts of killing Desi with a sharp knife. In *Gone Girl's* film adaptation, Amy cuts Desi's throat during their sexual intercourse, and Desi perishes in an agonizing bloody death. In the book, Amy gives him sleeping pills, kills him after the coition, and again Desi has a bloody death. The vagina dentata, the toothed vagina or the devouring mouth promises metaphorical paradise to capture its male prey and to castrate him symbolically or literally. Through her terrifying power of the monstrous-feminine and the horrific force of her devouring mouth, Amy castrates Desi literally and Nick symbolically. Having sexual intercourse with a monstrous-feminine, like Amy, is precisely a life and death issue. Through *Gone Girl*, Flynn focuses on the central question of whether Amy is the "castrated-proper" female victim or the "castrator-deviant" female perpetrator (Creed, 1993, p. 107).

## **5. MILLENNIUM TRILOGY ANALYSIS**

“And she always got revenge.”

Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo*

### **5.1 The Terrifying Lisbeth**

Alban maintains that in fear of getting petrified or objectified and lacking her autonomous subjectivity by the Other, a woman requires to look back on the Other in order to devastate and disempower its subjectivity and degrade it to a reified entity (Alban, 2017, p.40). Alban alleges that in this power struggle, just one person holds superiority over the Other, embodied in monstrous Medusa’s apotropaic potency turning her thrilling look back and deflecting the one who dares to confront her deadly gaze (Alban, 2017, p.40). Alban defines that under these circumstances, the gaze diverts the petrification, while the observed person switches her eyes back to the voyeur to capture him in the process of observing, and lock him in embarrassment (Alban, 2017, p.40).

In this thesis, it is claimed that the female protagonist of the *Millennium Trilogy*, Lisbeth Salander utilizes her own apotropaic, petrifying, and terrifying Medusa gaze to deflect her enemies. Although Lisbeth falls into Medusa’s category and the monstrous feminine, she brings some changes into the theory by her own initiative and her own female agency. Medusa does not have initiative. She is punished by this gaze. So, actually, Perseus and Athena give this lethal gaze to her as a punishment rather than her own agency. However, in this novel, Lisbeth Salander takes her own initiative in her own hands by using the Medusa Gaze rather than as the result of punishment. Lisbeth is not punished with this gaze; nevertheless, she becomes the contemporary Medusa archetype by using this gaze knowingly and willingly.

Larsson’s *Millennium Trilogy* mostly focusses on female empowerment and eliminating discrimination against women, child abuse and sexual harassment in the social system. *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* is the first volume of the *Millennium*

*Trilogy* by Stieg Larsson. The central point of the book is female inequality in misogynist cultures. The book also deals with a range of subjects regarding child abuse, corruption in the government system, the breakdown of the socio-political news, the perversion of the tyrannic male gaze, and the female agency's necessity. The character of Lisbeth Salander is contradictory to traditional values of femininity. She is a strongly autonomous woman, almost to a reclusive degree. She is highly knowledgeable and in her silent way, powerfully threatening. Apart from her individual traits, Lisbeth's physical aspects refute the traditional female stereotype so generally embodied in women. Strongly contrary to her dark black hair, Lisbeth's eyebrows are so light that they are relatively insignificant from her ghostlike white skin. Lisbeth Salander appears as a complex protagonist who is different from the typical victim and the traditional passive femininity. Lisbeth challenges societal restraints and breaks down traditional gender stereotypes through manifesting force, sexual self-esteem and mathematic ability while riding a motorbike, kickboxing and seeking vengeance on the enemies of both her and innocent women. Lisbeth comes as the anti-social figure and not sexually attractive woman in the masculine sense and that is why she becomes the abjected and othered object which signifies the multifaceted monstrous Medusa because she can exert her castrative gaze upon the male gaze to destroy its corrupt perversion and to terminate the phallogocentric laws of the patriarchal symbolic order. The search for equality and liberty for women in Lisbeth derives from her sufferings, including brutal violence, sexual abuse, and physical assault.

Lisbeth manages to build her unique identity to endure the abusive obstacles and prosper with her own gaze regardless of her life's challenges and perils. Lisbeth personifies Medusa's debilitating power and focuses her apotropaic eyes on others in a reversal of gazing when others' Medusa gaze objectifies her identity and when they claim against her female agency. Embodied the Medusa's apotropaic gaze power, Lisbeth is eager and determined to petrify the atrociously abusive patriarchal symbolic ideology. Thus, she challenges the life itself, in her solitary. Protecting women who are persecuted and somehow oppressed, and getting their revenge are the most prominent features of her personality. Lisbeth's photographic memory can be interpreted as the capacity and force to petrify the moment in her memory palaces.

Thus, it means that her Medusa gaze is so powerful that she manages to petrify everything she sees in her mind forever.

Almost all the incidents are exacerbated by assaults on herself and those few ones Lisbeth Salander worries about. Once a bully at school beats her, Lisbeth rejects to go back down even if she does not equal him. Lisbeth then licks her cuts, comes out with a baseball bat, and slugs her attacker. When her father hits her mother badly to cause permanent damage to her brain, Lisbeth, a 12-year-old girl, takes control and tries to burn her father to protect her mother. Lisbeth is incarcerated at the age of twelve in a psychiatric clinic for children when she attempts to destroy her father's fake identity, his pseudonym, his entire case, and she tries to kill him. Zalachenko is Lisbeth's father and her real threat, he attempts to destroy her many times, but he fails to kill her. At twelve years old, Lisbeth spreads petrol to her father and puts him on fire when he hits her mother with a brutal beat that permanently damages her brain. Her father nearly dies as a result of the attack but recovers with extreme cicatrise. At the age of thirteen, she has been deemed as a threat to herself and others; moreover, she has been locked up in a psychiatric institution for children. Lisbeth declines to communicate with any psychiatrists, police members, instructors, or social staff. A trustee, Advocate Holger Palmgren, is appointed to her because her legal rights are taken from her.

