

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Poetry, as described by Baldick (in Sulaiman, 2017, p. 34–35), is a language that is sung, chanted, spoken, or written according to a pattern of recurrence that highlights the connections between words based on both sense and sound. This pattern is nearly always a rhythm or meter, and it may be enhanced by rhyme, alliteration, or both. It can be said that poetry is a set of words that in its application uses unusual, unordinary, and unstructured language, but has a very strong depth of meaning. Even Perrine (1973, p. 3) said that poetry is as universal as language and almost as ancient.

In poetry, it is not uncommon for poets to want to convey a message in the form of desperation. A sense of desperation is present in humans due to the existence of unattainable human desires or wills. In addition, despair will infect a person when the individual has struggled to achieve what is aspired to but ends in repeated failure. One of the Danish philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard, in his work entitled *The Sickness Unto Death* (1980) said that the presence of despair is due to a situation of disconnection from oneself with the 'Eternal'. It is undeniable that this often happens to someone who has worldly wealth which is only temporal. Thus, desperation can be said to be a spiritual disease in humans.

Victoria Chang is a contemporary poet whose works often explore themes such as loneliness, death, contemplation, and desperation. Her poems capture the essence of the emotional turmoil that accompanies them. Chang's exploration of the aforementioned themes is not just a surface depiction, but a deep and introspective analysis of what it means to be human in a rapidly changing world. Through her style of language and the allusions she uses in creating a poem, Chang conveys complexity in a way that resonates with

readers on a deep level. Her work gives voice to those who feel voiceless, making her poetry an essential study for understanding the human condition in contemporary society. Chang's poetry reflects the intricacies of the modern existential crisis, often exploring themes of identity and belonging through a variety of lenses, one of which is disconnection. This deep engagement with a sense of desperation highlights the relevance of her work in contemporary literary discourse.

This *project paper* will examine one of Victoria Chang's themes: desperation. The theme of desperation in Chang's poetry can be attributed to a variety of influences, such as personal experience and cultural background. As an Asian-American, she has most likely experienced cultural displacement and identity struggles, which is a common theme in her work. Her poems frequently reflect the tension between different cultural identities and the feeling of not fully belonging to any of them. These cultural tensions, along with her personal experiences of loss and longing, give her poetry a unique perspective on desperation. Chang's ability to blend her personal story with larger themes of desperation makes her poetry both deeply personal and universally relatable.

Victoria Chang's poems selected for this study include "Passing," "Gift," "Another Year Come," "To The Face In The Mirror," and "Lark." These poems were selected because they use rich figurative language to either overtly or subtly represent different facets of sorrow. Every poem provides a different perspective on the issue of desperation, giving readers a thorough grasp of how Chang expresses this nuanced feeling. For instance, the combination of birds and mortality in "Lark" alludes to a sense of helplessness and desperation. Similarly, "To The Face In The Mirror" expresses an inward fight with identity and self-desperation. These poems show Chang's variety and depth as a poet by providing varied yet coherent analyses.

These poems were selected because of their rich figurative language and excellent thematic coherence. These poems' use of metaphorical language offers a wealth of material for examination. For instance, "Passing" warns

against the transient nature of human connection and the ensuing sensation of despair by using the metaphor of time passing. "Gift" employs a simile to convey the desperation of the unending cycle of time that will eventually cause mankind to age. Chang's poetry are useful text for scholarly examination in addition to being enjoyable to read because of these features.

Moreover, the poems chosen for this study were legitimate and important due to their widespread recognition and appreciation in the literary world. Award-winning poet Victoria Chang is praised for both her technical mastery and emotional depth in her extensively published poetry. Leading literary publications and anthologies have published her poems, and she has won multiple accolades for his contributions to modern poetry. This acknowledgment highlights the significance and applicability of her work, establishing it as a reliable resource for scholarly analysis. This study is justified in part because the chosen poems, in particular, have been recognized for examination of desperation. The poems chosen for this study have more legitimacy and relevance when her work is acclaimed.

