

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Women have always been compelling subjects in literature, with many works exploring the struggles and experiences to depict the real aspects of human life. Although literary works are fiction, they frequently depend on the author's personal experiences and perceptions (Sugiarti & Andalas, 2018). Among the many roles that women play in literature, their identities as spouses, mothers, and daughters typically reflect complicated psychological and societal aspects.

Motherhood, in particular, is a common yet challenging issue in literature. Henriksson, Williams, and Fahlgren (2020) argue that literature conveys the importance of mothers on both physical and metaphorical levels. Mothers are shown in literature in both standard and innovative ways, emphasizing the various struggles women experience while reconciling society's expectations with their own personal growth. These complexities demonstrate that debates about mother and motherhood frequently raise issues of identity, responsibility, and individualism.

In literary studies, the depiction of inadequate or “bad” motherhood often plays an important role in shaping both domestic and social aspects of a narrative. Socially, the consequences extend beyond the domestic field; personalities shaped by inadequate mothering frequently struggle to adapt to society's standards or expectations and may become targets of gossip, judgment, or exclusion in their communities. This dynamic is especially visible in literature that investigates how patriarchal norms magnify home failures, holding mothers solely accountable for their families' moral and social position.

By depicting the repercussions of unsuccessful motherhood, authors not only highlight the suffering of individuals but also criticize the harsh social expectations placed on women as mothers. Thus, studying the influence of terrible parenting provides a better understanding of how personal and societal identities are produced and challenged in literary texts.

Within the domestic context, a mother who fails to provide emotional warmth, stability, or proper care might impair her children's psychological development, forming patterns of insecurity, anxiety, or rebellion that will resurface throughout their lives. Scholars such as Chodorow (1978) contend that the mother's role is fundamental to the child's sense of self, attachment, and relationship dynamics. As a result, a lack of caring mothering can cause strained family ties, unsolved issues, and a tense atmosphere in the household.

Historically, women's roles have been intimately linked to household tasks and the emotional care of children, particularly in patriarchal cultural contexts. Bowlby and Ainsworth (1969) emphasized the importance of the role of the mother's presence in establishing a stable foundation for a child's emotional and social development. This expectation was especially strong during the Regency period in England, when the mother's position was viewed as critical to the moral standing of the family and the stability of the home (Anne, 2022). Mothers were obligated to nurture, educate, and provide moral principles to their children, which could not be completely handed over to others, such as childminders or nannies. One of the literary works set in the Regency era is the work of Jane Austen entitled *Persuasion* (1817).

Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817) provides a pathetic illustration of these themes through the character of Mary Musgrove. Mary, the youngest and most self-absorbed daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, displays neurotic self-absorption, constant dissatisfaction, and an emotional detachment from her own children. The premature death of her mother, Lady Elliot, deprived Mary of strong maternal guidance, shaping her psychological development and her ability to mother her own sons (Kaplan, 2006). While Mary may rely on a nanny to accomplish utilitarian chores, the deeper emotional relationships and holistic direction that a mother gives are irreplaceable, creating a gap that impacts both her son's current development and his future.

This absence of maternal care in *Persuasion* (1817) reflects the broader historical reality that the presence or absence of good mothering could deeply influence a child's behavior, mental well-being, and future relationships (Pinedo, 2023). The narrative underscores how a mother's neglect can undermine her children's psychological stability (Mao et al., 2020).

Psychoanalytic theories provide a valuable framework for examining Mary's behavior. Sigmund Freud's structural model of the mind id, ego, and superego, emphasizes how unconscious conflicts influence behavior (Freud et al., 2003). Mary's frequent complaints of illness and need for attention can be interpreted as unconscious responses to her unmet emotional needs, reflecting how her ego negotiates unresolved conflicts from childhood (Niaz et al., 2019). Nancy Chodorow expands this perspective by emphasizing how early mother-child relationships influence caregiving patterns. Chodorow's psychoanalytic feminist theory demonstrates how the loss of a caring mother affects an adult's ability to mother (Aldridge et al., 2014).