Meanwhile, she reaches at her fifteen age; she is accepted not to be dangerous and released from the mental clinic to be taken into a foster family home. After escaping from her first foster families, Palmgren explains that she will be put back to the rehabilitation institution again, and Lisbeth decides not to leave the next one anymore. The patriarchal symbolic order regards her to be hostile, disrespectful, and disobliging of the masculine authorisation; furthermore, she is viewed as an overly aggressive outcast frequently fighting with others when she becomes eighteen. Following an exceptionally aggressive fight with a man attacking her, the psychiatrist at the patriarchal symbolic court decides that she can be better if she gets institutionalised. Palmgren serves as her legal lawyer at the court trial and struggles desperately to show the judge that Lisbeth is not a terrifying threat, and instead, she can be held under the guardianship system. From being her trustee to her guardian in time, Palmgren has been one of Lisbeth's most meaningful relationships.

Her next guardian, Nils Bjurman, does not scare her because she never fears something or anything. As Lisbeth's current guardian, Bjurman's first legal order is to have full access to all her accounts in order to be able to abuse her sexually by holding control of her financial accounts. Although Lisbeth has taken care of herself since the age of ten and has no problem with her former guardian, Bjurman forces money restraints to claim his authority over her and enjoy his mastery. Palmgren used to enable Lisbeth to handle her own finances, but Bjurman prefers to have absolute power and influence over Lisbeth's personal life in order to satisfy his pervert sexual desires on her own body. Lisbeth's first few assemblages with her guardian go all right, but when Lisbeth's computer breaks down, she gets forced to ask her guardian for her own money, and that is when the situation changes because the man uses this opportunity to get her to perform oral sex and to have him in her devouring mouth. A guardian is the one who is charged with protecting those who cannot care about themselves, and therefore, the guardian monitors their financial situation and private interests. The guardian's position is equivalent to that of a speech officer, except that the guardian has absolute power and can transfer them to a psychiatric clinic at any time. Lisbeth Salander, the victim of a tough and traumatic childhood, has been sentenced to live dependent on guardianship which is ordered by the patriarchal court. Finally, the man who is supposed to guard her, assaults, and abuses her for his sexual perversions and the rapist guard sodomises her brutally. Bjurman forces Lisbeth to take him in her mouth, but he ignores the fact that a woman, having the potential power of the vagina dentata like the Medusa's devouring mouth, may castrate the penis of the abusive phallogocentric authority's corrupt and pervert phallus. After abusing Lisbeth to give him oral sex, Bjurman thinks that it is a good way to abuse her sexually with her own money: "This is better than a whore. She gets paid with her own money" (Larsson, 2008, p.208).

Even after Bjurman rapes Lisbeth brutally, she manages to threaten him by directing her deadly hatred towards him by Medusa's destroying gaze:

"She crossed the threshold, out of the apartment, and turned to face him. Her body looked fragile, and her face was swollen from crying, and he almost recoiled when he met her eyes. *Never in his life had he seen such naked, smouldering hatred.* Salander looked just as deranged as her casebook indicated." (Larsson, 2008, p.233).



Lisbeth, who does not go to the police in any case, has her own scheme to tackle with the problem: “Salander never forgot an injustice, and by nature she was anything but forgiving” (Larsson, 2008, p.212). Lisbeth, “legally incompetent”, plots her vengeance by using her Medusa gaze power that petrifies the atrocious guard metaphorically because she sets a plan both punishing him and enabling her to be rescued from her imperative guardianship (Larsson, 2008, p.209). Lisbeth quickly and easily recognizes men who hate women and enjoy torturing and abusing them brutally. This is the general rule of anything in the masculinized nature of her social world. As a woman, she becomes the legal victim because of her extraordinary appearance, particularly if she wears a black leather jacket, pierces her braces, tattoos her objected body, and has zero social status in the patriarchal system. Even though Lisbeth knows exactly what a women’s counselling centre is like, she never turns to herself. There are support centres for victims in her mind, and she never sees herself as a victimized prey. As a result, her only choice left is to do as she always does; Lisbeth takes things on her own hands and solves her own problems alone. This is undoubtedly a choice for her resourceful and challenging monstrous identity who exerts her powerful gaze which wards off the evil around either her or Othered and abjected women: “*Analysis of the consequences*. What she needed was a way to *control* her guardian and thus her own situation” (Larsson, 2008, p.227). Lisbeth never sounds like a submissive victim surrendering the patriarchal symbolic system; she defies the life itself and defends both her and undervalued women’s rights as a modern Medusa Goddess.

Lisbeth feels intense pain in the chest, blood from the rectum and less noticeable bruises that take longer to recover, spending a week in bed. The second rape exercised on her body is quite different from the first assault in Bjurman’s office; it is no longer an issue of humiliation and devaluation; this violence turns to the systemic abuse. “[it was no longer a matter of coercion and degradation. This was a systematic brutality” (Larsson, 2008, p.235). But anyway, she never feels herself as a subjugated victim and she never gives up and she does not even cry when she gets raped brutally: “She did not cry” (Larsson, 2008, p.235). She does not assess herself as a victim. She gets a band symbol tattooed her leg after being raped savagely by her so-called protector, Bjurman. Lisbeth challenges all the negativity in her life, the bullying and inequality imposed on her, and she does this by engraving the tattoos

