

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Today, the world is more aware of the black woman's movement, black feminism, and racism. Back in America in 1950s, discrimination and racism were the treatment received every day by black people, especially black women. Some various types of discrimination received by black women such as gender discrimination, oppression, sexual harassment, and others. In human relations, women are frequently considered powerless and weak. "Women who are the most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are mentally, physically, and spiritually battered down on a daily basis; women who are powerless to improve their situation in life. They constitute the silent majority. They accept their situation in life without inquiry, without organized protest, without collective wrath or rage, which is a sign of their subjugation" (Hooks 1984). As time went by, along with blacks fighting against racism and discrimination, black women also carried out a movement to make life better. Braxton, writes about how black women's autobiographers have used "language as a weapon" against various forms of oppression (1989). Literary work has been one of the crucial pieces of evidence that represent human history issues. Many issues can be discussed in literary works, some of them are about self-representation, sisterhood, and power.

There are several literary works written by black women. They discuss so many issues from racism, black women's oppression, to black women's movements. Some recent works by black women writers are *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones (2018), *Magical Negro* by Morgan Parker (2019), and *Queenie* by Candice Certy-Williams (2019). One of the literary works that discuss self-representation, sisterhood, and power is the novel *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* by Audre Lorde. She is also one of the figures of the black women's movement in literature. Lorde was born on February 18, 1934, in New York. She is a writer, poet, black lesbian, and feminist activist. Lorde is an African American writer who has written several poems including, *From a Land Where Other People Live* (1972), and nominated for a National Book Award, *The New York Head Shop and Museum* (1974), and *The Black Unicorn* (1978). In addition to poetry, Lorde also wrote longer works such as *The Cancer Journals* (1980), *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), and the essay collection *A Burst of Light* (1988), which won the National Book Award. Lorde's works focus on the black women's movement, civil rights, and the struggle for LGBTQ equality.

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name was published in 1982. Lorde herself said that the genre of this book is biomythography, which combines biography, history, and myth. *Zami* tells the story of the main character's life from childhood and the important lessons she learned along her life journey. Lorde also tells how she grew up, her relationship with her mother, and how she discovered her sexuality as a lesbian. She also recounts her journey and experiences as a black lesbian in the United States in the 1950s.

In this book, Lorde tells about her childhood when she received discrimination, pressure, and racism, and how Lorde found her identity as a black woman and a lesbian. Lorde refers to herself as a black woman and black lesbian, which is how she represents herself. According to Woollacott (1998), self-representation means representations of the self, which can be through any number of media but purposes are through discursive productions. Usually, a sense of solidarity arises when we experience a similar situation. In *Zami*, the case is the solidarity that arises because of the condition of fellow black women who experience discrimination, oppression, and racism. In the novel, it is mentioned that Lorde has contact with women who have a similar situation as black women, and finally a sense of trust and solidarity is established which is called sisterhood. Maria C. Lugones defines Sisterhood as the thought of sometimes in feminist discourse as a metaphorical ideal and sometimes as a metaphor for the reality of relationships among women (Weiss and Friedman 1995).

As known, black people have a long history of getting their freedom from slavery. In addition, they also had to fight racism, especially by African Americans. Josep stated Black power movement began to develop alongside the civil rights movement between the 1950s and 1960s in The United States (2006). This black power movement was a turning point in the relationship between black and white in the United States. At that time, black people including black women began to think about their existence and respect themselves as human beings. In addition to fighting against slavery and racism, black women also fought against race and gender discrimination, oppression,

and sexual assault in their way. With the higher awareness of black women for the discrimination they received, they need the power to free themselves from the gender and race discrimination they faced.

This study will focus to analyze self-representation, sisterhood, and power in the novel *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. The reason why the writer chooses to analyze the three topics above is that the writer wants to discover how a black woman writer represents other black women. The writer chooses the novel because it will be interesting to examine how the author portrays self-representation, sisterhood, and power from the main character of the novel, Lorde's viewpoint as a black woman herself. The writer also wants to uncover more about the self-representation, sisterhood, and power experienced by a black woman in the novel *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*.

1.2. Identification of the Problems

There are several problems in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Racism, love between women, and conflict with family. The genre of the book is biomythography which combines biography, history, and myth, so this book is not fiction, yet based on the author's experiences. I want to study Lorde's concern about self-representation, sisterhood, and power as a black woman. The writer chose self-representation, sisterhood, and power because these problems are often discussed throughout the story. the author represents black women and what they want and how they bond relationships with other women which through the same condition, also the power they have as black women. By examining Lorde's messages about self-representation, sisterhood, and power

as black women from the novel, I can elaborate on her messages regarding those issues.

1.3. Scope of the Research

Many topics can be discussed in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. In this research, the writer will focus on the topic of self-representation, sisterhood, and power as a black woman in the novel *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. These topics have not been widely discussed before, so the writer wants to discuss these topics and discover how a black woman writer represents other black women. The writer limited these three topics into three parts. First, explain how Lorde portrays self-representation in her novel. Second, it explains the relationship that the characters have in the novel. And lastly, what kind of power of black women's movements are described in the novel.

1.4. Research Questions

- a. How does the author portray self-representation in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*?
- b. How is sisterhood among black women is portrayed in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*?
- c. How does *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* represent power by women?

1.5. Objective of the Research

In this research, the writer wants to examine self-representation, sisterhood, and power experienced by the main character in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. The writer wants to discover how the author portrays self-representation,

sisterhood, and power in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Self-representation is how black women represent themselves and how they struggle for their rights. I want to examine how Lorde portrays black women's sisterhood and black power movement affects their lives.

