

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. 1. Background of Research

Literary works are considered a depiction that reflects the profundity of the human psyche and is often used as a case to be studied. It illustrates the strong connection between psychoanalysis and literature. The field of literature and psychoanalysis are interrelated and could be used on each other distinctively as literature has been used as a sample or source for psychoanalysis conception concurrently psychoanalytic also has been used to explain literature. This strong connection between literature and psychoanalysis offers an exploration of rich possibilities in both fields which help us understand the complexity of the human psyche, consciousness, conflict, emotion, and desire.

Psychoanalysis approach is considered one of the important approaches to understanding literature, as psychoanalysis theory has been used to interpret the meaning of literary work and its relation to other variables. According to Hossain (2017), psychoanalytical literary criticism has been used to analyze the author of the literary work, the text of the literary work, the characters of the literary work, and the audience or the reader of the literary work (p. 41). Some of the themes in literature that could be analyzed with psychoanalytic literary criticism are grief and conflict, as it has been portrayed in many literary works through its story or the character's experience in grieving and conflict.

Grief as one of the themes in literature explores the profundity of human emotion by being a stimulant in the story progression for the development of the character in the story. According to Ross (2005), grief is the healing mechanism

which is the journey where one comes to peace with the loss (p. 15). Literary works such as novel portrays grief through the character's emotion in experiencing the loss and the process of coping with the loss. The exploration of grief through literature serves abundant insight into human emotion by reflecting on the pain of experiencing loss, the process of healing, and accepting the loss.

According to Kübler-Ross (2005), each grief has its own uniqueness as peculiar as the loved one that we lost (p. 171). In literary works, grief is also portrayed with its complexity in the story. The complexity is often reflected in the internal conflict that the characters experience. The portrayal of the complexity of grief is not only to interest the reader but also to shows the depth of the characters, the effect of the grief on the characters, the growth of the characters, the conflict that emerges amid grief, etc.

The literary work that explores the themes of grief that the researcher wants to explore is Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* Novel. Jhumpa Lahiri is a British-American author who is known for her short stories, essays, and novels. Born in London and raised in the United States. Her parents were Indian immigrants from the state of West Bengal. Her first debut is a short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Hemingway Award. Her first novel is *The Namesake* (2003) it was adapted into a successful feature picture and a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Her second novel is *The Lowland* (2013) was a finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction and the Man Booker Prize. She was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2014.

In *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri shows the story of Subhash Mitra and Udayan Mitra in Calcutta during the 1960s and 1970s which was the early time Naxalite movement. The story revolves around their strong relationship and the different paths that they choose in life. Udayan joined the Naxalite movement an uprising radical movement while Subhash sought a more peaceful and quiet life by moving to the United States for studies. Subsequently, their lives and the lives of others around them are changed by the tragic death of Udayan Mitra. In this novel, Lahiri offers interweaving the complex dynamics of the characters' interactions, providing a moving examination of the intricacies of human emotion and the influence of past events on personal experiences.

The researcher intends to analyze the novel *The Lowland* because the researcher discerns the novel explores the theme of grief that are portrayed through its characters in the novel. The theme grief of the novel could be analyzed through the characters such as Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra. The researcher argues that the characters is portrayed to experience grief in the novel. As explained above, the researcher will do psychoanalytical literary criticism analysis entitled "The Portrayal of Grief and Internal Conflict in Grief in *The Lowland* Novel by Jhumpa Lahiri" by applying theories such as stages of grief and inner world of grief by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

## **1. 2. Identification of the Problems**

*The Lowland* novel by Jhumpa Lahiri shows the story of Subhash Mitra and Udayan Mitra in Calcutta in the 1960s and 1970s during the early Naxalite movement. The story portrays the relationships of the two brothers and the different paths they choose in life. As the story progresses the tragic event of

Udayan's death changes the lives of others around them. Through the tragic event, Lahiri offers the complex dynamics of human interactions, the intricacies of human emotions, and the influence of past events on personal experiences. Therefore, the problem to be addressed through this study is how the author portrays grief and internal conflict in grief in *The Lowland* novel.