that are equated with her pain: “It’s a reminder” (Larsson, 2008, p.236). Tattoos of Lisbeth Salander signify not only her incompatibility with traditional social norms but also her own control over her own body. Her extraordinary tattoos automatically characterize her as an unconventional force, and they lead others to gaze at her and get terrified or maybe petrified. “[In possessing the powerfully castrating and debilitating gaze” power, Lisbeth’s apotropaic tattoos exert her Medusa gaze and signify her absolute control over both her body and her life; hence the tattoos reveal her intense desire and powerful stance to self-possess her own body and her own fate (Alban, 2017, p.3). Lisbeth gets a tattoo soon after being raped brutally: a thin chain symbol on her leg encircling her ankle in a means of getting “the metaphorical power of Medusa” (Alban, 2017, p.3). After Medusa is violently raped, she is cursed with hair snakes as the mark of her ostensible sacrilege but in fact the remainder of her abusive victimization which can be interpreted as the tattoo of her rape that Medusa carries on her head in self-confidence. Lisbeth’s getting a chain symbol tattooed after her assault functions like a determined assurance securing her own control over her body. Lisbeth tattoos Nils Bjurman, her lawyer and legal guardian as a means of her control over his body, and thus, the tattoo reveals her ultimate power over him as well as the guardianship system.

Lisbeth’s defiant stance within the novel advocates that the institutional authorities are instituted intensely on patriarchy’s ideals, and the best solution to defend oneself from the abusively corrupt male grasp is to take the initiative into one’s own hands. Lisbeth’s vengeance is praised in a tone encouraging Medusa gaze power as a force to use retaliatorily. Even though Medusa herself has been exposed to rape, execution, and beheading, she deflects the danger by shifting her eyes back to the Other, and she still wields this disempowering force even after her demise (Alban, 2017, p.21). From becoming a disruptive weapon, Medusa thus becomes a defensive force, an evil eye, or a talisman, used to dislodge the control of the gaze and to defend the subject against the threat, as gazer and gazed ones are stuck into an interplay of reciprocal contemplation (qtd. in Alban, 2017, p.22). So, while Medusa is almost always depicted as an evil entity, her petrifying power protects those who armed themselves with her utterly terrifying gaze, acting as a castrative force which shields them from evil and debilitates their enemies (Alban, 2017, p.22). Consequently, Medusa’s forcibly lethal gaze shields as an apotropaic evil eye, warding off the

hostile authority away from the ones she tends to safeguard (Alban, 2017, p.22). Women besmirched and reduced when disdained as the monstrosly horrific Medusa presently assert her castrative power and her challenging gaze for themselves (Alban, 2017, p.22). Alban concludes that “destroyed and raped as Medusa was, found guilty and “punished” (or maybe rewarded) by receiving powerful snakes for hair, she was beheaded by patriarchal forces” (Alban, 2017, p.22). The moment Lisbeth handcuffs her rapist guardian and starts tattooing over his chest; she actually transforms into an ultimate Medusa Goddess who terrifies and petrifies the ones facing her apotropaic defiant gaze: “*She had taken control. [...] She looked him in the eyes. Her face was expressionless*” (Larsson, 2008, p.240). Alban claims that in the patriarch’s symbolic hierarchy, the prevailing social eye is the masculine, revealing woman under an omnipresent, also panoptic gaze (Alban, 2017, p.22). However, Alban maintains that women presently claim their autonomous scopic power of defiance under the shield of Medusa and threaten to suppress any attempts degrading them to the zero images such as the Other, the abject, the object, the second gender, castrated, lack (Alban, 2017, p.22). Lisbeth is literally the embodiment of how powerfully castrating women can be when their revengeful potency is triggered by the abuse of the masculine system’s phallus: “If you complain, I’ll have to punish you.” (Larsson, 2008, p.240). And she takes the revenge of the rape by tattooing on his chest: “I AM A SADISTIC PIG, A PERVERT, AND A RAPIST” (Larsson, 2008, p.244). While using castrating gaze power, Lisbeth terrorizes the other person deeply: “‘If you ever touch me again, I will kill you. And that’s a promise.’ Bjurman absolutely believed her. There was not a vestige of bluff in her eyes.” (Larsson, 2008, pp.243-244).

With her outstanding detective skills and excellent hacking knowledge, Lisbeth acts as a supporting protagonist and partner working with the journalist Mikael Blomkvist to resolve Harriet Vanger’s case of disappearance. On the other hand, Blomkvist self-diagnoses Lisbeth as suffering from Asperger’s Syndrome, a psychological condition with serious socialization problems and nonverbal interactions, including limited and repeated behavioural patterns (Wikipedia). Characterized by her incompatibility, Lisbeth turns towards the unconventional, both in style and attitude. It is often the case that Lisbeth is mischaracterized, disregarded, ignored, or criticized by others just because of her unusual style of tattoos, gothic appearance, piercings, and her isolated attitude which reminds the unusual appearance of Medusa with her

writhing snaky hair and her terrifying look. Her Milton Security manager first feels sympathy and mercy for Lisbeth and considers her worthy of nothing but temporary works. Lisbeth's current guardian, the jury and some other officials assume her to be mentally incompetent, so they claim that she needs to be institutionalized, which is the same case of decapitating Medusa's isolation. In abusive patriarchal authority, when the victim woman uses her power against the abuser, she immediately becomes unfit of the system to be decapitated.