Both psychoanalytic and feminist approaches have been used extensively to examine the representation of incompetent or selfish mothers in Jane Austen's writings and beyond. Critics of psychoanalytic theory use core notions such as Freud's early writings on family dynamics and Chodorow's (1978) concept of the reproduction of mothering to investigate how maternal neglect or narcissism impairs the child's psychological development. Characters such as Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Lady Susan Vernon in *Lady Susan* have been interpreted as embodying self-absorption and emotional inconsistency, traits that create insecure familial attachments and perpetuate unresolved conflicts in the domestic sphere (Chodorow, 1978).

In addition, feminist literary criticism emphasizes how such images reveal the restricted notions of motherhood imposed by patriarchal society. Literature frequently exploits imperfect or conflicted moms to demonstrate how social expectations of nurture and self-sacrifice shape and restrict women's identities (Kaplan, 1992). In *Persuasion*, Mary Musgrove's self-centeredness and parental failings reflect not just her own unmet psychological needs but also the excessive expectations placed on her as a mother. Similar interpretations have been given to other Austen characters, such as Mrs. Norris in *Mansfield Park*, who exemplifies how maternal power may be used for self-interest and societal control.

By applying Freud's and Chodorow's perspectives, this research investigates how Austen portrays Mary's selfishness and inattentive mothering as consequences of her own disrupted upbringing. Mary's story highlights how early family dynamics and the lack of maternal modeling shape her flawed maternal role, a cycle that will impact her son's emotional development.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Mary is a mother with two sons who is emotionally detached from her sons, reflecting her struggle with her identity and inability to nurture. This may align with Freudian theories of ego development and Chodorow's theories of the reproduction of mothering. This study indicates a correlation between how Mary tries to blend in with her current situation and how her early childhood experience has a major influence on her present behavior. In addition, Mary is described as a self-centered, somewhat immature, and often dramatic character. Mary's inattentive approach to parenting is the result of how her early childhood experience affected the development of her identity as a mother. This research aims to prove that the early childhood experience greatly impacts the shaping of character development.

1.3. Review of Related Studies

This review of related literature examines the connection between psychoanalysis and portrayals of motherhood. It aims to investigate research exploring the psychological foundations of mothers' behavior toward their children. Regarding psychoanalytic theories and concepts, this review seeks to explain childhood experiences and the factors that shape this type of behavior. Among the articles and journals discussing this topic, the researcher has summarized several theses, articles, and journals related to this discussion.

The first study is provided by Anneli Olsson Hagman entitled "Vanity, Grief and Mary Musgrove: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*" (2020). It investigates the character of Mary Musgrove using psychoanalytic theory, specifically Freudian psychoanalysis using the concept of repression and projection, and Carl

Jung's theory of personality, the concept of personal unconscious, to claim that Mary is a complex character influenced by unconscious forces rooted in her early experiences. In some parts of this study, especially in the theory section, they are quite dense and could be simplified for better readability. Also, Mary's level of self-awareness could be explained more clearly to avoid confusion.

The second study is an article by Rafli and Lekpi Panora entitled "The Psychological Conflict of A Woman in Her Family as Seen in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*" (2023). This research examines Anne Elliot's issues and coping mechanisms in *Persuasion* (1817), focusing on Freud's personality theory and defense mechanisms. The study categorizes Anne's characteristics as kindness, patience, sacrifice, and pessimism while also examining the challenges she confronts, such as sorrow, love, and suppressed emotions. The research effectively employs Freudian ideas such as the id, ego, and superego to demonstrate how Anne regulates her inner conflicts through suppression, sublimation, and justification. While the study is detailed and well-organized, several portions are repetitive, and clearer distinctions between different defensive systems would improve comprehension. Furthermore, the topic may benefit from a more in-depth look at how Anne's psychological difficulties reflect wider cultural expectations of women during Austen's period.