The study of the portrayal of grief and internal conflict in grief in the novel was carried out by examining the characters that are affected by Udayan's death which are Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra with its complexity in the story. The researcher examines the characters above to study the portrayal of grief and internal conflict in grief in the novel because the researcher believes that the author portrays the complexity of grief, the intricacies of human emotions, and the influence of grief on human experiences through the characters experiencing grief after the loss of Udayan with their complexity in the story. This study will be conducted through the lens of psychoanalytical literary criticism to solve the issue in this research.

### **1. 3. Review of Related Literature**

In writing the research, the researcher read several studies related to the topic of the research to enrich the knowledge to conduct the research. In this part, the researcher will review the related studies that have been read to identify different opinions and views. The related studies that will be reviewed discuss the same object with different theories, different objects with the same theories, and the same object with a similar topic.

An article related to the topic was written by V. Shanta and B. Cauveri (2017) entitled "Mourning and Melancholia in the Characters of *The Lowland* by Jhumpa

Lahiri". This study used Sigmund Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* concept as an approach to the study. This study emphasizes that Bijoli cannot recover from the death of Udayan, Gauri is haunted by her past love (Udayan's death) and the complexity of her mourning, and Subhash deals with the loss of Udayan through his affection for Bela (Gauri's and Udayan's daughter). Although the study uses a different approach to the research that the researcher will conduct, this study provides valuable insight into the research because it studies the same object *The Lowland* novel and relates to the topic of grief on Udayan's death through the characters of Gauri Mitra and Subhash Mitra. Despite the good things, unfortunately this article only briefly explained the theory that was used and didn't explain it thoroughly. Also, the introduction of the article mentions that the objective of the paper is to analyze the psychic processes that transpire in the characters of *The Lowland* but only analyze the psychic processes in the aspect of mourning but not in other aspects.

TK. Pius (2014) published an article entitled "Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*: A Critical Analysis". This study explores the context, title, setting and time, plot, characterization, narrative technique, and thematic dimensions of the novel. It emphasizes that Lahiri in this novel portrays the absence of a person that the characters loved might haunt the subconscious of the characters which affects their choices that lead to the consequences in the story which presents complex perspectives of the emotions, vulnerabilities, beliefs, and struggles of the characters. *The Lowland* novel tells the story with a solid theme that intertwines sexuality and politics, psychological wounds and grievances, and the iteration of settings and personalities. This study highlights the novel quite in depth which

provides a gainful insight into the novel as the object of the research. Although, the article provides a gainful insight into *The Lowland* novel it only discusses the intrinsic aspect in general.

A study related to the topic was written by R. Priya and D. Janani (2023) in their article entitled "A Study Of Family Ties In The Novel *The Lowland* By Jhumpa Lahiri". This article studies the complex family ties of Udayan Mitra, Subhas Mitra, Gauri Mitra, and Bela Mitra. It emphasizes that Lahiri portrays a sort of complicated family relationship in *The Lowland*. This article concludes that Gauri accepts Subhash's offer to go to America due to the death of Udayan which changes her circumstances and her longed desire for academic advancement not because of her love for Subhash. Gauri's memories of Udayan lead her to leave Bela which leads her to spend the rest of her life alone. On the other hand, Bela acknowledges Subhash as her father despite the truth of her birth and she hates Gauri for leaving her. This study is considered to provide a helpful insight into the research because it discusses *The Lowland* novel and it studies the complexity of family ties of the characters in the novel as Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra are also the characters that will be analyze in the research. Unfortunately, this article only explains the family ties in the novel through a general perspective which is not based on a theoretical theory approach.

