

## THE SHADOW ARCHETYPE AS STIMULATION FOR DESCRIPTIVE WRITING: A POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC PEDAGOGY

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### ABSTRACT

Students at the UiTM Seri Iskandar Campus were found to have a limited ability to describe and expand creatively on subjects in class, particularly during their in-class evaluations. A first evaluation determined that this was due to a lack of writing stimulus in class. Therefore, we initiated the incorporation of two figures from horror fiction and folklore (Cthulhu and the Pontianak) into a type of creative stimulation aimed at improving pupils' descriptive writing abilities. This was accomplished by applying the Jungian shadow archetype in action-based research, incorporating the psychological stimulus into class-based activity. This had the effect of providing and thus empowering the students to improve their descriptive writing. Additionally, students benefitted from this recommended archetype-related stimulation by expanding their creativity and vocabulary via the process of defining the subject. The primary intention behind the research methodology of incorporating these two figures in class-based activity is to discern the points of divergence in which gender-based horror figures provide more psychological impact. The research objective is to investigate the ways in which the shadow archetype as a stimulus enables students to express themselves better, first through speech and then through descriptive writing. It is shown that students responded well to this Gothic pedagogical method and were able to express themselves better. The findings indicate that students exhibited increased performance in their descriptive ability and displayed understanding of the concept of the shadow archetypes. The study's conclusion is that utilising psychological cues promotes improved writing in Malaysian students.

**Keywords:** descriptive writing, Cthulhu, pontianak, exercise, horror, postcolonial gothic

### INTRODUCTION

Students at the UiTM Seri Iskandar Campus were found to be limited in their skill and inventiveness when it came to describing and expanding topics in class. According to Bushnell and Waugh (2017), one of the most frequent difficulties encountered by many students during their writing exercises is a lack of visual stimulation to inspire them to write. Furthermore, Walsh (2011) believes that another factor contributing to this problem is that instructors were providing fewer instructions or bringing in less external context for students to practise and engage in more meaningful learning. As a result, students were not sufficiently stimulated throughout the writing process. The writing development examined in this paper is specifically descriptive writing. It is a style of writing that entails the use of details to bring a person, place, or object to life (Spencer, 2005).

To address this issue, a descriptive writing tool was required to improve the students' visual stimulation and external context. The catalyst and starting point for the research undertaken is the Postcolonial Gothic method of creative writing taught in the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Postcolonial Literatures in English Masters course SKBK6183

LITERARY STUDIES IN ACTION, designed by Anita Harris Satkunanathan based on Gina Wisker's approach to Postcolonial Gothic pedagogy (2015), which was then innovated and evolved for the needs of UITM Seri Iskandar Campus students by Ahmad Muhyiddin Yusof, an alumnus of the course. For the purposes of UITM Iskandar students working on descriptive writing, it was evident that incorporating Gothic Pedagogies with a Jungian method helped descriptive writing students better develop an understanding of horror, resulting in an expansion of their writing options when presented with a Gothic stimulus. As a result, this paper proposes a unique descriptive writing tool for language students using folk horror cues as stimuli and will investigate the findings using the keywords given by students throughout this Gothic pedagogy-based study.

Two well-known horror characters were chosen as representatives of the shadow archetypes: the Elder God (Cthulhu) from H.P. Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928) and the "Pontianak" from Tunku Halim's "Night of the Pontianak" (2005). The diversity represented by the two options evokes a stimulus for the purposes of discerning reactions to the unknown, as represented by the Other. We consider aspects such as gender-based horror and different types of fear as points of divergence in the writing stimuli provided since the use of two texts that cross-national boundaries have surfaced, therefore adhering to the discipline of Comparative Literature (Hine and McLeod, 2001). The theoretical approach for this research is therefore a combination of a psychoanalytical method and a procedure incorporating principles of Gothic pedagogies. The objective of this research is to ascertain the extent to which Gothic markers may be used to stimulate and activate the imagination of Malaysian students into more effective descriptive writing, utilising a Gothic pedagogic approach. The researchers then investigate the ways in which the shadow archetype as a stimulus enables students to express themselves better, first through speech and then through descriptive writing.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Tabish Khair writes the well-known truth that horror, "as a genre, depends on what lurks beyond thresholds and borders, or what crosses over from them" (2018: 436). He further asserts that because of these cultural locations of borders and thresholds, it becomes even more important that postcolonial writing engages with horror "instead of evading it" (436). Based on these principles, which are also aligned with Gothic pedagogies, this paper explores the impact of horror-related texts on students embarking on descriptive writing. According to FINAS's official website, moviegoers in 2019 demonstrated an interest in horror films. Hassan Abd Muthalib (2013) elucidates this strong interest in the horror genre by stating that Malaysians, particularly Malays, have a strong tendency and interest in using Malay ghosts from Malay lore as their subject of attraction in films, writings, and even oral tales, as these horrific figures have a strong foundation in Malay culture. In their article, A.M. Yusof, Ruzy Suliza Hashim, Noraini Md. Yusof, and A. Harris Satkunanathan (2017) looked for gothic traits in Western haunted home films and Malaysian haunted house films. They argue that Malaysian horror and haunted house films follow a pattern similar to that of conventional Gothic or Western horror and haunted house films, but with a cultural twist. The presentation of Gothic themes, motifs, and characteristics via a Malay lens has created widespread misunderstanding, since it is impossible to determine if Malay horror films or haunted house films are actually unique or are adaptations of their Western counterparts. This point of convergence facilitates the process of examining the two short tales as impetus for the writing exercise.

