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Subjectivity and Mother-Daughter Relationship in *Frog under a Coconut Shell* Novel by Josephine Chia

Novia Nurul Ulfah¹, Aquarini Priyatna² & Amaliatun Saleha³

^{1,2,3} Ilmu Sastra, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Padjadjaran, Jl. Raya Bandung – Sumedang KM. 21, Kec. Jatinangor, Kab. Sumedang, Jawa Barat 45363

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Abstract

This research discusses how the subjectivity and mother-daughter relationship are depicted in the autobiographical novel *Frog under a Coconut Shell* (2002) by Josephine Chia, a writer from Singapore. This autobiography tells the story of the daughter's relationship with her mother, which was based on a patriarchal cultural environment and challenging economic conditions. The novel's relationship between mother and daughter shows the ambivalence regarding the constructed female subjectivity. This research aims to show how the mother's subjectivity in the autobiography is built through the relationship of the mother and daughter, which is presented through narrative descriptions and dialogue. This research uses a qualitative method with an autobiographical narrative approach based on the theory of motherhood and mothering, especially regarding the relationship between mother and daughter. The results of this research show that the subjectivity of the mother character builds relationships with her daughter. This relationship shapes the daughter's life by manifesting the mother's hopes for her daughter. However, this subjectivity must still obey patriarchy to make the hopes can be realized. In addition, this autobiography also shows that the mother's function as a fulfiller of needs also applies to a daughter who fulfills the mother's needs. Based on the findings in this research, it is expected that it can be a reflection that the relationship between mother and daughter can be a source of subjectivity for both sides.

*E-mail:

¹novia20008@mail.unpad.ac.id

²aquarini@unpad.ac.id

³amaliatun.saleha@unpad.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Women have always been an exciting topic to discuss. Literary work is an example of a medium or place that takes women's issues or experiences into stories because literary works reflect the reality of human life. Despite the existence of fictional elements in literary works, they do not come from a vacuum that is separated from the dimensions of the author's life (Sugiarti & Andalas, 2018). The stories about women in literary works contain many issues about the roles and functions of women as wives, children, or mothers.

The existence of the mother's role, especially in the motherhood experience, has become a story concept that often appears in a literary work because of its unique role. Henriksson, Williams, and Fahlgren (2020) argue that motherhood gains meaning on existential and symbolic levels in texts or narratives. In literary works, the role of mothers is not only presented conventionally but also unconventionally. Henriksson, Williams, and Fahlgren (2020) stated that the role of mothers in the narrative can draw attention to issues contrary to society's perceptions and expectations about the mother and motherhood. This shows that the issue and discourse of mothers and motherhood have complex problems over their roles because every mother has their own experiences.

The role of mothers is often considered a role that must always focus on domestic affairs and taking care of children according to patriarchal cultural expectations. In one example of women's problems, shown conventionally, a single mom works in the public sphere to speed up the construction process. She also raised her daughter to be an independent and authoritative woman (Willhoit, 2021). These actions show the mother who presents their subjectivity. Referring to Weedon through Sinanda (2021) understanding, subjectivity is a form of self-awareness of the individual's thoughts and feelings. In the context of women, they can form their own identity without being influenced by the social construction surrounding them. Thus, a mother who is presented unconventionally is a mother who voices her independence in their role without being influenced by many constructions that oppress her.

Frog under a Coconut Shell by Josephine Chia is a work written by a female author about the story of her closeness to her mother. *Frog Under a Coconut Shell* was published by Times Book International in 2002. In this work, Josephine focuses on her own story and her mother's life in carrying out her role as a mother. *Frog under a Coconut Shell* presents the story in an autobiographical narrative based on the

experiences and observations of Josephine Chia as the author, narrator, and object of the story as the "I" character.

Marcus (1995) argued that in autobiographical narrative, there is a unity between the subject and the object of storytelling, with the author as the subject and the object being told by the story. The autobiographical narrative also represents how the author can freely show their point of view, thus making this narrative contain a high value of subjectivity (Marcus, 1995). In autobiographical writing, Subekti, Priyatna, and Aksa (2013) stated that autobiographical narratives can exclude women from showing their subjectivity. In autobiographical writing, Priyatna (2018) Stated that women's autobiographical narratives with the subject "I" are political actions to expose behind normative things that have been covered up. It can be argued that autobiographical narratives can be a means for women to voice what they want to express and show their subjectivity based on their experiences around them.