1.6. Review of Related Literature

To support this research, the writer read several related studies that explain the same research object with different topics and different objects but have similar problems. The writer read some articles of related studies to find different views and opinions to understand the issue.

First, an article was written by Monica B. Pearl titled "'Sweet Home": Audre Lorde's *Zami* and the legacies of American Writing" (2009). This article points out that "*Zami* derives from two extant American literary traditions, the African American slave narrative, and the lesbian coming out story - rendering it, after all, not a marginal text, but rather a text that falls obviously and firmly in a tradition of American literature" (Pearl 297). Based on the article, the genre of *Zami* is biomythography. Why is this book called biomythography because *Zami* doesn't fit into the existing category or genre in American literature such as African American autobiography, African American literature, lesbian autobiography, or women's autobiography but *Zami* covers all of these things and that's the reason why it is called biomythography. This article focuses on the relationship between Audre Lorde's work, *Zami* with the legacies of American writing. Pearl stated that Audre Lorde's *Zami* ends with two forms of American writing, the slave narrative and the coming out story. The relationship

between Audre Lorde's work, *Zami*, and the legacies of American writing is depicted by the author in detail and very well.

Second, an article by Barbara DiBenhard entitled “*Zami: A Portrait of An Artist As A Black Lesbian*” (1991). DiBenhard studies the artist's portrayal as a black lesbian in the novel *Zami* using Lorde's experience as a black lesbian to open our conception of the female writer without generalizing the experiences of other women. In *Zami*, we will find other alternatives to the model of female development as new faces of poets and female creativity. The portrait of the poet as a black lesbian includes many things. The portrait of the artist's relationship itself can identify and utilize the powers of the women around her is an important thing to consider. As the portrait of a black lesbian artist, *Zami* shows us to acknowledge all parts of ourselves. Barbara DiBenhard includes many quotes and explains quite a in detail about Lorde's experience as a black woman and becoming the portrait of a black lesbian artist.

Third, Maja Milatovic in her article entitled “The Love of Women, Kind as Well as Cruel: Feminist Alliances and Contested Spaces in Audre Lorde’s *Zami: A New Spelling Of My Name*” (2014), sees *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* as an interesting and forward-thinking novel that addresses a variety of contemporary issues such as the erasure of black women's voices, intersectionality, and establishing feminist alliances across differences. The article examines how *Zami* uses ambiguity and difference to depict the challenges in forming feminist alliances. This article claims that biomythography refuses judgment by providing spaces for negotiation and critical thinking, as well as mutual acknowledgment, debate, and development.

I suppose this analysis would be better if the author explains contested spaces in more detail.

Fourth, another article that examined *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* is “New Living the Old in a New Way: Home and Queer Migrations in Audre Lorde’s *Zami*” (2011) by Stella Bolaki. This essay examines Audre Lorde’s *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, which rethinks limiting formulations of queer and diasporic subjects’ relationship to the space of ‘home’. Bolaki starts by showing how Lorde, leaving from the Anglo-American tradition of the lesbian, queers, and the childhood home demonstrates the dynamic relationship between ethnicity and sexuality in female queer diasporic narratives. It then turns to the lesbian community as a theoretical home and traces the process of ‘making home’ exemplified in *Zami*. She argues that *Zami* challenges idealized conceptions of home and belonging without abandoning these concepts altogether. The article shows that leaving the old “home” which is the childhood home to a new “home” which is the lesbian community as queer black women. This is not against the childhood home, but a process to accept ourselves. This article gives me more insights that *Zami* can be read as a text that illustrates how queer migrations are not merely against the childhood home but rather reprocess and reclaim it differently.

Fifth, an article by Folabomi L. Ogunyemi published in 2021 entitled “Trauma and Empowerment in Tina McElroy Ansa’s *Ugly Way*”, This article examines the novel’s thematic junction of Black feminist theory and trauma theory through close reading. *Ugly Ways* portrays African American women as multifaceted human beings, going beyond historical, literary, and popular

representation. In Tina McElroy Ansa's *Ugly Ways*, Ogunyemi argued that the change of the main character from the novel is an act of empowerment and an expression of psychic pain. She also looked at a connection that the novel makes between black feminist theory and trauma theory. When African American women are freed from the constraints of the Strong Black Woman image, their response to trauma can be liberating. I note that Ogunyemi examines that Ansa accepts her protagonist's entire humanity and investigates how everyday incidents may be distressing in the lives of African American women. Recognizing that African American women, too, have emotional and mental boundaries confronts society and a literary tradition that places unreasonable expectations of invulnerability on African American women. I would say that the author explains her thoughts in detail and measured. Also, the author divides her explanation into several parts so that the reader is clear in reading her explanations.

Sixth, an article entitle "Black Power in Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*, *Phenomenal Woman*, and *Weekend Glory*" was written by Sylvania Krisna and Liliek Soelistyo in 2013. They discuss the black power inside the three poems of Maya Angelou. They argue that there are different kinds of black power in each poem. Based on their analysis of the three poems of Maya Angelou, it can be seen from three speakers that black power fights against injustice as black women. They fight against gender discrimination and oppression, and also show that black women are not powerless. The three poems of Maya Angelou mentioned in this article have different ideas about black power, but it has the similarity that the speaker wants to change their life to be better by fighting race

and gender discrimination. This article shows that black power's struggles and problems, also help me to know the kind of black power which is useful for me to enrich my research.