Xavier Aldana Reyes (2016a:9) writes that horror is that “terrifying moment of sublimity experienced as human consciousness is faced with its insignificant position in a vast cosmos”. The form of horror Reyes speaks of is that of the Burkean sublime. Horror has long been connected to the Gothic through this exemplification of the sublime, and it remains extensively discussed in Gothic analysis and Gothic pedagogies. According to Groom (2012), the Gothic nomenclature dates all the way back to the fifth century, while Caetlin, Maeyer and Bressani remark that the fifteenth century represents the age of the Gothic resurgence in architecture (2016). The theme of Gothic was then transferred to Giorgio Vasari's depiction of ancient European churches (Kleiner 2016), to expose institutional iniquity (Punter and Byron 2004). Gothic has a long history of showcasing supernatural and sublime emotions such as horror, as demonstrated in early Gothic works such as Ann Radcliffe's (1794) *The Mystery of Udolpho* and Matthew Gregory Lewis' (1796) *The Monk*, which examine the use of diabolical and restless spirits to tempt the souls of men and as a metaphor for injustice or warnings (Groom, 2012).

Recent developments include postcolonial scholars from Malaysia venturing into the field of Gothic and horror, such as Andrew Hock Soon-Ng, who has published extensively on Malaysian and Asian Gothic, and Anita Harris Satkunanathan, who has published several articles from 2011 to 2018 on spatio-temporal aspects of postcolonial Gothic literature among the Nigerian diaspora of women writers. Other researchers, such as Jamaluddin Aziz and Azlina Asaari (2017a), argue that horror films are a reflection of the community's culture. While the culture may not be true or representative of the community's general culture, they assert that it serves as a vehicle for conveying the society's basic practices. In another article, Jamaluddin Aziz and Azlina Asaari (2017b) discussed *susuk* (an object inserted into the body) as a form of resistance to patriarchal dominance, and Ahmad Muhyiddin Yusof, Ruzy Suliza Hashim, Noraini Mohd Yusof, and Anita Harris Satkunanathan (2019) explored horror strategies used in Malaysian and American haunted house films. Alicia Izharuddin has authored two essays about the Pontianak's shadow figure (2019). As a result, the merger of Gothic and supernatural elements into the Malaysian horror scene has developed into a viable study, as these themes are connected in presenting concerns of horror and societal issues via the academic area. The findings of each of these studies correlate to the fear of the unknown within a patriarchal society. The fear of the unknown then becomes encapsulated in a perception of evil.

In Gothic texts, evil, or the apprehension of it, becomes a main motivator for fear or disgust, as in fairy tales. As a trait, however, many Gothic scholars remain ambiguous about it, preferring to frame unspeakable acts as "demonic". Helen Stoddart (2009: 117) writes that the portrayal of "evil as a distinctly human potential marks an important the beginning of an important change of direction in the Gothic towards both internalisation and, linked to this, secularisation" so that disturbances formerly attributed to demonic forces are instead connected to human agency. Of moral evil, Andrew Michael Flescher (2013: 23) writes that "the idea of moral evil has always held a special place in philosophical and theological systems of thought because the existence of evil has implications for the dignity with which we act and the limits within which we act." Therefore, Flescher notes that "moral culpability" becomes a matter of personal choice or agency, whether to do terrible things or to refrain from doing it. Evil, Flescher avers, in a Gothic sense, is connected to these binary oppositions, framed between human decisions. In fact, we could argue that this attribute has been in Gothic texts from the days of the Gothic Revival since these moral choices existed very strongly in Radcliffe's oeuvre. However, it is also important to realise that "evil" as a moral judgement has often been

used to depict Otherness or those outside of the margins of acceptability by either patriarchal or imperial-coded societies. Therefore, "evil" as a marker used in Gothic texts is not unproblematic, as Flescher also admits (24). For the purpose of this article, evil refers to the characteristics that influence the actions of characters, whether human or monster.