The third study is an article by Maureen Johnson entitled "Jane Austen's *Persuasion*: Finding Companionate Marriage Through Sickness and Health" (2023). This paper investigates how physical limitations and disease in *Persuasion* (1817) serve as narrative instruments for exploring emotional suffering and the formation of companionate marriages. According to Maureen Johnson (2023), Anne Elliot's loss of

bloom and Captain Wentworth's mental distress represent their emotional turmoil, whereas minor characters' physical injuries, such as Louisa Musgrove's fall and Mrs. Smith's illness, serve as narrative prostheses that help the protagonists grow. Drawing on disability studies, namely Mitchell and Snyder's Narrative Prosthesis theory, the paper examines how Austen utilizes physical and mental limitations to criticize conventional marital norms and promote compatibility, respect, and reason in partnerships. Johnson also delves into how Anne's restoration, as seen by Wentworth's increased interest, adheres to the typical literary motif of overcoming handicap to achieve a happy ending. While the research successfully corresponds embodiment, disability, and marriage in Austen's novel, it relies significantly on theoretical frameworks, sometimes at the expense of in-depth textual examination. Overall, the study presents a convincing viewpoint on how *Persuasion* (1817) interacts with bodily and emotional development.

The fourth study is an article by Neslihan Albay and Ülkü Güleşce entitled "A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Motherhood in Emma Donoghue's *Room* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*" (2022). With an emphasis on the strong psychological bonds that form between mothers and their children in confining, isolated settings, this study offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of motherhood in Emma Donoghue's *Room* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. The study effectively examines the characters' unconscious desires, traumas, and coping strategies using Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. The mother archetype, Oedipus complex, and prolonged nursing are used to evaluate *Room*, highlighting Ma's strong protective tendencies and the reality she constructs for Jack. The *Scarlet Letter*, which depicts Hester Prynne's

tenacity in the face of Puritan persecution, is analyzed in terms of gender roles, societal retribution, and repression. By emphasizing how motherhood can be both a burden and a source of strength under intense social and psychological constraints, the study deftly ties the two works together. Although the theoretical underpinnings are solid, there are some thick portions that would be better organized, especially when it comes to differentiating between Freudian, Jungian, and Lacanian interpretations. All things considered, this comparative study provides an engaging look at how literature depicts suppressed feelings and the mental challenges faced by mothers in limited situations.

The fifth study is an article by Touhida Khan Khusbu entitled “*Sense and Sensibility: Delineation of Maternal Sway by Jane Austen*” (2024). This essay investigates the effects of a mother’s influence on daughters in *Sense and Sensibility*. The research looks at how Austen disrupts traditional motherly roles by showing various maternal characters whose characteristics influence their daughters’ personalities and decisions. Using ideas from Motherhood Studies, the study argues that maternal identity and authority have a significant impact on girls’ emotional and moral growth, as seen by Mrs. Dashwood’s connections with her daughters and Mrs. Ferrars’ dominating attitude over her boys. The study successfully links parental influence to the daughters’ battle to combine reason and sensibility, with Elinor emerging as a logical character despite her mother’s impulsiveness. While the study is well-supported by theoretical references, it does occasionally repeat topics, and certain arguments might be more clearly organized. Overall, it offers an in-depth analysis of Austen’s complex portrayal of motherhood and its long-term impacts on character

development.

The sixth is an article by Dorothy Tiffany Burlingham entitled “Child Analysis and the Mother” (2017). This research investigates the mother’s critical role in determining a child’s psychological development, specifically in the setting of psychoanalytic treatment. She contends that a mother’s emotional availability and response are critical to a child’s feeling of security and self-worth, but emotional neglect or unresolved worries can lead to developmental difficulties. Burlingham highlights that maternal influence goes beyond early development and has a substantial impact on personality and emotional resiliency. She also emphasizes the necessity of integrating mothers in psychoanalytic therapy, as their perspectives and participation can improve therapeutic outcomes. Working closely with therapists allows moms to better understand their children’s emotional issues and give the necessary support for recovery. This study concludes that by emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to child analysis that takes into account familial dynamics as well as the larger emotional context.

The seventh study is an article by Alison Stone entitled “Mother-Daughter Relations and the Maternal in Irigaray and Chodorow” (2011). This essay analyzes the opposing views of Luce Irigaray and Nancy Chodorow on the mother-daughter connection and maternal subjectivity. Stone investigates how both philosophers criticize the dominance of father-son interactions in Western culture and want to reestablish the maternal role. Drawing on object relations theory, Chodorow claims that daughters have a strong affinity with their mothers, which shapes their gender identity and relationship development. In contrast, Irigaray, based on Lacanian and

poststructuralist theory, sees mother-daughter relationships as formed by patriarchal institutions that deny maternal subjectivity, compelling daughters to seek individuation through the paternal hierarchy. Stone underlines the contrasts between both perspectives, stating that whereas Chodorow emphasizes the value of existing mother-daughter ties, Irigaray advocates a symbolic transition to realize maternal identity. The article provides a fascinating comparative study; however, it might incorporate modern feminist thoughts on parenting outside psychoanalytic theory.