An article written by Malak Khaled Hantoosh and Rohimmi Noor (2023) entitled "Diasporic Identity and Politics in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*". This article explores the diasporic paradox and sensitivity that was depicted in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* novel within three elements which are the sense of belonging and identity, family relations and conflicts, and political perspective. In



terms of the sense of belonging and identity, the finding of this study is that Subhash and Gauri experience disengagement and estrangement originating from American culture in the underlying days after they live in America. It also points out that America gives a fundamental space to Subhash and Gauri to begin another life because no one there knows what happened with their family. In the element of family relations and conflicts, this article finds that the death of Udayan turned into a starting point for Subhash's, Gauri's, and Bela's conflict with each other. Lastly, from a political perspective the story revolves around Subhash, Udayan, and Gauri. This article provides gainful insight into the diasporic context of the novel for the research to be conducted. Unfortunately, in the introduction it stated that family relations and conflicts are laid out sequentially which in the analysis it changed to family relations and crisis which did not provide the explanation of aspects of internal or external conflicts the novel despite the literature review of the article it explains that conflicts generally categorized into internal and external.

Bipasha Majumder De (2017) wrote an article titled "Gender and Feminist Consciousness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*". This article emphasized that the issue of gender and feminist consciousness in the novel should be considered in the Indian social context. The article presents that Lahiri seems to suggest through Gauri's portrayal that Lahiri implies that women need more than just knowledge for the emancipation of women. In addition to being the typical victims, women participate in the exploitation system by being subservient to the dominant power structure inside the family, which serves as an advantage for patriarchal beliefs and concerns. Although this study uses the feminist literary criticism lens, this

study helps the researcher to broaden the perspective toward Gauri Mitra to gain a better understanding of the complexity of Gauri as she is one of the characters that will be analyzed in the research. Unfortunately, in this article the gender and feminist consciousness is not approached through specific theoretical literary criticism feminist theory but instead a general perspective.

Rong-Rong Wang and Ya-huei Wang (2021) published their article entitled "Using the Kübler-Ross Model of Grief with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): An Analysis of *Manchester by the Sea*". This study uses the theory of five stages of grief by Kübler-Ross as an approach of their study. The finding of this research is that the characters such as Randi and Patrick reflect the way to understand traumatic grief and grow from it by turning their issue into a meaningful reintegration that allows them to heal and flourish. Meanwhile, Lee failed to reintegrate his grief into his life and fell into a repetitive loop of the traumatic grief process. Although this study used a different object, the study applies five stages of grief theory by Kübler-Ross which helps the researcher to apply the theory in this research. Unfortunately, the explanation of the grief process of the characters that were analyzed is explained briefly not thoroughly because the article only mentions some of the stages of grief shown in the characters while not describing where in the novel each of the stages are shown.

Aveen Sarkawt A. Sami (2023) wrote an article entitled "A Psychological Approach to Internal Conflict in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series". This article emphasizes the character's internal conflict and its impact on their decision-making process using Kurt Lewin's types of internal conflict. The findings of this article are J. K. Rowling used the approach-avoidance conflict to represent the



concept of making sacrifices for the sake of humanity in the characters. The approach-approach conflict represents the character's desire to help others or to show heroic qualities and the characters also experience avoidance-avoidance conflict. The internal conflict of the characters reveals their personality and leads to various consequences. This study highlights Kurt Lewin's types of internal conflict of the characters thoroughly and also reveals what the character's internal conflict represents in the novel which provides a gainful insight to the researcher. Unfortunately, the article didn't provide a review of related literature as references to the reader and also the findings of the article are not written neatly by arranging it per character.

Hidayatul Nurjanah (2023) wrote a article titled "Five stages of grief in C.S. Lewis' Novel *A Grief Observed*". The finding of this article is that the main character experiences all five stages of grief in the novel. The main character experiences the first stage of denial when he is scared to go somewhere that used to be his and his wife's favorite vacation place, he also feels the emptiness of his house without his wife's presence which he cannot escape from, and refuses to accept the truth of his wife death. The second stage of anger is shown when the main character directs his anger to the higher power or god by criticizing, blaming, and challenging god for losing his wife. The third stage of bargaining is shown through the characteristics of the main character who negotiates, bargains, and deals with losing his wife. The fourth stage of depression is expressed through the main character's feelings of hopelessness, mourning, and frustration which he starts to do drugs and having suicidal behavior. The last stage of acceptance is shown by the main character having the characteristics that accept his wife's death

as he becomes wiser and he continues his life with honor and dignity. This study is considered important for the research because it uses the same specific theory of the stages of grief by Kübler-Ross, it helps the researcher to gain insight into the theory which helps to apply the theory in the research. Unfortunately, in this article there are some quotation errors as some quotations of the novel dialogue didn't mention on what page the dialogue was.