The first text analysed by this article is "The Call of Cthulhu", a short tale by H.P. Lovecraft that was first published in 1928 in the *Weird Tales Magazine* (Ndalianis, 2012). The short story is about a dying professor who leaves a collection of materials pertaining to the Cult of Cthulhu to his great-nephew. The nephew begins to investigate why his grandfather is so taken with the cult case. He begins piecing together the frightening implications of his grandfather's research from bits, and eventually embarks on his own mission to investigate the Cthulhu cult. As he pulls together the situation's frightening and disturbing reality, his own sanity begins to disintegrate. It is the sole narrative to include the terrifying Elder God Cthulhu. According to Gaiman, Lansdale, Kiernan, and Bear (2014), Cthulu is one of the old gods; it has a monstrous body, demonic bat-like wings, and an octopus-like head. Furthermore, Cthulhu has the ability to instil psychological terror in his victims (Reyes, 2016b). The famous writings of Lovecraft, particularly Cthulhu, instil themes of insanity, religious frenzy, and cosmic terror (Callaghan 2013). Tyson (2012) remarks on the same topic, stating that Lovecraft's creation, including the Cthulu monster, is a metaphor for racial prejudice. Tyson (2010) explains that Lovecraft hated and detested the coloured immigrants who came to his hometown of Rhode Island in the 1920s, and hence created these monsters to reflect his dread and loathing of these immigrants. In the past decade, there has been an influx of young authors and content producers of colour and diverse backgrounds, writing back to the mythos created by HP Lovecraft, a mythos that continues to excite the popular imagination despite the fact that he was an unrepentant racist and xenophobe. Authors such as Victor LaValle and Cassandra Khaw have all re-envisioned the Cthulhu mythos in their fiction, writing back to Lovecraft's fear of the other by repositioning his mythos in more culturally diverse settings. In popular culture, Jordan Peele produced the HBO series *Lovecraft Country* (2020). Meredith Blake (2020) writes that the television series brought "renewed attention" to Lovecraft's legacy, whose "dread-soaked writing is animated by fear of the Other" (par. 2). Horror, then, can be used both to validate one's own prejudices and to rebut those prejudices, as authors who have written back to his fraught legacy have achieved by centering the racial Other in their own narratives. David Peak (2020: 178) writes that "one half of what allows Lovecraft's fiction, specifically his Mythos, to persist in contemporary pop culture is his use of an artificial pantheon and myth background to focus on themes of scientific notion and present-day concerns". As a result, Lovecraft helped to create the subgenre known as "cosmic horror," which Blake (2020: 8) defines as "stories filled with dread and terror at the knowledge that humans are not the most important things in the universe." Clearly, this cosmos and the realisation that one is not at the centre of it are a direct correlation of the experience of white supremacy in response to the world's various cultures and religions. Hence, it was interesting to introduce the "Call of Cthulhu" to Malaysian students using English as a second language to see how they would resituate those tropes of horror.

The second text utilised is Tunku Halim's short fiction "Night of the Pontianak". This is the account of Azman, Fauziah, and Julian going pontianak hunting on a government property that doubled as a home following lunch at a stall. While they wander about the home looking for the Pontianak, they come across the security guard, who then orders them to leave, which they refuse to obey. As time passes and Azman concludes that Fauziah's narrative about seeing a Pontianak a long time ago is accurate, Fauziah begins to exhibit her actual

characteristics, which are similarly uncomfortable and spooky. When her two friends realise what is happening, she reveals herself as a Pontianak with her screaming voice and ghostly visage. Julian is apprehended by "Fauziah," while Azman rushes into their car and drives away, eventually colliding with a construction site's wall. Finally, the Pontianak kills Azman, exactly as she has done to Julian. Numerous concerns have been expressed regarding the research of the Malay ghosts, particularly the Pontianak. The Pontianak, according to Hock Soon-Ng (2008), is the offspring of Langsuyar or Langsuir; it flies from tree to tree, emits a terrifying screech, has long black hair, a pale face, sucking blood from its victims, and wears a white robe. According to others, the Pontianak is a demon that has died during delivery and feeds on the living's blood (Danny Lim, 2008). According to Hock Soon-Ng and Picart (2009), the image of the Pontianak has been tainted by a plethora of cinematic representations to the point that the line between the real Pontianak and the Pontianak represented in film has been blurred. According to Hock Soon-Ng and Picart (2009), the study of the Pontianak is frequently connected with issues of gender and sexuality.