The story reflects how Lisbeth actively deconstructs the assumptions of those surrounding her, as in intellect, autonomy, character strength, and common sense, she tends to overshadow her colleagues. First, all these factors enable her to release from the oppressive and sexually sadist guardian and secondly her deep connection to Blomkvist. Eventually, Lisbeth utilizes other's misinterpretation and judgements to her advantage to ward off them as in the same case of Medusa's evil eye. Those who look at the Medusa, see their reflection and fragmented identity in her evil eyes, which serve as a mirror, and thus they get petrified. Medusa is cursed with this deadly gaze and her terrifying snaky appearance. The critical distinction between both of them is that Lisbeth wilfully embraces Medusa's petrifying gaze and her terrifying appearance without being cursed with it as a punishment. Even though being an innocent victim, Lisbeth has been violated, abused, imprisoned in a children's psychiatric institution, controlled under guardianship system since her eighteenth age, raped and degraded as a Lesbian Satanist who has paranoid schizophrenia and pathological narcissism similar to the purely beautiful Persephone who is raped by Poseidon, condemned by Athena, decapitated by Perseus, and used as an apotropaic force by Athena. Lisbeth and Medusa's most crucial difference is that Medusa does not actually do anything actively, whereas Lisbeth adopts and intentionally uses this petrifying gaze without being sentenced to this curse. Medusa operates entirely as a reflector, and essentially, turns to stone the ones who look at their own reflection in her eyes. While Medusa exists like a mirror that draws the gaze to herself and sends it back to the other, Lisbeth takes the initiative and actively sends this petrifying look to both her foes and abused women's enemies.

Lisbeth stands as the victim and the survivor of the phallogocentric symbolic system, but she transforms from being the prey to a predator with her powerful Medusa and female gaze against the sexually pervert male gaze of brutally abusive and controlling

patriarchy. Lisbeth believes that the enslavement, the exploitation, brutally subjugation and the systematic rape of women are socially widespread, so she does not perceive herself as a victim or a survivor. Lisbeth generalizes the abuse problem for all women, and she thus regards that she is not picked for assault and the violence to women is a general issue rather than a one. Eventually, her extraordinary outbreaks of violence, particularly in the case of her torturing of the rapist guardian and her assaulting Martin Vanger with a golf club, all personify Lisbeth's Medusa gaze power to ensure her own protection in defiance of devastating inequalities and punish the perpetrators victimizing the impotent ones. Moreover, almost every action of Lisbeth empowers her to guarantee her autonomy securely and to have the capacity to defend herself and other atrociously victimized women. Blomkvist signifies the journalistic capacity to deal with the societal problems honestly and transparently, and so his decent deeds anticipate a functioning democratic order. On the other hand, Lisbeth embodies the desire for absolute freedom and autonomy, and Lisbeth thus signifies the dysfunctional governmental system and social structure.

## **5.2 The Redemptive Lisbeth**

*"Lisbeth Salander is never passive."*

Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo*

*The Girl Who Kicked The Hornets' Nest* is the third volume of the *Millennium Trilogy* by Stieg Larsson. Life interactions of Stieg Larsson inspire the figures, philosophies, and incidents of the *Millennium Trilogy* actively. At his fifteenth age, Larsson experienced gang rape as a bystander (qtd. in Ralph, 2012, p.41). Some of his friends are the ones who attack and rape. Even though Larsson is not involved in the rape actively, he feels sorry for the victim and needs to apologise to her, but the abused girl declines his apology and condemns him for being as guilty as the abusers since he does nothing to save her from being raped (qtd. in Ralph, 2012, p.41). Eva Gabrielsson, Larsson's partner for thirty- two years, claims that this case and the *Millennium Trilogy* have actively influenced his feminism has been published both as an apology and the revelation of violation against females in Sweden (qtd. in Ralph, 2012, p.41). The book outlines Amazonian women's original roots and

legendary myths. The writer, thus, somehow implies that Lisbeth Salander has the omnipotent power in her soul like an Amazonian woman. On the other hand, within this thesis it is claimed that Lisbeth reverts her female and Medusa gaze as an apotropaic power on those who try to destroy either her or the other women because Lisbeth exerts her power not only to petrify her enemies but also to protect the victimized and abused women around her. She defends herself against the negativity she has experienced.

Officially recognised as Karl Axel Bodin, Alexander Zalachenko (Zala) is both the father and the most dangerous enemy of Lisbeth. Ronald Niedermann, both the second familial enemy of Lisbeth and her stepbrother, is like an extremely shielded android, suffering from a disorder termed congenital analgesia which enables him not to feel any physical pain. Niedermann buries Lisbeth alive, but as an unusually resourceful and capable woman, she manages to rise out from the grave and to hurt her father with an axe on his head with the aim of both defending herself and getting her revenge: “She was shot and buried here, but somehow she managed to survive and dig herself out and somehow got back to the farm and swung an axe into Zalachenko’s skull.” (Larsson, 2009, p.36). Mikael Blomkvist admires her potency of possessing the ultimate power: “[You have to understand that Salander is exceptionally resourceful” (Larsson, 2009, p.33). Lisbeth’s being buried alive reminds the mythological victim Medusa who is raped and penalized: “Salander has been subjected to a number of infringements of her rights, starting when she was a child.” (Larsson, 2009, p.43). On the other hand, Lisbeth’s accomplishment to climb out of the earth resembles Medusa’s re-birth as a terrifying castrator with her snaky hair and her petrifying gaze because Lisbeth gets an axe to castrate the most paternalistic figure of her life, her father when she passes from the state of being dead to being alive. So, it can be interpreted that being a victim, staying as a victim or choosing to stay as a victim is like to be buried alive and to be dead. On the contrary, for a woman, challenging life, using the female and Medusa power, and getting control of her own life and her female agency is like rising out of the earth, the re-birth and choosing to be a castrator instead of being a passive victim, so choosing to be alive rather than dead.

