

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter consists of research procedures which explain how the research is conducted. This chapter comprises of six parts namely research questions, research design, data source, data collection, data analysis, and data presentation. Brief biography of the author and synopsis of the three short stories used in this study are also presented in this chapter.

#### **3.1 Research Questions**

The present research investigates the representation of women in the family shown in three short stories from Maureen McHugh's collection book. The research questions of the present study are stated as follows:

1. What forms of women's power are represented in the three short stories viewed from a feminist perspective?
2. What do these forms of power signify?

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This research is a textual analysis of the three short stories from Maureen McHugh's collection book. This study is qualitative descriptive in nature because it aims to describe the representation of women characters in the three short stories through forms of power according to Cixous' feminist perspective (1976) and the signification of such representation. According to Nazir (2003), descriptive qualitative method is a method in analyzing people, system of thought, and other subjects at the current time.

Furthermore, textual analysis technique is appropriate in analyzing the short stories because the present study deals with texts. According to Byrne (2001), textual analysis can be defined as the method that emphasizes significant influences on qualitative interpretation which reveals hidden meanings and it is used to gain understanding of human nature. The main framework used in this study is Cixous' concept of women's representation in feminine writings

(1976). It is used to describe the representation of woman's power and its relation to the issues of feminism.

### 3.3 Data Source

The focus of this study is three short stories written by Maureen McHugh (2006) in her collection book entitled *Mother and other monsters*. From the 13 short stories in this collection book, the writer chooses 3 short stories to be analyzed. The three short stories are about women's power in their family and social life. The first short story is *The Lincoln Train* which has 10 pages in it. The second short story is *The Oversight* which has 8 pages and the last short story is *Presence* which has 18 pages in it. These three short stories point out the relationship between men and women in exercising power in three certain period of times and places. These short stories explain the relationship between men and women today and in the era of capitalism in the United States of America.

In *The Lincoln Train* story, there are three female characters that are depicted. They are Clara Corbett, Clara's mother, and Elizabeth Loudon. In this story, Clara is the main character who is represented as a firm, strong and full of unchristian feelings. Clara's mother, on the other hand, is portrayed as a weak and passive with Alzheimer's issue. In her old age, she gets Alzheimer and forgets several things about her family. Elizabeth is depicted as a nice and helpful woman when Clara first met her. Clara thinks she is a kind of an adventuress. But in the last part of the story, Elizabeth turns to be a cold and cruel woman.

In the second short story entitled *Oversight*, there are also three female characters that are depicted as the key points of the story. They are Clara as a mother, Renata as Clara's daughter, and Clara's mother. Same as *The Lincoln Train* story, in this story the main character is also named Clara. As a mother, Clara is portrayed as a firm, a hard worker, and a caretaker for her family's safety. Clara's daughter, Renata, is a rebellious and unpredictable person who has a passion in painting. Clara's mother is portrayed as a weak, soft and absent-minded person because she gets an Alzheimer.

In the last short story entitled *Presence*, there are three female characters that are pictured. They are Mila, as the main character in this story, Cathy, as Gus' (Mila's husband) new nurse, and Eileen, as Mila's husband therapist. Mila is represented as a hard worker and a patient person. She tends to show her strong image to her family and her friends, but she hides anxiety about her own health. Unlike Mila, Cathy is presented as a young feminine woman who already feels frustrated in doing her first assignment as a nurse in her first three weeks, and Eileen is depicted as a young talkative woman. As a therapist, it is her job to persuade her patient to get involved into the conversation, although the patient may or may not care about her.

These three short stories were chosen as the data source because of their uniqueness in presenting women's power issues in different eras. Besides, these short stories also emphasize the relations of power which are closely related the issue of feminism.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The data are collected in the form of textual evidence from three short stories which are written by Maureen McHugh. Close reading strategy is used as a procedure of collecting data by reading the text several times carefully. By doing close reading strategy, the writer starts to identify the data from the primary source, *The Lincoln Train*, *Oversite*, and *Presence*. The data contain forms of power that the women characters have in the three short stories. They are identified from the main female characters in each story and other women characters that support the main characters, through word choices, phrases, sentences, and contexts. The data are selected in the form of monologue, dialogues, narration and the actions of the characters.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The present study uses qualitative descriptive approach and textual analysis technique with an analytical main framework from Helena Cixous' feminist perspective (1976). This framework is chosen because the present study describes the phenomena of forms of power

demonstrated by the women characters through their roles in Maureen McHugh's short stories. In addition, with this framework, women's power can be seen through the representation of the women in recreating their real identity in literary works.