The quick survey of the literature demonstrates the specifics of fear that researchers have discovered in a variety of horror fiction and cinematic works. Producers' use of imagination as scare tactics can undoubtedly elicit feelings in students that they would not normally associate with their ability to write. The use of two texts from the Western world and another from something that is familiar to them creates a difference in the manner in which terror is imagined and processed by the characters in the stories. As a result, it is believed that the gothic genre is the ideal subject matter to employ in order to startle students out of their comfort zones while also forcing them to think critically about descriptive terms that may be used to enhance their descriptive writing.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Postcolonial Gothic Pedagogies**

The approach in which the students of UITM Seri Iskandar campus were stimulated into producing effective descriptive writing has its pedagogical basis in postcolonial Gothic pedagogies. Anna Powell and Andrew Smith (2006) write that "there is an urgent need for a pedagogic intervention that reflects, and reflects upon, our theory and practice as teachers of Gothic in Higher Education" (1). Powell and Smith (2006:2) observe that "Gothic stimulates ambivalent kinds of pleasure as desire and dread work on us in tandem". This provides pedagogic opportunities for students to explore their motivations and how they relate to the world around them. Powell and Smith further note that this opens up avenues for students to engage in "close analysis of specific textual operations, intellectual engagement in, and debate of, major critical theories and the study of historical and cultural contexts" (2006: 2). Gina Wisker (2007: 403) expands upon this thought when she writes that the teaching of the "postcolonial Gothic provides us and our students with a diversity of difficulties and delights of accessibility, expression, and interpretation." She asserts that educators and their students "need to learn to problematize seemingly fixed, comfortable versions of everyday life, authorised histories, and normalised readings of relationships of power and values," and this is doubly important when the different reading methods made available by both the postcolonial and Gothic forms of inquiry are merged. This allows the student to envisage a "kind of insight, imaginative freedom, sense of alternatives, and diversity of underpinning values of representation and interpretation" (2007:404). This insight by Wisker was deployed in the

teaching of Anita Harris Satkunanathan's convening of SKBS6183 Literary Studies in Action from 2015-2021 and is ongoing. The proliferation of a Postcolonial Gothic pedagogy from a Malaysian context was then transposed upon the students of UITM Seri Iskandar Campus by Ahmad Muhyiddin Yusof in order to discern the ways in which they would react to being confronted with depictions of the shadow archetype which in both Eastern and Western civilisations is coded as evil. By breaking down further the postcolonial Gothic pedagogical potential of teaching "The Call of Cthulhu" to Malaysian students, the UITM project succeeded in creating a stimulus for descriptive writing at the college level.

### **The Shadow Archetype**

According to Jungian archetypal theory, archetypes were representations of individuals, behaviours, and personalities. To be specific, archetypes are components of the collective unconscious that incorporate dreams, characteristic traits, and themes taken from myths and fairytales (Dyk, 2016). Jung's premise regarding the relationship between myth, fairy tales and archetypes is that their appearance and representations have been embedded at the back of a person's unconscious mind, based on the experience that they have encountered and in a constant recurring state (Casement, 2001).

There are several archetypes that McCauley (2005) proposed as the final archetypes, which are the shadow, the animal, the wise old man, the anima, the animus, the mother, and the child. Each of these archetypes has its own functions and traits, which play their own roles in a person's journey through life. When it comes to the negative aspects of an archetype, it is referred to as the Shadow. The Jungian Shadow archetype is associated with the unconscious mind. The Shadow symbolises the suppressed aspects of one's experience or character that are not allowed to be discovered by the conscious mind (Jung, 2014). It stays deep in our mind and it keeps memories and attitudes from our existence as humans. These archetypes often impact our beliefs, expectations, and behaviour (Merit, 2012). The Shadow is the darker and more negative aspect of the human self, as it is able to possess and gain control of one's sanity, behavior, and imagery manifestation. "The shadow refers to the dark, potentially evil side of human nature, which exerts a powerful influence on people's life." (Siang-Yang Tang, 2011:86). The shadow may be manifested through dreams and is often considered as nightmares for its dark connotation. In his book, Mattoon (1986) elaborates that shadows often appear as sinister or threatening figures of the same sex as the dreamer, and often share the same nationality, color, or race. Thus, it may also symbolise fear and madness. The aspects of madness and fear are giving birth to the manifestation of the shadow archetypes.

There are no characteristics that may be regarded as unique to this archetype. This is because the shadow archetype is associated with ghosts and other horror-related entities. The features of a shadow archetype cannot be reduced to precise criteria, as the physical aspects and characteristics of a shadow are defined by a person's cultural background as Jung (1969: v) emphasised that "we have availed ourselves of cultural and everyday conceptions which are the product of human consciousness and its reflections, in order to form a picture of the psychic modes of manifestation of the factor 'spirit'."