The eighth study is an article by Gabrielle Gedo titled "Eran Dos Flores: The Paradoxes and Ambivalences of Maternity in the Diamond Square" (2022). This article examines how Mercè Rodoreda's novel portrays motherhood in various ways. Gedo explores how the protagonist, Natalia, views motherhood as both a social burden and a deeply personal growth. The research, which references Nancy Chodorow and Adrienne Rich's theories, challenges the idealized, patriarchal view of motherhood, emphasizing its complexities, limitations, and emotional burdens. Gedo also contextualizes Natalia's maternal struggles within the sociopolitical setting of Francoist Spain, highlighting how state ideology reinforced repressive gender stereotypes. The study skillfully analyzes the intersection of maternal identity, sacrifice, and agency, showing how Natalia's journey defies common motherhood myths. While the analysis is rich in theory, it could benefit from a more straightforward discussion of Rodoreda's storytelling techniques. Nonetheless, this work offers a compelling exploration of the institutionalization of motherhood and its psychological impact on women.

The ninth study is an article by Ariane Ávila entitled "The Ambivalences of

Motherhood: An Analysis of the Character Anna in *With Sleepy Weapons*”, by Carola Saavedra (2024). This article explores how the novel challenges traditional maternal ideals. Using feminist and psychoanalytic literary analysis, the study examines the protagonist Anna’s rejection of motherhood, emphasizing its socially constructed and oppressive nature. Drawing on theorists such as Nancy Chodorow, Elizabeth Badinter, Adrienne Rich, and Orna Donath, the article critiques the patriarchal expectation that maternal love is innate. The findings reveal that the novel portrays motherhood as an alienating experience, exposing the burden of maternal guilt and the impossibility of escaping patriarchal expectations. The article’s strong theoretical foundation and detailed textual analysis effectively deconstruct the idealized mother subject, but could benefit from exploring alternative perspectives on maternal experience. Despite its dense academic language, the study makes a valuable contribution to highlighting how contemporary Brazilian literature redefines motherhood beyond traditional norms.

These studies help the researcher in improving their understanding of the topic being discussed. The researcher found that these studies and articles were quite useful for this research. Some of the studies helped the researcher to understand how the character’s psychological problems in the form of the id, ego, and superego are applied and analyzed. Other articles help the researcher comprehend the character in literary works.

1.4. Research Questions

The primary discussion in this study focuses on how Mary Musgrove’s character behaves as a mother, which is discussed using a psychoanalytic approach. This

research will be conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How does Jane Austen portray Mary's selfishness as a mother in *Persuasion*?
2. What are the factors that contribute to Mary being a selfish mother, and how do these factors have an impact on Mary's children?

1.5. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the side character in *Persuasion* (1817) named Mary Musgrove Elliot. It is said that Mary married Charles Musgrove at the age of nineteen years old and became a mother when she was twenty-three. On the other hand, she grew up without a mother figure and also received no attention from her father, which contrasts with the main character, her sister, Anne, who is thoughtful, composed, and close to Lady Russell. Lady Russell is her mother's best friend. Meanwhile, Mary's other sister, Elizabeth, is close to her father. To conclude, Mary is the one daughter who was not close to either her mother or her father. She is the one daughter who is a mother whose growing-up years were not accompanied and guided by a mother figure, which affects her character development and behavior. Therefore, to analyze this thesis, the theories that will be used to discuss this research are the dynamics of personality developed by Sigmund Freud and the theory of the reproduction of mothering, developed by Nancy Chodorow. This thesis will examine what factors contribute to Mary's selfishness and how they may affect Mary's interactions with her sons. The results of the analysis will ultimately relate to how Mary's character is shaped.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

This research aims to explore the mother's self-indulgence or selfishness in Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion* (1817), focusing on Mary as the mother figure navigating her childhood experiences that shape her character development. Additionally, this thesis examines the factors contributing to Mary's selfishness as a mother.