*Millennium Trilogy's* extraordinary character, Lisbeth Salander, is condemned because of her sexual choice of being a lesbian. Lisbeth signifies the abject woman archetype in the androcentric world of the story since she claims her sexual agency and takes control of her choices as a lesbian woman. According to patriarchal discourses, the bisexual Lisbeth becomes abject because she crosses the imaginary boundary between men and women by ignoring the rules of heterosexuality as it is explained deeply in the monstrous feminine chapter. Lisbeth has always been degraded for being a lesbian character; even though she is bisexual. Lisbeth is condemned because she signifies the sexually independent woman archetype who can have sexual intercourse with a woman and who does not need the penis of the patriarchal symbolic order, the other gender to achieve sexual satisfaction. The lesbian relationship is a threat to the patriarchal symbolic ideology because it clarifies that women do not need the penis of the male authority to have sexual pleasure; therefore, lesbianism signifies the meaninglessness of the male genital organs which masculine order gets frightened to lose through castration.

Lisbeth has been deprived of her personal rights and her female agency systematically since her childhood. Although Lisbeth has been a victim who is continuously subjected to injustice and bullying, she has never been a type to beg for help from others, and she has learned to rely on only herself even in the severe conditions. Lisbeth is not a violent person, but she becomes monstrous when injustice triggers her rage and abuse prompts her to take revenge in order to petrify the abuser: "Salander was seething inside. She was so enraged that she tasted blood in her mouth. Now she was going to have to punish him." (Larsson, 2009, p.33). That is why Lisbeth signifies a radical and defiant girl whose body is in revolt against the masculine authority.

Lisbeth stays in the hospital for most of the third book in order to get healed from her bullet wounds. For the first time in her life, Lisbeth has to trust someone other than herself and seek help from the others, due to her negative situation and not being healthy enough to clear herself of the murder charges: "Probably she wouldn't want any lawyer at all. She isn't the type to ask anyone for help." (Larsson, 2009, p.33). Those who help her in all kinds of ways to prove her innocence in all three murder cases during her stay in the hospital are Blomkvist, Jonasson, the police and Giannini. During the investigation, Mikael discovers multiple crimes committed by

the authorities in the Section, which is a particular unit of the police, and Lisbeth gets blamed for the crimes that she indeed does not perpetrate. Even this situation solely is similar to the Medusa's tragic fate in which Medusa is actually innocent, but she is blamed, and therefore she is punished brutally only for being a woman in the patriarchal symbolic order.

The most distinctive feature that distinguishes Lisbeth from the typical victim female archetype is that she is fearless in essence, nothing that happens to her or that may happen to her actually frightens and intimidates her:

*"I was shot in the head. I could stick my finger in the entry wound and touch my brain. She was surprised to be alive. Yet she felt indifferent. If death was the black emptiness from which she had just woken up, then death was nothing to worry about. She would hardly notice the difference."* (Larsson, 2009, p.68).

Lisbeth, who has been brought to the hospital with three shots and a shot in the head and survived, perhaps because she is a strong, rebelling, and tenacious girl who has survived death, or perhaps by chance, is a powerfully omnipotent and defensive Medusa woman who can think of finishing her unfinished job and killing her father when she finds out that her father is in the next room:

*"She wondered whether she could manage to get out of bed, find something to use as a weapon, and finish the job. But she could scarcely keep her eyes open. She thought, *He's going to get away again*. She had missed her chance to kill Zalachenko."* (Larsson, 2009, p.69).

When the Section sends an elderly member to kill both Lisbeth and Zalachenko, Lisbeth gathers all her strength, stands up and stares at the door with her Medusa gaze and prepares to defend herself with a pencil as a resourceful, defiant woman:

*"What she wanted more than anything was a weapon, and to have the strength to get up and finish the job once and for all. ... For a second she felt as though she would faint, but she steadied herself against the bedhead and concentrated her gaze on the table in front of her. She took small, wobbly steps, reached out and grabbed the pencil."* (Larsson, 2009, p.129).

Lisbeth has been subjected to a lifetime of injustice since her childhood. As in the Medusa myth, Lisbeth is a female character who is regarded as contrary to the typical submissive female figure; thus, she somehow has been excluded from society and accused by the patriarchal norms:



“Her name is Lisbeth Salander. Sweden has got to know her through police reports and press releases and the headlines in the evening papers. She is twenty-seven years old and one metre fifty centimetres tall. She has been called a psychopath, a murderer, and a lesbian Satanist. There has been almost no limit to fantasies that have been circulated about her.” (Larsson, 2009, p.71).

In order to defend Lisbeth in court, her lawyer, Giannini, needs to know all the facts, but Lisbeth has no desire to talk about all the injustices that happen to her, the events that happen, her own actions and her own feelings. Lisbeth feels that her life entirely belongs to her own, and she has no intention of discussing it with anyone or talking about it under any circumstances. Of course, Lisbeth has some anger about her own life, but still, she prefers to live it only within herself. It is not Lisbeth’s fault that her father is a pathological sadist and a notorious killer, nor is it her fault that her father beats her mother to death. All Lisbeth can do, and indeed best, is to defend herself and the oppressed women through her Medusa Gaze power.

Moreover, in this case, it is actually not her fault to take revenge by burning her father, who beats her mother to death, and it is really not her fault to try to eliminate him. Likewise, it is not her fault that her stepbrother, whose intelligence is low and whose body does not feel any pain, is a murderer. It is not her fault, either, that the guard appointed to assist her is a rapist pervert. However, Lisbeth will not be a victim despite all these negativities, and she has no intention of doing so. Lisbeth cannot digest the thought that she will be forced to explain herself and ask for forgiveness when she goes to court just because she tries to defend herself in the negativity she has experienced.