Suggested by Townshend (2014:81), the archetypal shadow is the villain, the evil character, or perhaps the evil doer in every episode of literary tales, fairy tales, and even in many blockbuster films. Taking an example from Disney's animated Hercules in 1997, Hades is the villain in the film, as he struggles to destroy Zeus's reign by kidnapping Hercules and releasing the prisoned titans. In relation to this, the shadow is always depicted as very dark in

both appearance and the mental state, thereby causing madness, constantly seeking to destroy and conquer. This shadow archetype is the counter to the archetypal “Hero”. Commented by Faber and Meyer (2009: 308), “The archetype destroyer. The kind of evildoer that makes villains like boys scouts. Villains are merely troublesome. A destroyer represents destruction for destruction’s sake. “That is, its whole existence is devoted to pursuing and spreading devastation. According to Faber and Meyer (2009), the shadow is likewise characterised by violent, haunting, and primal characteristics, serving as a mirror for humanity's darkest qualities. This may be seen in the Elder Gods created by Lovecraft, served as a mirror to humanity’s darkest fears of madness and of the other, and of the utter obliteration of being.

In connection to this, Chen Lianshan (2011:19) offered information about the shadow's characteristics according to Chinese legend. Chen further avers that according to Chinese legend, one of the most renowned shadow archetypal figures is Houtu, he who controls and defends the capital of spirits or the underworld. He surmises that the typical characteristics of the shadow archetype, in this case Houtu, are that it has the body of an ox and the head of a hideous tiger, as well as highly pointed horns and fiery eyes. In summary, the shadow archetype has the following traits: dark, evil, love to destroy, having a vulgar appearance, conqueror of the dead, violent, causes madness, haunting, primitive, opposite of the hero archetype, and the love to spread destruction. Like the depictions of ghosts and demons in Occidental literature, the Chinese cognates of the devil, demons, or ghosts are the images opposite of what is perceived to be good. This connects to the sense of binaries related to the depiction of evil in Occidental texts, as mentioned by Flescher (2013). It is via the application of these characteristics that we may better grasp the notion of the shadow archetype while also matching it to other figures in the corpus, in this instance, the Lovecraftian figure of Cthulhu and the Malaysian folk horror figure of the Pontianak.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study, which is grounded in postcolonial Gothic pedagogy, consists of providing the students with the texts to stimulate imagination and discourse. The aim is to see how students would extract the characteristics of shadow archetypes contained in the figure of Cthulhu and the Pontianak before constructing the framework for the examination of the archetypal stimulus. As indicated in the conceptual framework, this section compiles a list of shadow archetypal characteristics from Chan Lianshan (2011), in which he characterises the shadow as the ruler of the dead, destructive, and vulgar in appearance. The shadow, according to Faber and Mayer (2008), is aggressive, demonic, haunting, destructive, and primal. Stevens (2011) notes on the same page that the shadow looks dark and frightening.

### **Action Research and Sampling**

This investigation involved 30 students enrolled in the pre-diploma course ELC030. This programme was scheduled for 9 hours per week, which equates to four sessions per week, and students were required to attend for a total of 14 weeks to complete the course. Students must participate in this practise for a week as part of this research. The investigation was done during week three for four days, one day prior to and three days following their exposure to the items.

On day one of week three, students were taught the research requirements and had to prepare an expository essay and a quick verbal presentation on any topic. This was done to assess the students' proficiency. On day 2, students were introduced to the notion of shadow

archetypes and the accompanying materials, which included "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Night of the Pontianak." Additionally, students were exposed to resources such as films, essays, and visuals relating to the Cthulhu and Pontianak concepts. The majority of the materials exhibited to the pupils were in English, with just a small portion in Malay, since some of the Pontianak-related information was provided in that language. Additionally, students were instructed to concentrate on the attributes and characteristics of the specified characters utilising the shadow archetype idea. On day 3, students were asked to give a spoken presentation in English on any Cthulhu or Pontianak-related topic.

### **FINDINGS FROM SAMPLING: KEYWORDS**

To facilitate a more methodical approach, the keywords provided by the students were then organised and classified into three categories: 1) Evil, 2) Destruction, and 3) Madness, as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Archetypal characteristics

<b>Evil</b>	<b>Destruction</b>	<b>Madness</b>
Dark	Love to destroy	Vulgar Appearance
Evil or sinister	Primitive	Haunting
Opposite of the Hero Archetype	Violent	Causes Madness
Conqueror of the Dead Threatening	Spread destruction	

It was satisfying to see students identify these components when they read the texts during the analysis process. These categories will be used later in their in-class writing assignment as a result of their reading expanding their vocabulary and moving their emotions, as expanded and explained in the discussion section – where it is evidenced that these keywords have contributed to their better understanding of the stimulus and what is required of them.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **“The Call Of Cthulu”**