Josephine Chia tells the story of her life and her closeness with her mother through her memoir. As the narrator, Josephine tells the story of how her mother struggles to fulfill her role as a mother in an environment that sees women as inferior to men and constrained by a normative culture where women have limited space to move. However, this situation did not make her mother lose her subjectivity as a woman. Josephine narrates her mother's subjectivity and shows that her mother's experience as a mother has fought for things considered prohibited by patriarchal culture. Moreover, her mother's struggle is related to how her mother raised Josephine as her daughter. In this case, the relationship between mother and daughter becomes essential for the mother in presenting her subjectivity.

The relationship between Josephine and her mother shows a relationship that can be a strength to show a woman's subjectivity as mother and daughter in a patriarchal cultural environment. O'Reilly (in Aquarini Priyatna, Lina M Rahayu, & M Subekti, 2019) argued that a strong mother and daughter-relationship gives birth to female solid selves. In this case, the mother's role in the mothering process is essential in forming the relationship. According to Aquarini Priyatna, Lina M Rahayu, and Mega Subekti (2019), mothering refers to the behavior or relationship of being a mother to the children they care for. In establishing relationships between mother and children, the mothering process becomes essential in achieving the relationship because the mother and the children are in direct contact.

O'Reilly suggested that the connection and closeness between mother and daughter are essential to female empowerment (in Aquarini Priyatna, Lina M Rahayu, & M Subekti, 2019). The daughter can be formed according to how the mother plays her role towards her daughter. Through the mothering process, it will be projected on her children as they receive from their mother. This emphasized that the process of mothering, especially mothering the daughter, is essential because the daughter will become the mother to their children in the future. Thus, the relationship between mother and daughter is more intimate because both are female.

In the theory of motherhood and mothering, Rich (1997) states that motherhood is divided into two parts: motherhood as an institution and mothering as an experience. Motherhood as an institution is bound by the power of patriarchal ideology or normative norms. In contrast, motherhood is an experience in which mothers devote all their experience to carrying out their role as mothers, a form of experience celebrated as a specific capacity of women (O'Reilly, 2008; Rich, 1997).

Rich (1997) explains that in the discourse of mothering, two crucial aspects must be separated: women's biological capacity to raise their children and the power that places women lower than men. Mothers are not only considered to have to always care for and look after their children but are also constructed to be attached to domestic work permanently. Mothers must also fulfill this construction, leaving limited space for their subjectivity (Andiani, 2019). Mothers have minimal space to move due to the construction. Therefore, in the context of mothering, it is considered an absolute nature for women. Rich (1997) added that the discourse of motherhood and mothering in patriarchal culture is not a humane condition, but it is a form of rape, prostitution, and slavery.

In previous studies, several studies discussed subjectivity, especially female subjectivity, and the relationship of mother and daughter in a novel and autobiographical work. The issues of subjectivity and mother-daughter have been discussed by Aquarini Priyatna, Lina M Rahayu, and M Subekti (2019). In the study, Indonesian female celebrity in autobiographical work was the main focus of discussion. The research found the existence of subjectivity through her identity as a female celebrity who has a position as a mother of her daughter and a daughter of her mother. The autobiography shows that the mother-daughter relationship is built in a feminist mothering mode, which encourages the formation of feminine agency and subjectivity.

Priyatna and Budhyono (2020) also conducted a study that discusses female subjectivity in two short stories. The subjectivity found in the two short stories shows various forms of subjectivity that are inconsistent, changing, and constantly evolving. The subjectivity found shows compliance, rejection, and breaking of the expectations of gender norms.