There are three steps involved in the data analysis. The first step is identifying the textual evidences containing forms of power. The second step is categorizing the forms of power the women characters have using Helena Cixous' feminist perspective (1976). The third step is scrutinizing forms of power with Cixous' concept of women's representation in feminine writings to show the signification of the representation of these forms of power on the women characters. These steps are intended to reveal the information in what forms of power women characters are represented and what do these forms of power signify.

### 3.6 Data Presentation

The data from the three short stories are broken down into forms of power that the female characters have in each story. The forms of power in these short stories are analyzed from Cixous' feminist perspective (1976). The example of data presentation can be seen in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Samples of forms of power from female characters in the three short stories

No	Title of short story/ Character	Forms of power	Textual Evidence	Explanation
1	The Lincoln Train/ Clara Corbett	knowledge	<i>instead of talking about home, we talk about gardening, and I can see the garden at home, lazy with bees. She is a quilter. I don't quilt, but I used to do petit pointe, so we can talk sewing and about how hard it has been to get colors. And we talk about mending and making do. We have all been making do for so long. (Mc.Hugh, 2005, p. 75)</i>	Clara is the main character who has power through her knowledge about things, such as gardening and sewing. With her knowledge, Clara is able to continue the conversation to kill the time and make Elizabeth become her friend.

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2	The Lincoln Train/ Clara	Physical strength	Everyone is afraid there will not be room. <i>I grab the valise and I grab my mother's arm and pull them both.</i> The valise is so heavy that my fingers hurt, and the weight of our water and food is heavy on my arm. (Mc.Hugh, 2005, p. 71)	Clara Corbett, as a young woman who has to bring her mother to a safer place, is able to use her strength and grab their valise and mother into the platform of the railway station
3	The Lincoln Train/ Elizabeth	communication skills	She is silent for a moment. "We only work with our own," she says. <i>There is something in her voice that has not been there before. Sharpness.</i> "What do you mean?" I ask. <i>"There are no slavers in our ranks," she says and her voice is cold.</i> I feel as if I have had a fever; tired, but clear of mind. I have never walked so far and not walked beyond a town. The streets of St. Louis are empty. There are few lights. Far off a woman is singing, and her voice is clear and carries easily in the night. A beautiful voice. "Elizabeth," Michael says, "she is just a girl." <i>"She needs to know," Elizabeth says.</i> (Mc.Hugh, 2005, p. 79)	In this story, Elizabeth shows the changes of her attitude through her voice. She does this action in order to make Clara knows that she is hated and unwelcomed in Elizabeth's group.
4	Presence/ Mila	Management skills	The old house sells for \$217,000. The first half of the treatment is about \$74,000. The second half of the treatment is a little over \$38,000. Physical therapy is expected to cost a little over \$2,100 a month. Home health is \$32,000 through an agency (insurance will no longer pay because this is an experimental treatment). That doesn't include airfare and a thousand incidentals. At least the house is paid off, and the tax man does some finagling and manages to save her \$30,000 for a down payment on a little town house. It has two floors, a postage stamp-sized backyard, and	From this excerpt, it is shown that Mila has to manage her family's finance and also manage to pay Gus' treatment.

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			monthly maintenance fees of \$223 a month. Her mortgage is \$739 a month. (McHugh, 2005, p. 117)	
5	Oversite/Clara	decision making	<i>So, I told Matt I was going to do it, and he agreed. Matt is such a softy. I told him on the phone, and I heard him sigh softly, relieved. Relieved that I had made the decision that we both wanted, but both knew was a little foolish. We agreed it was foolish, but it wasn't expensive, only about a hundred dollars, so why not?</i>	In the story, Clara seems to have power in making a decision for her family instead of her husband. It shows that Clara, as the female character, in the story has the same rights with her husband in this context.

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From Table 3.6.1 above, it can be seen that there are several forms of power that the women characters have in the three short stories. These results support Cixous' women's representation in feminine writings (1976) in seeing that women in literary works are not always seen as the "other" or "lack" characters but they can also become powerful characters.

