

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, some sub chapters will be explained. They are background of this study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and the scope and limitation of the study. Those are important to explain because they describe this study generally.

1.1 Background of the Study

Poetry has long been regarded as one of the most powerful literary forms for expressing human emotions such as memory, grief, and loss (Abrams, 2005). Through the lens of psychoanalysis, poetry can be seen as a space where unconscious conflict and psychological struggles are revealed. As emphasized by Dong (2024) the application of a psychoanalytic approach allows readers to uncover psychoanalytic hidden desires, traumas, and inner tensions reflected in the poetic text.

This perspective highlights how literature not only reflect external reality but also reveals the psychological complexity of human experience (Barry, 2009). In this context, Victoria Chang's work, *Obit* (2020), is a significant work to analyze, as it deeply explores the sadness and psychological impact of losing a loved one.

In this context, Victoria Chang's work entitled *Obit* (2020) is an important work to analyze because it deeply explores the emotional and psychological impact of losing a loved one. This collection of poems takes the form of obituary poems written after the death of Chang's parents, both of whom suffered strokes. Poems such as *Obit (Memory)*, *The Blue Dress*, and *My Mother's Teeth* depict grief through fragmented memories and symbolic representations of loss, making them suitable primary data for psychoanalytic interpretation.

This topic was chosen because psychoanalytic studies of contemporary elegiac poetry especially those related to memory, grief, and loss are still limited in academic discourse. Although *Obit* has received widespread appreciation from literary readers for its emotional depth and innovative form, academic analysis of

this work is still rare. Most public discussions surrounding *Obit* appear on general literary platforms and online essays, rather than in formal academic analysis. Therefore, this study plays an important role in exploring how psychoanalytic concepts can illuminate the psychological dimensions embedded in Chang's poetic language.

Although several Indonesian studies have examined grief and psychoanalytic perspectives in literature, none have specifically applied Freud's concepts of memory, repression, mourning, and melancholia to Victoria Chang's work, *Obit*. Ashaffi (2024) analyzes Chang's poetry but focuses on figurative language rather than psychological processes. Setyobudi (2024) uses Freud's theory but applies it to novels, so the poetic structure is not explored. On the other hand, Adikara (2024) uses psychoanalysis to analyze internal conflicts in films, not sadness in poetry. These differences indicate that psychoanalytic elements such as memory, fragmented memories, and emotional fractures in *Obit* have not been widely explored. Therefore, this study fills this gap by offering a focused analysis of how Freud's concepts illuminate the representation of memory, sadness, and loss in three selected poems from Victoria Chang's *Obit*.the need for a psychoanalytic reading focused on selected poems from *Obit*.

These three poems were selected because they represent different psychoanalytic dimensions of grief. *Obit (Memory)* depicts repression and fragmented memory, *The Blue Dress* explores symbolic substitution and emotional bonds, while *My Mother Teeth* bodily loss and psychological rupture. These poems provide clear symbolic and psychological material that aligns with the psychoanalytic concepts discussed in this study.

By transforming the obituary into an elegy, Chang depicts grief not only as emotional suffering, but as a process that transforms memory and reshapes the inner emotional world. This approach reflects the psychoanalytic idea that mourning restructures the subjects psychological reality through symbolic expression. The fragmented form of the poem reflects the fragmented emotional state often experienced during mourning.

Psychoanalytic studies show that literary expressions of grief often involve ego defense mechanisms such as denial and displacement, which help individuals cope with overwhelming loss (Boogar, 2015). These mechanisms can be seen in Chang's poems through the appearance of recurring images, disrupted narrative flow, and symbolic substitution. These patterns show that sadness emerges through conscious expression and unconscious repression.

Freud (1917) concepts of mourning and melancholia is reflected in *Obit (Memory)*, particularly in the depiction of memory as something that "dies" with the mother. According to Giuseppe (2021), traumatic memories often become a battleground between the conscious and unconscious mind, leading to defense strategies such as repression or sublimation. On the other hand, in *The Blue Dress*, Chang uses objects left behind by the deceased to maintain emotional bonds, in line with Harris' (2024) claim that symbolic objects can mediate lasting bonds in elegiac poetry. Lacan's (2006) idea of the object petit a appears in *My Mother Teeth*, where the image of the body becomes a metaphor for prolonged emotional absence.

Although these poems have strong psychoanalytic potential, existing studies have not combined the frameworks of Freud and Lacan to analyze memory, grief, and loss in Chang's *Obit*. Most research focuses on general emotional themes or literary structure, rather than on unconscious processes underlying the grieving process. This gap indicates the need for focused psychoanalytic investigation of selected poems by Victoria Chang's.

Using three poems, *Obit (Memory)*, *The Blue Dress*, and *My Mother Teeth*, as data sources, this study directs its analysis toward identifying how language, symbols, and imagery represent sadness and loss. These poems provide textual evidence of unconscious conflict, symbolic substitution, and emotional fragmentation, which are essential aspects of psychoanalytic interpretation. Through these elements, the poem highlights the psychological depth of the grief experienced by the narrator.

Additionally the psychoanalytic interpretation of Chang's poem *Obit* is relevant in understanding contemporary expressions of grief, especially in periods marked by widespread emotional turmoil such as the post-pandemic era. Many

literary works written during or after the pandemic explore collective loss, uncertainty, and emotional distress. By analyzing these poems through psychoanalysis, this study contributes to understanding how contemporary literature becomes a therapeutic space for processing grief and reconstructing emotional meaning.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How is memory portrayed in the selected poems of Victoria Chang's *Obit* ?
2. How does the portrayal of memory reflect grief and loss in the selected poems of Victoria Chang's *Obit* ?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze how memory is portrayed in the selected poems of Victoria Chang's *Obit*.
2. To examine how the portrayal of memory reflects grief and loss in the selected poems of Victoria Chang's *Obit*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be useful both theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically

This study contributes to psychoanalytic literary criticism by applying Freud's psychoanalytic perspective to analyze the representation of memory, grief, and loss in contemporary elegiac poetry. The findings are expected to enrich studies on the psychological dimensions of literary works and provide a reference for future researchers in literary criticism.

2. Practically

- a. The Reader

To enhance readers understanding of how poetry conveys sadness, memories, and psychological conflicts through symbolic language and imagery.

b. Lecturer

As supplementary material for courses involving literary theory, psychoanalytic criticism, and poetry analysis.

c. Student

To guide students interested in conducting research using psychoanalytic or psychological approaches in literary studies.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study analyzes three selected poems from Victoria Chang's poetry collection, *Obit*, *Obit (Memory)*, *The Blue Dress*, and *My Mother's Teeth*. The analysis focuses on the portrayal of memory, grief, and loss in the selected poems using Freud's psychoanalytic perspective. This study employs close reading to examine how language, imagery, and symbolism construct psychological experiences within the selected poems.

This study is limited to textual interpretation and does not involve biographical research, historical background, or analysis of the entire *Obit* collection. These findings apply only to the selected poems and the psychoanalytic framework used. These limitations maintain a clear and focused analysis while ensuring that the discussion remains consistent with the research objectives..