“And yet it was her life that was going to be turned inside out. She would be forced to explain herself and to beg for forgiveness because she had defended herself. She just wanted to be left in peace. When it came down to it, she was the one who would have to live with herself. She did not expect anyone to be her friend.” (Larsson, 2009, p.222).

The sad truth that is intended to be emphasized in this novel is that women are still blamed for this in the patriarchal society even if they try to defend themselves against injustice imposed on them. However, what is tried to be emphasized in this thesis is the fact that there is not the victim woman but the passive and submissive woman in patriarchal societies. Lisbeth is the embodiment of the reality of how

powerful and defensive woman can be in modern society using her Medusa gaze by challenging the passive and obedient victim woman archetype.

When Lisbeth's lawyer, a female advocate, Annika Giannini defends her in the court, she particularly emphasizes that a woman's sexual inclination is of no concern to anyone, however, in patriarchal societies, women are most often blamed for their sexual choices and women do not have sexual freedom:

“She's been described as psychotic, and as a mentally ill lesbian mass murderer. All that is nonsense. Lisbeth Salander is not psychotic. She is probably as sane as you and I. And her sexual preferences are nobody's business.” (Larsson, 2009, p.275).

As with the Medusa myth, the main point here is to be provoked. If a thin and 1.5 meters tall woman finds the strength to challenge her stepbrother who is at least 1 meter taller than her, does not feel any pain and who is only trained to kill; it is because she gets irritated and enforced to defend herself: “[They knew what provoked Lisbeth to do what she did. ...the beating that provoked Lisbeth's attack put her mother in hospital for the rest of her life.” (Larsson, 2009, p.276).

Lisbeth is a woman with the genius to document that the so-called child psychiatrist, Teleborian, who conducted research and falsified a report that she had schizophrenia, even while in the hospital room, is actually a pervert and has downloaded child pornography videos to his computer:

“But what really interested Salander were the forty-seven folders containing close to 9,000 photographs of explicit child pornography. She clicked on image after image of children aged about fifteen or younger. A number of pictures were of infants. The majority were of girls. Many of them were sadistic. She found links to at least a dozen people abroad who traded child porn with one another.” (Larsson, 2009, p.382).

Possessing the power of Medusa's redemptive gaze, Lisbeth is a modern Medusa who somehow yearns to protect the little girls she does not know. As a child, Lisbeth herself was actually the victim of the Teleborian's perverse sexual inclinations:

“She remembered the nights when, as a twelve-year-old, she had been strapped down in a stimulus-free room at St. Stefan's. Teleborian had come into the room again and again to look at her in the glow of the night light. She knew. He had never touched her, but she had always known. She should have dealt with

Teleborian years ago. But she had repressed the memory of him. She had chosen to ignore his existence.” (Larsson, 2009, p.382).

Lisbeth now feels that she is a woman strong enough to kill the Teleborian whenever she wants: “*I was a scared little girl barely into my teens then. Now I’m a grown woman. I can kill you whenever I want.*” (Larsson, 2009, p.529). Doctor Teleborian has written such a fake report about Lisbeth that he aims to take full control of her; so, he claims that Lisbeth suffers from “a serious mental disturbance and employed terms such as psychopathy, pathological narcissism, and paranoid schizophrenia, and similar.” (Larsson, 2009, p.586).

The real show begins the moment Lisbeth is finally brought to the courtroom. With a frightening and threatening stance even when viewed from the outside, Lisbeth comes to the courtroom in a terrifying image like Medusa’s serpentine hair, which is cursed in a sense or maybe actually rewarded: “She looked a bit vulgar, to put it mildly. It was almost a Goth look. She reminded him of a vampire in some pop-art movie from the sixties.” (Larsson, 2009, p.588). Lisbeth actually comes to the courtroom in a Medusa costume, in a sense the image she is wearing is like a Medusa costume because in her stance there is a talisman that can in a sense petrify the person out of fear when looking at her. Blomkvist, who sees the stance and image of Lisbeth the moment she is brought to the court, admits this to himself:

“Then he realized that Salander was in costume. Salander always seemed to mark her private space as hostile territory, and he had thought of the rivets in her leather jacket as a defence mechanism, like the quills of a hedgehog. To everyone around her it was as good a signal as any: *Don’t try to touch me—it will hurt.*” (Larsson, 2009, p.589).

Lisbeth, in her Medusa costume, actually carries the proud in the stance of Medusa, who is cursed with snake hair after being raped:

“She had come as herself and no-one else. ... Her message to the court was that she had no reason to be ashamed or to put on a show. If the court had a problem with her appearance, it was no concern of hers. ... With her very appearance she had already indicated that she intended to brush aside the prosecutor’s accusations as nonsense. She moved with confidence and sat down next to her lawyer. She surveyed the spectators. There was no curiosity in her gaze. She

seemed instead to be defiantly observing and registering those who had already convicted her in the press.” (Larsson, 2009, p.589).

With her stance at the court, her gaze and her calmness and determination while answering the questions posed to her, Lisbeth evokes the image of a Medusa woman: “Salander sat with her back ramrod straight and gave the prosecutor an unfathomable look. Her face and eyes were impassive, and she did not appear to be wholly present.” (Larsson, 2009, p.593). Furthermore, Lisbeth wins by preferring to be a surviving warrior rather than a victim of this war that she did not want but was imposed on her: “His gaze fell on Salander. Their eyes met. She smiled. She looked malicious. Ekström frowned.” (Larsson, 2009, p.598). Lisbeth is a woman who prefers to be a survivor rather than a victim and is ready to do whatever she can for it, and that is what it should be: “If I’m going to survive, I have to fight dirty.” (Larsson, 2009, p.415).