Fakhry Tri Setyo and Abdillah Nugroho (2024) published an article entitled "Defense Mechanism in *No Longer Human* (2019) Movie: a Psychoanalytic Approach". This study used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the self-defense mechanism. The findings in this article are out of Freud's seven original defense mechanisms Dazai shows denial, projection, displacement, sublimation, and isolation. The occurrence of displacement is when Dazai diverts his internal turmoil into another object such as his actions, alcohol, and smoking which causes illness and mistrust. This article provides a gainful insight into the application of displacement to the researcher by providing the example of displacement data in their article. Unfortunately, the article only briefly explains the definition of each self-defense mechanism, not in a detailed manner.

Rinda Dwi Andini, Diana Anggraeni, and Nurvita Wijayanti (2023) published an article entitled "Anxiety and Self-Defense Mechanism of the Characters in *Maleficent* Movie". This study used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the self-defense mechanism. The findings of the article are that Maleficent has one realistic anxiety and three self-defense mechanisms such as displacement, sublimation, and reaction formation. Meanwhile, Stefan has realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, also uses the displacement and projection self-defense

mechanism. The article mentioned that the occurrence of displacement is when Maleficent is disappointed and angry toward what King Stefan did to her which she displaces by shouting and ejecting her power toward the sky. This article provides a gainful insight into the application of displacement to the researcher. Unfortunately, the theoretical framework of this article is only explained briefly.

In conclusion, many studies discuss *The Lowland* novel with different theories, different novels or objects with the same theories, and *The Lowland* novel with a similar topic. The distinction of this research from other studies is there's yet discussion on the portrayal of grief and internal conflict in grief in *The Lowland* Novel which is the topic that will be explored in this research.

#### **1. 4. Research Questions**

The main issue to be explained in this research is the portrayal of grief with its complexity through the character's experience in the novel. The questions of the research which will be answered are:

- a) How is grief portrayed in *The Lowland* through Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra?
- b) How does Jhumpa Lahiri explore internal conflict in grief through Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra?

#### **1. 5. Scope of the Research**

The scope of the research is limited in analyzing the portrayal of grief and internal conflict in grief in *The Lowland* novel. The researcher intends to analyze how the portrayal of grief and internal conflict in grief with its complexity in the novel. How Jhumpa Lahiri portrays grief and internal conflict in grief through the characters experiencing the loss of Udayan with its complexity in the story makes

the researcher particularly interested in studying the novel. The researcher intends to conduct psychoanalytical literary criticism of the novel by examining the characters that were affected by Udayan's death: Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra. The researcher assumes that the portrayal of grief and internal conflict in a grief with its complexity in the story of the characters is the way Lahiri shows the complex dynamics of human interactions, the intricacies of human emotions, and the influence of past events on human experiences in the novel.

#### **1. 6. Objectives of the Research**

The objective of this research is to reveal that Lahiri portrays the complex impact of grief on the characters, the depth of characters emotions in grieving, and the effect of past experience on the characters through the characters experiencing grief after the loss of Udayan with its complexity in the story. Therefore, the researcher focuses on the characters that are affected by Udayan's death in the novel which are Subhash Mitra and Gauri Mitra. In order to achieve the objective the researcher will examine the two characters with psychoanalytic literary approach which are Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) and internal conflict in processing their grief (inner world of grief: haunting and roles) to analyze the character's experience in processing grief and the complexity of their grief.