The previous research discussing the same work in *Frog under a Coconut Shell* has been done. The research conducted by Wati and Sumartini (2019) and Nurrahmawati and Puspita (2021) shows forms of struggle in seeking education for their children. It focuses on comparative literary studies that discuss forms of women's resistance to gender injustice contained in the novel and another novel. Both studies discussed the issue of how female characters respond to various problems of injustice and carry out forms of struggle and resistance in the ideology of feminism. This shows a gap in the discussion of issues within the scope of the discourse of mothering and the relationship between mother and daughter that can shape a female's subjectivity, as will be done in this study.

As explained above, the relationship between mother and daughter is an essential process of forming female subjectivity through the discourse of mothering. Therefore, this study aims to discuss how the relationship between mother and daughter is shown and how the relationship can build maternal subjectivity through this research. It is hoped that it can enrich and add a new point of view on the mothering and mother-daughter relationship discourse in works such as autobiographical narratives.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with an autobiographical narrative approach. According to Creswell (Kaharuddin, 2021), the qualitative method is a method or way to explore how to understand the meaning of several individuals and groups of people. In addition, the autobiographical narrative approach is also used because the object of research conducted is an autobiographical text, and this approach is suitable for this research. This approach is also used to analyze how the narrator views females, especially mother and daughter, and how the narrator conveys issues related to the relationship between mother and daughter that build female subjectivity through their experience story. The autobiographical narrative uses the theory presented by Smith and Watson (1998), who argued that autobiographical texts become a vehicle for women to express their specific experiences as women in the intersectionality of

class, race, ethnicity, and others. This research also uses the theory presented by Marcus (1995), which explains that the author is positioned as the subject who tells the story in autobiographical writing.

A close reading technique was used to select and collect data in the first step of the research. The data taken was in the form of narrative and dialogue. The data was classified and analyzed into two parts: the mother who is mothering the daughter and the daughter who is mothering the mother. The data was then analyzed and interpreted using theories related to the motherhood/mothering and mother-daughter relationship. The data is analyzed and processed by describing the subjectivity built by the relationship between mother and daughter through the description of narrative, dialogues, or behavior of the main character and another character. The theory of motherhood and mothering used in this research is by Adrienne Rich (1997), O'Reilly (2008), and Chodorow (1978). These theories will help to see how the mother and daughter relationship in autobiographical works.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Josephine Chia is a female writer from Singapore; she lived in England for 30 years and returned to Singapore in 2012. She has published approximately 12 works, some of which have won awards. On Josephine Chia's official website (<https://www.josephinechia.com>), she explained that her love of adventure, drama, love, and loss had inspired her to write stories about herself. Many of the works she creates are related to her life in the village, such as Peranakan culture, culinary delights, yoga, and the history of Singapore. She also wrote on the website that her mother was a very influential person in her life. Therefore, some of her works contain stories about her mother, such as *Frog under a Coconut Shell*. Through *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, Josephine wanted to show people how special her mother was and as a form of respect for her.

In the narrative *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, the narrative uses "I" as the character who narrates the story or narrator. Referring to the concept of voice explained by Genette (1980), narrators are divided into two categories they are narrators who are present in the story they tell (homodiegetic) and narrators who are not present in the story they tell (heterodiegetic). In the homodiegetic category, narrators are divided into two types: the narrator as the main character and the narrator as the observer. In *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, Josephine tells of her experiences with her mother as the narrator, the main character, and observer through the character "I." When telling about her mother,

the narrator acts as an observer. Therefore, the focus of the narrative conveyed by Josephine as the writer and this part of the story is not only centered on the story of the narrator's life but also on how her mother plays a mother in mothering the narrator. In general, the plot of this autobiography tells the life of the narrator, Josephine, and her mother's life, as well as stories about their togetherness.

The character "I" in *Frog under a Coconut Shell* is used by the character Josephine, whose name is similar to the author's name. Josephine's use of the narrator's point of view, "I," confirms that the narrative describes Josephine's feelings as both a subject and an object in the story. Moreover, "I" shows the personal experience of relating to her mother, thus showing the narrator's relationship with the mother character as being connected. In this case, Josephine and her mother are connected in showing their attitudes towards women's issues, such as mother and daughter. Thus, the relationship between mother and daughter in the narrative is built from the narrator's experience of being mothered by the mother character, and the mother character mothering the narrator is represented subjectively.