Thus, analyzing Victoria Chang's poetry on desperation provides a deep and intricate comprehension of this intricate subject. This study aims to uncover how Chang expresses this sense of desperation through an analysis of the figurative language used in a selection of her poems. The chosen poems not only demonstrate Chang's talent as a poet but also offer compelling illustrations of how modern poetry can tackle and express difficult existential and emotional subjects. Readers can better comprehend Chang's writing and the theme of desperation in contemporary literature by reading this analysis. Through its insights into how modern poets use figurative language to explore and articulate complex emotional states, this research will also benefit the larger field of literary analysis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study above, this research will answer the research question: How does Victoria Chang utilize figurative language to convey feelings of desperation in her selected poems?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore how Victoria Chang utilizes figurative language to convey feelings of desperation in her selected poems.

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that this research will advance literary studies, particularly in the area of figurative language usage in modern poetry. Victoria Chang's work will be highlighted, which will enhance the body of knowledge on contemporary poetry and desperation themes. An in-depth examination of Chang's chosen poems with an emphasis on figurative language will provide fresh perspectives on how these components work to express intricate emotional states. Scholars, researchers, and students who are interested in literary thematic analysis and poetic devices will find it useful. Furthermore, it can function as a foundation for subsequent investigations into analogous themes and methodologies in the compositions of other poets, thereby broadening the scope of literary analysis.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

The methodology used is descriptive qualitative, and it looks at how Victoria Chang uses figurative language in her selected poems through textual analysis. This method makes it easy to examine the complex levels of meaning found in poetry and permits a thorough examination of the various ways in which the theme of desperation is expressed through figurative language. Data collection for the research project started with the poems "Passing," "Gift," "Another Year Come," "To The Face In The

Mirror," and "Lark." These poems were chosen for their rich use of figurative language and their connection to the theme of desperation.

The next step was to carefully read each poem and note any instances of figurative language. This would look at word choices that convey a sense of hopelessness, taking into account both the literal and metaphorical meanings of the language used. Additionally, a contextual analysis is used to set the poems in the larger context of Chang's work as well as the current literary scene. This analysis will make use of pertinent theoretical texts on figurative language and desperation as well as critical works on Chang's poetry.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is restricted to an examination of five poems by Victoria Chang that were chosen for their applicability to the depressing theme, with an emphasis on the analysis of figurative language. These restrictions are required to keep the analysis thorough and consistent. Through the utilization of figurative language and a focus on five distinct poems, the study can offer a more comprehensive and targeted analysis. This study's focus is on analyzing the poetry texts concerning the depressing theme and figuring out how this theme is expressed through the use of figurative language. Additionally, by imposing these restrictions, the research is kept narrowly focused and does not stray into areas unrelated to its primary goals.

1.7 Status of the Study

Erick Lane (2022) in his journal entitled "“My body is its image, here”: Diasporic Identity and the Deconstruction of Binary Division in 21st Century Asian American Poetry” discusses how Victoria Chang's poem "Home" from the poetry collection *Obit* explores the idea of belonging and identity for Asian Americans. The exploration of history in Chang's poem "Home" is seen as a space for different perspectives. The poem reimagines history as a collection of possibilities and imagination, not just a fixed

representation of the past. This reflects a broader theme in Asian-American poetry that breaks down rigid categories and divisions. In her analysis, Lane uses a close reading method based on the language, theme, and structure of the poem. From there, she reveals how Chang challenges conventional boundaries and builds a new sense of identity and belonging for Asian Americans. Thus, the present writer assumes that the use of this method allows Lane to explore the nuances and illustrate the complexity of diasporic identity in Victoria Chang's "Home" poem.

Regarding the research to be conducted, the present writer currently finds limitations in searching for related journals so that almost no research articles or journals have been conducted on the five selected poems by Victoria Chang. So, this *project paper* different from previous research, both in terms of poetry and the theory used. The present writer believes that this *project paper* has uses and benefits for readers and future researchers.

1.8 Organization of the Study

I. Chapter I – Introduction

Outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, methodology of the study, scope and limitation of the study, status of the study, and organization of the study.

II. Chapter II – Literature Review

Discusses the relevant theories for this study, including a description of poetry, the elements of poetry, and an explanation of figurative language.

III. Chapter III – Findings and Discussion

Analyzes the use of figurative language in Victoria Chang's poems and how these elements convey the theme of desperation.

IV. Chapter IV – Conclusion and Suggestion

Summarizes the main findings from the analysis and provides suggestions for further research.