In this short story, the obvious traits that may be identified are closely related to the theme of madness, as the criteria found in this creature trigger the madness in men. Words that are associated with the theme of madness are indescribable, incomprehensible, and vulgar. The existence of this creature is extremely bizarre and mysterious. Words have failed to describe it, and it may lead to madness seen in this description: “The Thing cannot be described—there is no language for such abysses of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order” (22). Cthulhu is very vulgar, to the point where its appearance has scarred the character’s mental state and ended up in an asylum. "The tips of the wings touched the back edge of the block, the seat occupied the center, whilst the



long, curved claws of the doubled-up, crouching hind legs gripped the front edge and extended a quarter of the way toward the bottom of the pedestal," (8) and "That was all. After that, Johansen only brooded over the idol in the cabin and attended to a few matters of food for himself and the laughing maniac by his side. He did not try to navigate after the first bold flight, for the reaction had taken something out of his soul" (24). Apart from that, Lovecraft's vision of the return of the Elder Gods includes several xenophobic passages related to characters from different parts of the world, such as the description of the followers of the Elder God

*[T]he prisoners all proved to be men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type. Most were seamen, and a sprinkling of negroes and mulattoes, largely West Indians or Brava Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands, gave a colouring of voodooism to the heterogeneous cult. But before many questions were asked, it became manifest that something far deeper and older than negro fetichism was involved. Degraded and ignorant as they were, the creatures held with surprising consistency to the central idea of their loathsome faith.*

These terms make clear the ways in which the religion of the Elder Gods became conflated in Lovecraft's vision with his own fear of the various races and religion outside of his own, particularly in his terror of more nature-based and indigenous types of cultures. It was therefore important to frame any discussion of Lovecraft's work in relation to current discourse on the problematic elements of said work.

Lucas Kwong (2019:382) writes that Lovecraftian tales include "material configurations of human bodies, occult energies, and cosmic beings, which coalesce into a narrative tapestry known as the Cthulhu Mythos". Intriguingly, Kwong asserts that in "The Call of Cthulhu", Lovecraft's racial paradigms are self-undermining primarily because "it frustrates an attempted exaltation of racialized ontology" and therefore defies the intention of the author "to install race as the foundation of being" (382). This therefore, Kwong asserts, opens the door towards "attention from new materialist scholars who, through their study of matter's dynamic and relational capacities, seek the emancipation of bodies, places, and the planet itself" (382). But beyond the new materialist considerations of Kwong are the pedagogical implications of utilising the "Call of Cthulhu" to open up discussions in class about race, xenophobia and how those tropes related to the fear of the Other can be subverted towards a better understanding of difference. An important part of this discussion began in SKBS6183 Literary Studies in Action, which was then transposed into the descriptive writing action research project carried out upon UiTM students in the Seri Iskandar campus.

Students were assigned to study the text to see what they would discern from Lovecraft's vision. Below are the collected words from students that have been identified during this analysis of this tale:

Table 2: Description for Cthulhu

<b>Evil</b>	<b>Destruction</b>	<b>Madness</b>
Dark	Destructive inclinations	Vulgar Appearance
Evil	Primitive	Haunting
Opposite of the Hero Archetype	Violent	Causes Madness
Conqueror of the Dead	Destructive Actions	Incomprehensible

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Threatening	Aggressive	Indescribable
Deceitful	Murderous	
Odd		

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Based on the analysis, the collective words are rich in meaning and experience, as these words collected describe the horrific events that cause an individual, in this case, the UiTM students, to remember and understand this trope and the resulting emotions better. Furthermore, students will be able to understand how to effectively use the words according to their situation. As mentioned, each word represents a set of events or conventions, thus increasing the student's vocabulary, understanding, and descriptive ability. According to Need et al. (1990), when students write, they are continuously describing people, places, objects, or events as they are creating word images of the ideas that they are trying to convey. It is further stated that there are two important elements to writing an effective description. Firstly, the writer needs to have explicit and specific traits that may help them to create and develop mental images in their mind. Following that, the writer must detail each logical sequence in order. Jacob et al. (1981) said that sensory specifics of the qualities we perceive when reading are based on our four senses of hearing, sight, thinking, and scent. According to the short story, thought sense plays a significant role, as the reader of "The Call of Cthulu" uses imagery to visualise the monster's darkness, followed by its characteristics, which aids them in writing evocatively when they must mention negativity in their writing, such as the words "dark", "evil," "violent," and "aggressive." By describing these traits in depth, the writing of the pupils will be enhanced with expressive details.

### **“Night of The Pontianak”**

The students were instructed to study "The Night of the Pontianak". They highlighted the characteristics of the Pontianak that correspond to or are closely related to the topics of "Evil," "Destruction," and finally "Madness." Under the subject of evil, two major characteristics were noted: deception and oddity. Fauziah, who is also the Pontianak, disguises herself as a normal lady to deceive her male companions. She first attracts her victims before transforming into a Pontianak and devouring them. This is seen in the following excerpts: "Fauziah, dressed in jeans and a blouse, led the way to the water tank" (31) and "I couldn't get the idea out of my head that she had turned rotten" (36). These paragraphs detail her transition from a regular lady to a Pontianak, implying deception. Clearly, the term "deceit" refers to the act of misleading another person by distorting the facts. In the real world, students should utilise the term, describe it, and extend it into sentences to write about a subject linked to the word "deception." Like the concept of strangeness, it is demonstrated in the narrative, "Something was wrong with her. The Fauziah I'd known never acted in such an odd manner. Or Spoke so strangely" (34). Both concepts of deception and strangeness are easily understood by students since they are conveyed in a narrative format, which teaches them how to visualise the term and how it is utilised in a horror setting. With this notion, it is intended that students would be able to use comparable concepts to assist them in thoroughly performing descriptive writing.