In the narrative, Josephine reveals that she and her mother have a close relationship, as she narrates in the following quote.

"I do know that I am not just my mother's daughter. I am her hope and dreams. When I separated from her at birth, she passed her baton for me to complete her race. The handing over of the baton did not happen in one quick changeover; it has taken years of subtle learning through which she feeds me her desires, hopes, dreams, and life, which has not been." (Chia, 2002:8)

This quote shows that she has confirmed herself as the recipient of the baton for her mother's unfulfilled hopes and dreams. Her mother's unfulfilled hopes and dreams also seemed to become her goals. Therefore, Josephine and her mother are understood to have had the same goals.

Josephine's role as an observer can also be a process of observing Josephine to interpret her mother's role in her relationship with her mother. In this case, Josephine is highly subjective when viewing her mother. She represents her through an autobiographical narrative as a collective voice on issues regarding women as mothers and daughters through narratives of her experiences and those of her mother.

In *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, relations between women, such as mother and daughter, are a significant part of building the subjectivity of mother and daughter. Normative patriarchal culture and economic conditions also influence mother's subjectivity in the relationship between mother and daughter. This was discovered through the process of mothers mothering their daughters and also the daughters mothering their mothers.

Mother Mothering The Daughter

In *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, Josephine tells the struggles of her mother, Soon Neo, who is familiarly called Mak, as a mother and wife, and she narrates her mother's experience in the autobiographical narrative. In a patriarchal cultural environment and poor economic conditions in the past, Soon Neo experienced many experiences regarding her role as a mother. Soon, Neo's mothering discourse is told through direct observation of Josephine as her daughter. Apart from that, Soon Neo's role is also shown through the back story that is always told to Josephine.

In *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, Soon Neo is depicted as a normative mother, and this is shown when the narrator or Josephine narrates that Soon Neo becomes a wife and mother at a very young age. Soon, Neo becomes a mother; she adheres to traditional or normative parenting rules from her mother (grandmother character). Soon, Neo started becoming a mother at the young age of 18. At a young age, she was required by circumstances to fulfill the role of wife and mother, and she brought her mother's experience into how she mothered her children. This is illustrated through the following quote.

"At 18, Soon Neo was mother to her child and little brother. Even when pregnant, she drew water from the well, beat down the earth that made up their floor, washed her clothes by hand, and was still clean and beautiful for my father when he returned, her mother's words hammering in her brain about keeping your man at home." (Chia, 2002:81)

In the quote above, apart from being a mother to her child, Soon Neo is also shown carrying out the task of mothering her younger sibling. Her experience of living with her younger siblings before having children gave her experience and learning in taking care of a child. At a young age, Soon Neo, as a young mother, was required to carry out the role of an independent mother in the domestic sphere and be alert as a wife to her husband. She learned all these things from her

mother (grandmother's character). This is important to observe because the people around and the patriarchal environment influence how Soon Neo ultimately becomes a mother.

Soon, Neo carries out the mothering process for Josephine as she receives from her mother. This shows the relationship between mother and daughter in terms of learning each other's teachings and receiving information from generation to generation about what one should do as a woman.

"Grandmother told my mother something, which she repeated to me, "Must know how to cook or run a household, huh? If not, cannot handle your servants, you know." (Chia, 2002:18)

The quote shows how Soon Neo gives Josephine advice based on what she has received from her mother (grandmother). This shows that Soon Neo, through the grandmother, Josephine, has been given the meaning of being a woman. Soon, Neo, as a woman who has been in the position of being a child, makes her extend the experiences and thoughts she has received from her mother to her child. Josephine, who was given advice from her mother and received it from her grandmother, described the existence of communication in the relationship between mother and daughter. Fischer (1981) states that the relationship between mother and daughter can be viewed as a "life cycle." In this way, the advice passed down from generation to generation as a result of mothering will also be passed on to their child. This advice, which is constantly maintained, reflects that they, as mothers, maintain family institutions. In this case, Soon Neo accepts her role as a mother who maintains her domestic role; this is proven when Soon Neo teaches her daughter about domestic values, such as being skilled at cooking and taking care of the household. Apart from the values given by mothers to children, which are normative values, Soon Neo, in this case, shows her subjectivity in educating her children in domestic and household matters.

