

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

In everyday life, literature functions as a unique means of communication, one of which is poetry. Poetry uses to express feelings, such as affection, love, anger, hate, and even despair. Poetry often appears everywhere, be it in novels, magazines, biographies, radio, or even social media. Someone usually tells how they feel by looking for the media to vent their feelings. Some people vent these thoughts and feelings in a series of sentences and excellent word choices. This beautiful sentence arrangement is unconsciously a manifestation of a poem. Poetry is made by a writer from experience and social environment and becomes a literary work that can be enjoyed by the language's beauty.

Poetry is a written literary work whose contents are an expression of the feelings of a poet and contain meaningful words. Poetry has different characteristics from other literary works. In his book, entitled *Introduction to Literary Studies* (1999), Klarer states that poetry is one of the oldest genres in literary history (27). Narrative poetry is poetry that tells a story with a clearly developed structured plot. This kind of poetry cover genres such as long epic poetry, romance, and ballads. Meanwhile, lyric poetry is synonymous with a shorter form that focuses on one idea with one event. In *A Text-Book for the Study of Poetry*, Connell also gave an

interesting view on poetry. According to Connell (1913: 5), poetry is an emotional idea. In the book Peck and Loyle (1984: 11). Wordsworth adds that poetry is a form of a spontaneous overflowing of strong feelings. So, it can conclude that poetry is the result of strong human thoughts and emotions.

In this study, the writer chooses poetry to be analyzed because poetry is a unique literary work and has more meaning than readers think. A short and concise word series can carry the author's purpose, thoughts, and messages without giving a long sentence. A poetry can have different meanings. The meaning of poetry depends on the understanding, imagination, and experience of each reader. Another reason writers choose poetry is that research on readers' responses to poetry is still scarce. In this thesis, writers are interested in using poetry with the theme of women.

Nowadays, women become one of the objects of study in literary works that are always discussed. The topic of women still gets attention, both in the scope of religion, economics, politics, social, arts, and culture. Many literary works, one of them is poetry, which talks about women and conveys women's voices in it. Women's voices in literary works often represent women's voices in real life and can even be the opposite. In this case, literary works reflect the society that has been seen as media that can represent women's voices.

Many poets give messages and support to women. One of the writers known to the world for her work representing women's voice is Maya Angelou. Maya

Angelou was born as Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4th, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. During her lifetime, she recognized for her works representing her own identity with power and distinction. She is an African-American writer who is active as a poet, novelist, screenplay, and orator. Maya Angelou is one of the woman writers who use the feminist approach in her work. In her poems, Angelou expresses about the woman during racial discrimination, segregation, and male domination. She described how the pain of injustice that occurred at that time. Besides, some of Maya Angelou's poems also highlight the suffering that women experience in their lives. Through clear and impressive words, Maya Angelou can convey the painful experienced by women.

In this thesis, the writer chooses to discuss themes in poems by Maya Angelou through an analysis of reader responses. In this research, the writer uses Maya Angelou's five selected poems: *Woman Work*, *Still I Rise*, *Caged Bird*, *Phenomenal Woman*, and *When I Think About My Self*. These five poems contain similar meanings and themes. The speaker in these five poems is a woman who gets pressure from her environment and has various life problems. The problems described by Maya Angelou in her poems have a very close relationship with her life. In her poem, Angelou told the reader how she faced the difficulties and injustices she felt. She wanted to voice her message that, a however complicated and difficult life was, 'they' were able to solve their problems because they had something they wanted to fight.

The superiority of these five poems lies in the message the writer conveys. As the writer explained before, these five selected poems are about women and the problems that exist in their lives. These five poems give voice to how women can survive and be strong in facing all the difficulties they met in the past and apply to the present and the future. These poems are interesting to study because the writer can feel represented by these poems. The writer believes that the five poems chosen by Maya Angelou will produce various readers' responses because they contain deep themes and represent women's voices. The answers provided by the readers will vary depending on the understanding and experience of each reader.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

This research intends to see how the five selected poems of Maya Angelou can represent women's voices. These five selected poems raised issues and problems faced by women in their lives. The various problems in question can be in the form of violence, workload, power, or women's rights that ignored. This issue is fascinating and essential to raise. Until now, there are still many women who also feel what is voiced by selected poems. The sufferings and restraints felt by women seemed to overflow and were reflected in every written word. This issue is fascinating, considering that the selected poems are not new works.

There are still many injustices, whether it comes from social, family, or workplace, making a few women choose to remain silent. Therefore, the writer is

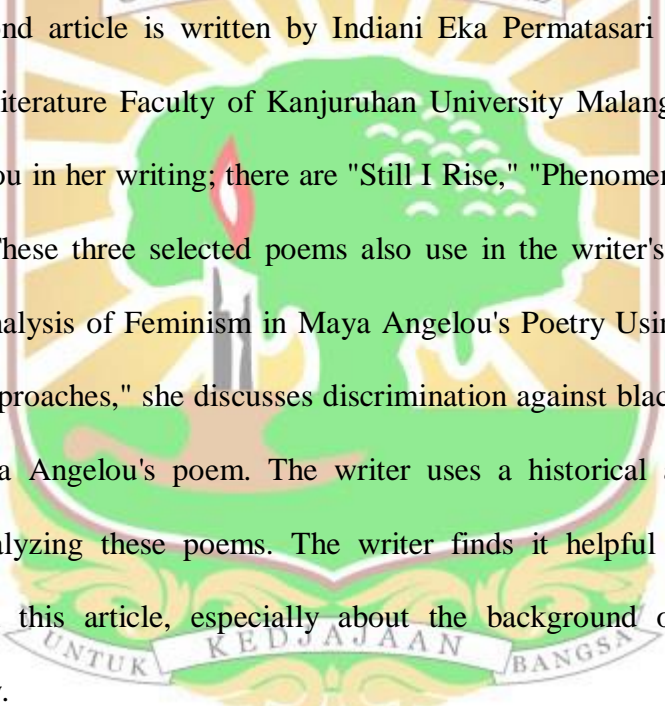
very interested in seeing how the readers view selected poems. The writer wants to find out how the reader responds to the five chosen poems given. The writer wants to know whether the reader can feel represented by the speakers in these poems, and the reader thinks that this poem can represent women's voices. Also, students' interest in reading poetry has now begun to decline. This problem makes the writer motivated to do research, considering that the respondents are students in the English Department.