Lisbeth realizes that someone bothers Erika Berger and threatens her, she has a stalker, and she needs help. Lisbeth, who always rushes to every woman in need of help, even helps Berger although she does not like her at all. The fact that Lisbeth chooses to help her and watch her back, even though she should have hated Berger for her previous disappointment with Blomkvist, reveals once again how real redemptive Medusa woman Lisbeth Salander is. Moreover, that is Lisbeth’s apotropaic power to protect women under harassment, and she utilizes Medusa’s redemptive power in the modern world. Berger is shocked when Lisbeth contacts Berger on her own. Because the least likely person in the world to communicate with Berger on the internet is actually Lisbeth because Lisbeth is actually a patient who has been struggling to survive in isolation in a hospital room for months. Embodying the character of a modern Medusa goddess, Lisbeth manages to help Berger with her computer genius. The most influential aspects of her identity are the defence and vengeance of victimized and somehow abused women. Lisbeth is not violent but monstrous, as brutality triggers her vengeance and violence leads her to avenge the attacker, and thus she illustrates a rebellious, challenging woman who can defy patriarchal force. Lisbeth transforms her female and Medusa eye into an apotropaic force over those who want to ruin her or others because Lisbeth uses her power not only to debilitate her foes but also to shield the victims and abused women around her.

Alban alleges that Medusa power manifests women's continuous commitment to claim their rights and assert their will against substantial challenges, rejecting to surrender to the hostile authorities threatening to destroy them abjectly (Alban, 2017, p.263). In the court, while defending Lisbeth against Teleborian's accusations about her, Giannini expresses her admiration for Lisbeth's ongoing determination and her strength which makes Lisbeth the Modern Medusa archetype as she adopts the Medusa force willingly:

“I admire Lisbeth Salander. She's tougher than I am. If I had been strapped down for a year when I was thirteen, I would probably have broken down altogether. She fought back with the only weapon she had available – her contempt for you.” (Larsson, 2009, p.637).

Alban claims that if a woman achieves to grasp control of her own gaze, “she may transitively revert her Medusa gaze onto others, disempowering or petrifying them with her stare as she asserts her own power” (Alban, 2017, p.15). Because “the archetypal Medusa is an expression of the gaze that passes from subject to object in an interplay of mirrored views”, this force process can occur through the mutual gaze of both the subject and the object (Alban, 2017, p.16). That is why, seizing Medusa force, Lisbeth projects her apotropaic, petrifying, and terrifying gaze outwards on the others; simultaneously, Lisbeth gets herself objectified by others' Medusa gaze if they assert themselves against her. Lisbeth converts into the Modern Medusa as she utilizes this debilitating stare against her enemies deliberately and wilfully even though she is not cursed with this petrifying gaze like the abused and victimized Persephone. Lisbeth fixes her lethal eyes on Teleborian in the trial scene both in the book and in the film adaptation: “Salander stared at Teleborian. He was once more deathly pale.” (Larsson, 2009, p.637). Turning her independent and blazing eyes back onto others empowers Lisbeth to redeem herself from the false accusations about her and the diminishing patriarchal restrictions: “As he was being led from the courtroom, Salander's blazing eyes bored into Teleborian's back” (Larsson, 2009, p.645). Exerting Medusa's terrifying gaze onto others, Lisbeth emphasizes how determined and competent she is in essence: “Ekström ... met Salander's unwavering gaze” (Larsson, 2009, p.646). Lisbeth's powerfully blazing gaze exists as a destructive threat which safeguards her as an evil eye, deflects the hostile forces and

disempowers her enemies. Lisbeth manages to assert herself through her destructive Medusa gaze and to be in control even when she is victimised: “Ekström met Salander’s gaze. She was sitting there patiently, and in her eyes, he read both curiosity and vengeance” (Larsson, 2009, p.647).

When the court ends, and Lisbeth is acquitted, Giannini speaks to Lisbeth to accept the assets inherited from her father, but Lisbeth refuses to inherit this murderous man whom she does not accept as her father. Among these assets, there is an old factory, which arouses Lisbeth’s curiosity, and she goes there to find out why Zalachenko has owned such a building. When she gets there, Lisbeth finds two dead female bodies in the pool inside the factory. As soon as Lisbeth realizes the entrance door is closed and locked, he suddenly sees his stepbrother, Niedermann, with a large knife in his hand which Lisbeth sliced open just before Zalachenko shot her in the head three times. When Lisbeth sarcastically asks Niedermann, who has been previously described as a pathological killer and psychopath by journalists and police, how his hand is, he raises his hand and shows his missing little finger: “It got infected. I had to chop it off” (Larsson, 2009, p.699). The fact that Niedermann does not feel pain makes him a more murderous psychopath. Niedermann gets more obsessed with Lisbeth because she manages to get rid of him and Zalachenko, survives, and besides, cuts his finger:

“He thought a lot about Salander. He had never expected to see her again, but she fascinated and frightened him. He was not afraid of any living person. But his sister—his half-sister—had made a particular impression on him. No one else had ever defeated him the way she had. She had come back to life, even though he had buried her. She had come back and hunted him down. He dreamed about her every night. He would wake up in a cold sweat, and he recognized that she had replaced his usual phantoms.” (Larsson, 2009, p.704).

Niedermann, not feeling pain and being twice Lisbeth in height and weight, essentially acts like an android only programmed to kill her. Nevertheless, Lisbeth manages not to get caught once again and challenge Niedermann and hunt him down:

“*She was resisting*. ... She had to evade him. ... She needed a weapon. ... No weapons. Only tools. ... She was challenging him. Her visit had suddenly turned into a game between brother and sister.” (Larsson, 2009, pp.706-707).