Soon, Neo provides some advice passed down from generation to generation in the relationship with her daughter regarding domestic matters and positioning themselves in front of men, which is also shown in the following quote.

Grandmother loved to teach my mother because Soon Neo was so keen. She Warned her, "Remember, huh. Never look directly at the man; always lower your eyes. Speak sweetly, like bird singing, not

cocks fighting. Only express opinions which he expresses. Always be clean and smell beautiful so that when he wants you, your body is desirable. Feel with your finger. You eat with them, and you make love with them." My mother echoes her mother before her, a lesson passed from mouth to mouth." (Chia, 2002, p. 23)

Based on the patriarchal culture that surrounds them influences how mothers give understanding to their daughters in terms of acting in front of men. The quote above shows a mothering discourse that educates daughters to become women according to the construction of a patriarchal society. Soon, Neo educates her daughter about how women should behave: women must lower their gaze and must not look directly at men, must speak sweetly, and must always be clean; her grandmother holds those things because the judgment that women are worthy of being desired by men has been passed down from generation to generation. Thus, the grandmother carries out the relationship between daughter and mother. Soon, Neo has a mothering discourse that seems to hold her subjectivity as a mother and authority over her daughter. However, on the other hand, the context they narrate refers to the perpetuation of patriarchy, which presents women as sex objects for men.

Apart from showing the relationship between mother and daughter in terms of inheriting domestic values and women's attitudes towards men, in the relationship between Soon Neo and Josephine, Soon Neo is depicted as a mother who fulfills her child's needs. However, the need that Soon Neo fulfills for Josephine refers to the need that men are concerned about, such as sending women to school.

Referring to the discourse of mothering, the mother is a figure who fulfills the needs of children (Aquarini et al. M Rahayu & M Subekti, 2019). In challenging economic conditions and a normative environment, Soon Neo controls herself while raising her daughter. In the experiences narrated, Soon Neo's efforts as a mother to fight patriarchal culture were done through a mothering discourse by manifesting Soon Neo's unfulfilled hopes and dreams through her daughter, Josephine. Instead of fulfilling her daughter's educational needs, Soon Neo also got knowledge from the education that her daughter received. They both get their own benefits and fulfill each other's needs.

"But my mother, despite not having been educated herself, went beyond the reaches of her mind and saw education's

potential for me. So despite earning my father's wrath and mockery, she continued to try to get me into school." (Chia, 2002:98)

Even though her husband was against sending her child to school, Soon Neo firmly intended to provide her daughter with an education. Soon, Neo's subjectivity as a mother is shown in her fight and struggle for her daughter's education. Soon, Neo provides for her child's needs by giving her a proper education and sending Josephine to school. Sending her child to school or providing education is a form that fulfills her as a mother figure herself by showing her subjectivity in front of men, such as her husband. Soon, Neo, in this case, discovers her capacity to become a mother, which is considered the main form of mothering (Aquarini et al. M Rahayu & M Subekti, 2019). Soon, Neo's subjectivity, shown through her desire to send her child to school, is built through the hope that her daughter will not have the same fate as her as an uneducated woman. In this case, it means that Soon Neo sees a problem with her status as a housewife without an education.

"My husband stern-stern man. He thinks girls do not need to study. Do not study very terribly for me. I want my daughter to be educated. I do not know anything. Very bodoh, stupid. Cut off from so many things. Cannot read road signs. Not even my name.' her voice thinned and seemed to tear. 'Must enable my daughter to read words on signboards: Come, Stop, Go, Wait, Careful. Read newspaper. She must not be like me. Stupid. If educated, she can work and earn her own money. There is no need to ask the man. No need to makan darah (eat blood).'" (Chia, 2002, p. 110)

Through the quote above, Soon Neo voiced her desire for her child to receive an education for her child's needs. This was conveyed when Soon Neo tried to communicate with the principal at the school her daughter would be attending. The narrative above shows how her discourse on mothering falls into what Rich (1997) calls mothering as an experience. Soon, Neo's actions regarding her child's schooling show the mother's character practice of following her instincts rather than being determined by social rules. The social rules themselves are shown in how her husband responded, who thought that women did not need to have education, "Education is bad for women," he said. "Poisons their minds. Makes them less meek." (Chia, 2002, p. 98). It can also be said that Soon Neo

does not want to make her child-like herself submit to men because she does not have the potential to read and know. Deciding for her daughter to go to school is part of her subjectivity. Soon, Neo also firmly states in the narrative that education ensures that her daughter is not bound by male oppression.