The analysis included singling out the traits of the Pontianak that have any close association to the theme "Evil" followed by that of Destruction and of Madness, as found from the gathered data listed in the table above. As mentioned above, students managed to identify

two primary traits, which are deceit and oddness, which may be connected to the perception of evil. In the short story, Fauziah, who is also known as Pontianak, disguises herself as a normal woman to trick her male friends. She first lures her victims and then turns herself into a Pontianak and devours them. Fauziah, “dressed in jeans and a blouse, led the way to the water tank” (31) and “I couldn’t get the idea out of my head that she had turned rotten” depicts one such instance in the text (36). These excerpts describe her transformation from a normal woman into a Pontianak in which suggesting the idea of deceit. Clearly, the keyword "deceit" here means the practice of deceiving someone by manipulating the truth, and this may be connected to the attribute of how evil is perceived from a human perspective. In an everyday context, students are supposed to use the word, describe, and expand it into sentences for them to write about the subject matter related to the word deceit. The notion of oddness may also be seen when the narrator states that, “The Fauziah I’d known never acted in such an odd manner. Or spoke so strangely” (34). The attribute of deceit and oddness can be comprehended easily by the students since it is written in a story form which allows them context to develop their skills of visualisation to better understand these words. This helps them to know the meaning of the word and how it is used in a horror context. With this concept, it is hoped that students will be able to apply similar concepts to help them perform descriptive writing comprehensively. It also allowed them to qualify and quantify the notion of evil when connected to human attributes and actions.

Although evil is a loaded and subjective word, when it relates to the Gothic, it has a certain causal relation to events taking place. Flescher (2013: 27) reflects that apart from relativistic and binary notions of evil, one could also note that “evil could be conceived as a dark, unwelcome, substantive intrusion within the self.” This element as adroitly pointed out by Flescher can be connected to the destructive actions of Fauziah in the text. The element of destruction is an important component of this short story. The words extracted by students in relation to this element are “aggressive” and “murderous”. Upon Fauziah’s transformation, she is seen as very destructive and violent “Neither Julian nor I had seen her since she became a remise three months ago at the stockbrokers where her father knew the MD, and I was surprised that the once gentle girl had become loud and aggressive.” (26) and “The head lunged for my throat. Perhaps for a long deep kiss. My body crumpled to the grass ... where the feasting begins” (44). It is noted that the trait of aggression carried by the girl eventually leads to a massive destruction which involves the act of murder. Through the description of her behaviour in the story, readers will already have an idea of the traits being described, which makes the story much more interesting and gives the reader an endless sense of imagination. This will eventually help students to remember the function of the word that makes the process of describing much easier and effective.

In relation to the theme of madness, the operative word here is "haunting", as Pontianak’s transformation haunts the minds of both the reader and the victims in the story, thereby pushing them to the verge of madness:

*The Pontianak, she turned and stared at me. Her eyes huge. Her mouth open. Her feet not touching the ground... Her hair, it was so long, it danced in the wind. Her white dress twirled around her body. (37)*

The words used show the description projects the appearance that gives the reader the information which could be retained in the readers’ memory. An evocative description that evokes the sense of disgust and the abject, such as, "... we could see how her eyes bulged. How

her eyebrows, like worms, squirmed to her ears "(37) incites reactions from students who are able to describe their own identifications. Therefore, this information may be recalled and somehow help students to describe similar concepts in descriptive writing regardless of the different contexts given. In summary, below are the collective words that can be obtained from this analysis.

Destruction is also a motif in this short narrative. The language is abrasive and deadly. Fauziah is viewed as extremely destructive and aggressive following her metamorphosis. "Neither Julian nor I had seen her since she became a remise three months ago at the stockbrokers where her father knew the MD, and I was surprised that the once gentle girl had become loud and aggressive," (26) and "The head lunged for my throat. Perhaps for a long deep kiss. My body crumpled to the grass...where the feasting begins" (44).

It is mentioned that the girl's violent nature finally results in tremendous damage involving the act of murder. Readers will already have an idea of the qualities portrayed in the narrative based on her behaviour, which makes the story much more intriguing and leaves the reader with an infinite sense of imagination. This eventually aids learners in recalling the term's function, simplifying and expediting the process of describing.