1.3 The Review of Related Studies

Research is necessary to have a review of related studies. The function of a review of related studies is to develop a systematic way of previous studies that have to do with literature studies ever undertaken. A review of related literature serves a presentation about the research and analysis that has been done previously. This research paper has the purpose of describing an analysis of the reader's responses to Maya Angelou's selected poems. This research is based on the reader-response theory. The writer studies some books, articles, and analyses to understand the approach.

The writer found several articles that also discussed Maya Angelou's poetry. P. Jayageetha wrote the first article, and Dr. S. S. Jansi Rani, "Picture of Woman: Feminist Reading of Phenomenal Maya Angelou." This article discusses one of Maya Angelou's famous poems, The Phenomenal Woman using feminist approach. The author believes that Maya Angelou, in her poem, argues that a woman's sexuality not only identifies with a beautiful face but how a woman feels in herself. The writer agrees with the opinions they convey in this article. The writer notes that

"Phenomenal Woman" is a work that praises the intensity of a woman and how the speaker describes as a woman who is reliable and confident. What this research has in common is the use of both Maya Angelou's poems. As for the difference, there is the goal to be obtained. Other differences also exist in the approach used. The research above uses a feminist approach, while this study uses a reader-response approach in conducting research.



The second article is written by Indiani Eka Permatasari (2016) from the Language and Literature Faculty of Kanjuruhan University Malang. She uses three poems of Angelou in her writing; there are "Still I Rise," "Phenomenal Woman," and "Caged Bird." These three selected poems also use in the writer's research. In her article titled "Analysis of Feminism in Maya Angelou's Poetry Using Historical and Biographical Approaches," she discusses discrimination against black women, which appears in Maya Angelou's poem. The writer uses a historical and biographical approach in analyzing these poems. The writer finds it helpful and gains more knowledge with this article, especially about the background of writing Maya Angelou's poetry.

Furthermore, the writer found an article entitled "Elements of Nature as the Object of Escapism in Maya Angelou's "Woman Work." This article was written by Rr. Arielia Yustisiana from the English Department, Widya Mandala Madiun Catholic University. This article published in the Journal of Language and Literature. In her article, Yustisiana discusses the natural elements implied in the poem Woman

Work. She uses several theories in this research, namely nature and escapism. This article helps the writer analyze because the writer also uses one of Maya Angelou's works. From this article, the writer can find additional information about the symbols contained in Maya Angelou's poetry. Yustisiana analyzes the poetry closely, and this is the strength of this article.

The writer also found several previous studies related to the reader-response theory. Arisa Tria Utari wrote the first study from the English Department at Andalas University. This study was entitled "The Reader's Responses To O' Henry's Selected Short Stories," and published in 2010. This study discusses readers' responses to O' Henry's three short stories, entitled: After Twenty Years, The Gift of Magi, and The Last Leaf. The purpose of this study is to find out whether the reader likes or dislikes short stories. Utari took respondents from English Literature Students 2006 at Andalas University. The writer uses the "gap" acceptance theory proposed by Wolfgang Iser, which emphasizes the implicit reader, which is also used by the writer in this thesis. From this study, the writer can find references and figures to design a questionnaire because it also uses a questionnaire to gather data.

The second research is written by Hadi Gustian, "The Reader Responses to The Presence of Love and Conflict in William Shakespeare's Mid Summer Night's Dream" 2015. In this thesis, the writer discusses the reader's response to misunderstandings in the presence of love and contradictions in the drama "A Midsummer Night's Dream." This study aims to determine the reason for this

misunderstanding, whether the love stories present the entire conflict or the complete contradiction that shows all the love stories in the drama. The data taken is the opinion of respondents who are students of the English Department who had performed the drama. Like the previous research, Gustian uses Wolfgang Iser's theory about the implicit reader in his study. From the results of his study, it can conclude that the respondent can fill the 'gaps' stated by Iser.

1.4 The Scope of the Research

Limitation of the problem is needed so that a study can lead to the intended target. Research needs to be limited in scope so that the study field is not too broad, causing research to be unfocused. The research is limited to Maya Angelou's five selected poems representing women's voices; there is Woman Work, Still I Rise, Caged Bird, Phenomenal Woman, and When I Think About My Self. The respondent of this research is the 2016 student in the English Department of Andalas University. However, to achieve the objective of this study, the writer will focus on three things, they are:

1. The reader's interest to poetry,
2. The reader's interpretation of the five selected poems given,
3. How the poems change the respondents' way of thinking.

1.5 Research Questions

There are questions which need to be answered in this research:

1. How is the female students of the English Department 2016 interest in reading poem?
2. Are the readers able to interpret the moral values contained in Maya Angelou's poems?
3. How do Maya Angelou's poems affect the reader?