"If she is schooling, she need not be answerable to any man; what," my mother said in a voice I did not usually hear. However, I will never forget her words. I try to live my life never being beholden to a man." (Chia, 2002: 98)

Josephine's statement regarding Soon Neo's narrative resulted from Soon Neo's subjectivity, which was then naturally embedded in Josephine. Josephine indirectly represents the beliefs she holds as a woman towards men. It can be argued that Soon Neo contributed to the formation of her subjectivity and that of her daughter against male oppression.

When Soon Neo's husband or Josephine's father was against education and ultimately let Josephine go to school because they would not cover school fees, they faced the family's mediocre economic conditions. Soon, Neo independently struggles to find money for school needs in every way, such as helping local people with childbirth and washing clothes. The narrative shows Josephine how she worked hard to send her to school. Soon, Neo's hard work made Josephine move to help with some of her mother's work. This instilled a sense of debt and respect for Josephine towards her mother, as she expressed in the narrative, "That is why I appreciated being educated so much, as so many other people's dreams sit upon my shoulders." (Chia, 2002, p. 130)

"I used to think that her boldness made my father let Mak have her way occasionally. Only in later years did I know the truth. When I got married, she told me about it. She called it "pillow talk." "Learn to hold your tongue till the right moment," she advised. "Whisper quiet-quiet into his ear in softness after love-making. You will get what you cannot at other times." (Chia, 2002:99)

In this quote, Josephine explains that her mother's struggle for her education resulted from her negotiations with her father. Soon, Neo's courage to defy her husband over her daughter's ban on going to school was only a tiny part of her efforts; the real effort was through bedroom conversations as husband and wife and seducing

her husband. Even though Soon Neo's struggle to fight for education for her daughter is seen as her subjectivity as a mother, the husband still has power over his wife. This makes Soon Neo negotiate the interpretation of her position and role as a woman and mother.

Based on the explanation, the mother in the autobiography shows an ambivalent female subjectivity. In the process of mothering and being mothered, as well as in the relationship between mother and daughter, they are shown to be subject to patriarchal culture. However, it also shows the existence of subjectivity in certain situations. Soon, Neo is shown in a submissive position while opposing patriarchal culture towards women. Soon, Neo, in the process of mothering, still shows freedom or follows her instincts as a mother despite the ideology and normative rules surrounding her. In addition, the relationship between mother and daughter in this work shows an effort to show women's subjectivity, leading to women's empowerment.

Daughter Mothering The Mother

In all the efforts made by Soon Neo as a mother to Josephine, the dynamics of the relationship between mother and daughter ultimately result in a relationship that shows reciprocity. As a daughter, Josephine ultimately has a role in fulfilling needs that her mother cannot fulfill. In other words, they finally fulfill each other's needs. This is also evidence of Soon Neo's subjectivity as a mother who shapes and builds her daughter's life.

"I took them (book) home to share with Mak and Parvathi. My mother was happy on two accounts: one, that I could read; two, that she was given a way to escape the coconut shell of her existence through these books, too. Mine was a shared education, brightening the lives of others as I learned." (Chia, 2002:186)

"As she read vicariously through me, she too was excited that I would be bringing home lots of books to read. It was our shared pleasure, the first occasion of the mother-child role being reversed." (Chia, 2002, p. 200)