### 3.7 Brief Biography of Maureen McHugh

Maureen McHugh is an American writer who has wrote many science fiction and fantasy books. She was born on 13<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1959 at Leveland, Ohio. She has written four novels and more than two dozen short stories published. The best known is probably her novel *China Mountain Zhang* and a collection of her short stories, called *Mothers and other monsters*. According to Amanda Jenkins (2013) as a member in psychology's feminist voices, McHugh recalls an early interest in psychology from literature she read about women who were labeled as "crazy". Her interest was piqued in ninth grade when she wrote an essay review of five novels including the book *I never promised you a rose garden*, a fictionalized semi-autobiographical account of the female author's treatment for schizophrenia with acclaimed. Her foray into feminism accelerated after she read *Old man and the sea* and found that she dislikes the novel and it became her private experience. She felt she was unable to express her views with others.

However, while attending a women's studies lecture, the novel was critiqued from a feminist standpoint. This lecture made McHugh feel like a curtain had been opened to reveal other women who had similar experiences and feelings toward the novel.

### 3.8 Synopsis of The Lincoln Train

The first short story is *The Lincoln Train* which has 10 pages in it. As a short story, this work was published in 1995 with science fiction genre. This story tells about a girl named Clara Corbett who is being forced to move with her mother from her home in Mississippi to St. Louis because of the American civil war at that time. As the people of a southern town, Clara is forced to move after the North wins the US civil war. As she and other Southerners board the train that takes them to St. Louis, they begin to realize that perhaps everything will not turn out as the government claims it will. This story is unique because the author tries to see influences of war from a teenage girl's perspective. Clara, in this story becomes powerless because she has to save her own life and her Alzheimer's mother by taking the train. In that time, she has to bring her valise and her weak mother with her own power. She becomes a mother for her self and her mother. When she is going to get into train, she has to let go her valise so that she can grab her mother with her two hands. It is not easy to take other people when you are surrounded by massive strange of people who try hard to get into the train with their family and save their own lives. However, after a few seconds, Clara's power becomes weaker so that she can not hold her mother's arm and separated from her mother.

### 3.9 Synopsis of Oversight

The second short story is *Oversite* which has 8 pages. Different from the first short story, the author wrote this story by looking at events that happen in 20<sup>th</sup> century. This story tells about a mother named Clara who lives with her husband, her daughter and her Alzheimer's mother. As a mother, Clara projects present trends in Clara's paranoia over her daughter and her mother and over-protectiveness so she put the GPS surveillance systems to her teenage daughter and her sick mother to prevent bad things from happening. Although there is a male character in this story,

the main characters are females because the author tries to convince the readers that female can also make a big decision to her family.

The story begins with Clara who suggests her mother to put GPS systems into her body to make her safe because of the latter's Alzheimer. Although initially her mother refused to take the GPS, with Renata's support, her mother finally approves the idea. Renata is the first person who has GPS in her body. Renata got the GPS when she was nine, the time when there was news about disappearing girls. When Clara feels everything will be alright with her two women because they already have the GPS, Clara starts to face the problem from her daughter who is missing with her boyfriend. Clara sees her daughter's action as an adolescent rebellion. From that horrible event, Clara sometimes wakes up at two in the morning and checks her mother and her daughter's situation and location from GPS.. In the last part of the story, the author pictures mother-daughter relationships and a rebellious daughter. The story also depicts how people depend on a technology.

### 3.10 Synopsis of Presence

The last short story is *Presence* which has 18 pages in it. Similar to the two first short stories, this story tells about an *Alzheimer's* sufferer who lives with her wife, Mila. This story starts with the search for the cure of Alzheimer and progresses with the question about how much of the original person will be left once they are cured and what price will their loved ones pay. As a wife, Mila also takes a role as a mother to her husband. Same as the second story, the scope of this story is family. The end of this story tells the readers how Mila starts to feel tired protecting her husband and at the same time she also feels afraid of losing her memories in her old age.

The story is about Gus, Mila's husband, who has Alzheimer and his rebellious behavior in following his wife's treatment plan for his disease. Gus has had Alzheimer for seven years and when he finds out the disease, he says that he will not do the treatment as suggested by his doctor. This treatment will help the patient to be a normal person so that he can take care of himself, but it will erase all of the patient's memories. Mila initially also takes the same decision to say no to the treatment in the beginning of the five years. But, in the last two years, Mila starts



to rethink about her decision when she sees Gus' acts that can danger himself, such as running away from their house in the middle of the night. In the last part of story, Mila finally takes the treatment to cure Gus and then faces the changes in his husband's behavior. Mila also finds out that she, herself, easily forgets many things in the last two years and starts to feel afraid of losing her memories like her husband does.