Despite being a short and skinny girl, Lisbeth turns back to the modern Medusa once again by stapling the left foot of Niedermann to the ground with a nail gun, with her intelligence, agility, courage, and the strength of the warrior Amazon woman inside her. After defeating Niedermann once again, Lisbeth fixes her destructive Medusa gaze onto him in glory:

“He met Salander’s expressionless eyes and was amazed. She had defeated him. *She’s supernatural*. Instinctively he tried to pull one foot from the floor. *She’s a monster*. ... She sat stock-still and observed his struggle for ten minutes. The whole time her eyes were frozen blank.” (Larsson, 2009, p.709).

Lisbeth employs Medusa symbol to challenge the traditional passive woman archetype since Medusa’s trilliant depiction was once viewed as both a female survivor and a dreadfully frightening object as an overarching force representing the transformational power of the female gaze, which empowers women, through their determination, to overcome oppression and persecution. Lisbeth adopts Medusa gaze as a female power because embodied both as a victim and a perpetrator, Medusa’s utterly terrifying eye and petrifying gaze ruins the hostile forces, on the other hand, it defends with her apotropaic and redemptive evil eyes. Lisbeth reverts her female and Medusa gaze as an apotropaic power on those trying to destroy either her or the other women because Lisbeth exerts her power to castrate her enemies to protect the victimized and abused women around her.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Within *Millennium trilogy*, Medusa, herself, reappears through this term: ‘Victim and murderer come together in me.’ Medusa refers to her persecution by the gods — the novel refers to the abuse and the rape of the Medusa by Poseidon — and to the destructive fury, she experiences because of their cruelty. Lisbeth gets the petrifying and the castrating power of Medusa rage in her hands willingly and knowingly and so she gives dimension to the Medusa myth by taking her initiative and using this debilitating curse without being punished with this murderous gaze. Lisbeth becomes the destroying Medusa actively, utilising her Gorgon-like deadly power to terrorise the men assaulting and abusing both her and the victimised women. Lisbeth Salander expresses the desire for individual freedom and self-sufficiency, and thus her character in the novel signifies that both the system of government and the social structure are dysfunctional. Characterized by her incompatibility, Lisbeth turns towards the unconventional, both in style and attitude, within Medusa’s same gesture.

Lisbeth emerges as the modern Medusa Goddess since almost every action of Lisbeth empowers her to guarantee her autonomy securely and to have the capacity to defend herself and other atrociously victimized women. Embodied the Medusa myth’s apotropaic gaze power, Lisbeth is eager and determined to petrify the atrociously abusive patriarchal ideology. Protecting women who are persecuted and somehow oppressed, and getting their revenge are the most prominent features of her personality. Lisbeth is not destructive but monstrous when abuse causes her anger and violence drives her to take revenge to castrate the perpetrator, that is why she represents a rebellious, defiant woman, whose body resists against the oppressive authority. Personified as a perpetrator rather than a victim, Lisbeth applies Medusa’s dreadfully petrifying gaze to ruin the ones who dare to hurt her as well as women both literally and symbolically. Lisbeth’s defiant and active stance proves that women are not passive objects of the male gaze to be enjoyed, on the contrary,



women can be active in controlling their lives by taking the initiative in their hands and claiming their own Medusa gaze power.

Amy Eliot Dunne is depicted as the anti-hero of the novel, Gillian Flynn has portrayed the literary figure in a transformation from traditional femme fatale archetype of past centuries to the modern monstrous feminine of the 21st century by deepening her in a more in-depth understanding, dimension, and humanity, as well as complex and moralistic reasons. With her intelligent tactics, Amy adds more to the typical femme fatale archetype by using her sexuality and intellect; thus, she appears as the woman giving rise to the mysterious evolution of the traditional femme fatale by turning her into a real, multi-dimensional character. By crossing the patriarchally appropriate borders as a fluid abject woman and exerting her monstrosity actively, the defiant Amy transforms herself from being castrated to being the castrator. Rather than being punished or abused by her self-centred husband and her over-controlling parents; the unyielding Real Amy controls her life by adopting the castrating monstrous-feminine archetype wittingly. Amy Elliot Dunne emerges as the castrator deviant, the castrating monstrous woman.

The monstrous-feminine is seen as an abject object as the patriarchal symbolic order gets disrupted with the threat of her terrifying, petrifying and castrative female power. In this study, the gender disparity between man and woman has been questioned. In traditional accounts, men with penis adopt the authoritative role and active status commonly associated with masculinity, in contrast, women reflect the passive and submissive characteristics of femininity. The critical aspect of being self-sufficient for a woman is to destroy the patriarchal ideals and the male gaze. In this thesis, it is emphasized that woman must assert her autonomy and integrity through the mighty Medusa's symbolic power; moreover, she needs to subordinate phallogocentric philosophy to her views if she does not want to be reduced and depreciated to an object to be stared at or controlled by the male gaze. In the patriarchal system, a woman is objectified by the authoritative male gaze led by the phallus wish, and she is appreciated for her physical appearance and sexual attraction as a doll rather than as a person having equal status in the phallogocentric symbolic order. Thus, a woman must take the initiative, exert her own petrifying Medusa gaze, or be the castrating monstrous-feminine.

Within this thesis, by using *Gone Girl* and *Millennium Trilogy*, it has shown that woman has the potential desire to get revenge, but the central dilemma is to be tempted or not to be tempted to get revenge; to be monstrous or not to be monstrous; to utilize the Medusa Gaze or not to. In this study, the patriarchal passive female image has been decomposed by a deepening and dimensioning of the monstrous feminine archetype with the feminine power of the apotropaic, petrifying, and redemptive Medusa eyes. In this study, it is stressed that the stare, gaze, eye, or look exists as active power and independent control that a woman can apply wilfully to deflect all the hostile forces and to possess her own agency.

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