The quote above emphasizes that Soon Neo and Josephine's relationship forms a sense of complementarity so that they can benefit each other. Soon Neo's efforts as a mother so that her child can go to school and read is a process of manifestation of Soon Neo's hopes through her

child, the hope that she wants her daughter to get a proper education so that she will not be like her. Her daughter's ability to read books made Soon Neo feel the same way as if she could read books even though they read through Josephine. This interaction shows the intensity of the daughter's closeness to her mother. Soon, Neo entrusts her education to Josephine, and she places her greatest hopes on her daughter. The relationship between mother and daughter is unique, as Chodorow (1978) explained, and the relationship between mother and daughter has a stronger bond. Thus, this shows the relationship between mother and daughter in the form of fulfilling each other's needs, which is supported by the role of both women. Josephine is depicted as a reliable daughter because she fulfills Soon Neo's hopes.

"We are linked in more ways than one. Although she lived within the constraints of her species, she would show her mettle now and again. This was the first but not the last time she fought my father for me. I remember such incidents and carry them in my heart, my debts to her. She gave me a life I would otherwise not have had. Because of this, I give her a life that she definitely could not have: I learn languages, philosophy, and literature, roam the world, hike, ski, and parachute, and I describe to her each experience, each moment so that she can live my life alongside me. Her eyes would glow, and her face would brighten as she fed on my living." (Chia, 2002:79-80)

In the relationship between mother and daughter, they have the role of fulfilling each other's needs. Apart from the mother's duty to look after and care for her child's needs, Josephine, as a daughter, also shows reciprocity by offering something that her mother does not have. Soon, Neo, who does not have the opportunity to go to school, still has hope that she wants to go to school. Through Josephine, this hope has come true. Soon, Neo's interest in Josephine reading a book showed her own satisfaction because, after all, the knowledge that Josephine got from the book also became her knowledge. This also shows their happiness as women and their success in subverting the patriarchal norms imposed on them. In this case, Soon Neo shows this with her disinterest in the patriarchal world by sending her daughter to school. This is also part of her subjectivity.

"So now, the cared has become the carer, daughter mothering the mother." (Chia, 2002, p. 11)

The argument of this autobiography can be summarized by the quote above. Soon, Neo and Josephine's struggles in the past finally paid off. Josephine, whose education she once struggled with, can show her success in becoming a writer. She can also choose husbands who can rely on each other, in contrast to her father, who was very patriarchal in domestic matters and raising children. Soon, Neo's living conditions have also changed; as she gets older day by day, she is faced with a severe disease, namely Alzheimer's. Her illness means that she is now unable to act as a mother as before. Therefore, Josephine, who was previously cared for, now cares for Soon Neo. Josephine acted as a mother to her mother and placed her under her care. Soon, Neo provided psychological and educational support, and now Josephine also provides psychological support and economic needs. This case shows that the roles are reversed, where the mother and child receive support from each other. The relationship between mother and daughter is in the form of interdependence and intersubjectivity. It can then be said that the relationship between mother and daughter in *Frog under a Coconut Shell* shows the articulation of the mother being there for her daughter and the daughter being there for her mother.

CONCLUSION

In *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, we find that through Josephine's relationship with her mother, this autobiography shows the construction of motherhood as an institution because the mother shows the support of women as a sex object for men. On the other hand, the mother also shows motherhood as an experience that empowers women, thus forming subjectivity. The mother shows the process of mothering or raising children as a tool for the mother to subvert patriarchy and provide subjectivity to herself and her daughter. Thus, the subjectivity formed by the relationship between mother and daughter is ambivalent, and there is instability in voicing female subjectivity.

Through Josephine's relationship with her mother, this autobiography also shows that the mother's function as a need-fulfiller also applies to daughters who fulfill their mother's needs. This indicates that there is a reciprocal relationship in the process of mother-daughter relating. In this case, Soon Neo's subjectivity succeeds in making the dynamic of the mother-daughter relationship mutually beneficial to each other.

In *Frog under a Coconut Shell*, which was written by Josephine autobiographically, the female subjectivity shows subjectivity in the relationship of mother and daughter in terms of the mother struggling for her daughter's education and through the autobiographical narrative. Through the narrator, Josephine shows her subjectivity in voicing the role of women in particular. In this case, she shows the motherhood issue based on her mother's experiences as a woman.

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