In terms of the subject of madness, the narrative is disturbing, as the Pontianak's change haunts both the reader and the story's victims, bringing them to the brink of insanity. "The Pontianak, she turned and stared at me. Her eyes huge. Her mouth open. Her feet not touching the ground... Her hair, it was so long, it danced in the wind. Her white dress twirled around her body," (37) and "... we could see how her eyes bulged. How her eyebrows like worms squirmed to her ears" (37). With the words used in the thorough explanation of the narrative, it is easy to see how it projects an image that provides the reader with eternal knowledge that they may remember in their mind. This knowledge may be retained and utilised to assist students in describing similar concepts in descriptive writing regardless of the context provided. The following is a summary of the collective terms that may be derived from this investigation:

Table 3: Description for Pontianak

<b>Evil</b>	<b>Destruction</b>	<b>Madness</b>
Dark	Destructive	Vulgar Appearance
Evil	Inclinations	Haunting
Opposite of the Hero Archetype	Primitive	Causes Madness
Conqueror of the Dead	Violent	
Threatening	Destructive	
Deceitful	Actions	
Odd	Aggressive	
	Murderous	

Students demonstrated that they are more motivated and confident in delivering their horror experiences through observation. Additionally, the students demonstrated an increased ability to clearly describe the attributes and characteristics of their scary character. On day 4, students were assigned to compose an expository essay, with the option of writing either Cthulhu or the Pontianak. Students' writings demonstrate that they have improved their descriptive abilities and a better knowledge of the shadow archetype notion. Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarise the findings.

## **Points of Convergence**

Upon analysing the selected subjects, which are the Pontianak and Cthulhu, we have noticed that although the subjects become the figure or the beacon of horror, they differ in terms of the methods and projection of horror. Methods here refer to the way these horrific figures deliver their horror to the readers, while projection here refers to the gender of these subjects. The basis for this is both cultural and psychological. Both Pontianak and Cthulhu represent different forms of fear of each other. While the Pontianak figure represents a fear of the monstrous feminine, the figure of Cthulhu is the embodiment of Lovecraft's deep fear of racial difference. Therefore, the markers of terror and of psychological undoing differ and stimulate different kinds of responses.

Beginning with the Pontianak, based on the analysis, it is shown that she uses a deceitful manner in luring its victims and finally murders them by sucking their blood and brutally devouring them. On the one hand, although Pontianak originally promotes the idea of supernatural horror, here in this case, Tunku Halim uses a form of body horror as a method of horrifying the reader. Gerrard, Holland, and Shailshe (2019) define this notion as featuring gory graphic depiction or the destruction and mutilation of the body. Although examples of body horror are at their finest presented in the form of cinematic view, as dictated by Hopcke (2002) in his notion of the Castration complex, fear of losing one's limbs or eyesight has been discussed by Jung in exploring the story of The Sandman. The fear and gore of watching one's limb being torn down is horrifying, and this is added to the fact that a horrific figure such as the Pontianak is devouring its victim in a gory manner.

Cthulhu, on the other hand, represents a different form of horror, which is deeply psychological horror rooted in the xenophobic tendencies of its author. In the story "The Call of Cthulu," there is no sign that the monster horrifically devours the characters, as the characters in the story become psychologically deranged and traumatised after the expedition. Suggested by Strinati (2000), the notion of psychological horror usually lingers around the idea of atmosphere and suspense. Lovecraft used this opportunity to create a monster that may appear in the characters' minds in a state of fear, either because the characters were too exhausted from their lost journey to the point where they began to imagine their horrifying endings, or perhaps they did meet the monster on an unknown island. Either way, it leaves both the readers and the characters in a state of psychological imbalance, particularly the readers and writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, working to glean pedagogical value in a problematic, yet intriguing text.

## **CONCLUSION**

To summarise, this essay has stated, proven, and reaffirmed its research objective of stimulating the human emotions of horror in order to achieve more impactful descriptive writing. Students succeeded in overcoming writer's block through the action research plan of introducing this psychological stimulus to engage their attention and to provoke discussion, as a technique towards allowing them to better express themselves in descriptive writing. The condition of "being stuck" is a significant impediment to students' writing since it leads them to be anxious when they have to write. As a result, by employing the appropriate approach, this situation may be addressed. In other words, students will gain confidence in their writing abilities if they overcome their fear of writing by utilising horror as a tool or approach. Additionally, by employing this method, students will be able to develop additional ideas during the writing process and will be driven to produce a quality piece of writing. While this

is only a preliminary experiment, it is certain that this method will have a significant influence on UiTM students' enthusiasm for writing. Thus, educators have the opportunity to include this strategy into their teaching methods, which would alleviate their frustration with teaching descriptive writing in a more participatory manner.

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