CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

The previous chapter explained about Maya's personal life such as her experience in discrimination, segregation and her love's experience. While in this chapter, this study will try to answer the problems to find the theme and the relationship of Maya's selected poems and her personal life. The selected poems are *Still I Rise*, *Equality, Woman Work* and *Touched by An Angel*.

The first, this chapter will describe the character and setting of each poems to determine the theme of each poems. After, finding the themes, this chapter will describe the correlation of Maya Angelou's poems with her life experiences like discrimination, segregation and love through biographical criticism.

4.1 Still I Rise

4.1.1 Explication of Still I Rise

Still I Rise is one of the best known of Maya's poems, that was published in 1978. This poem is about a Black person who lives among Whites. In this poem, the speaker shows that she will never give up to rise and will move forward for a better life for her and other Black African-American women. This poem offers strong tones inside such as defiant, angry and self-assured. This poem also has powerful in the words and meaning. For example in the line "*Just like moons and like suns*", this line shows the confidence of the speaker who rises herself up emotionally to stay strong and she use words "*moons*" and "*suns*" as comparison that they also stay rises everyday no matter what happens.

Although this poem was written in 1978, the message that presented inside is very powerful and can be related to anyone even in this time. *Still I Rise* is a poem

which is a sort of encouragement for everyone, this poem conveys whatever or however the society discriminates us, we must still rise and be courage.

4.1.2 Character

In the previous chapter explained that character was developed through description, action, thought, speeches and direct statement of the author (Gillespie 190). In this case, the character of the work can be the writer itself. Like in this poem, the speaker or the character is Maya Angelou herself since the poem is about a Black American who lives among Whites and she is a Black American woman who also lived in America where White people is the majority group. At the time, Black people have experienced of discrimination, insulting and oppression because of their race (Rahmawati 2).

The character here uses first person point of view "*I*". It can be analyzed by psychological character which the character showed by the inner mechanism of the character's mind as his habitual responses, attitudes, longing, purposes, likes and dislikes (Dinurriyah 116). In this study the character explained through the character's thought and the response about what have White people done to her. It also can be analyzed physically because Maya explained in line "*I*'m a Black ocean, leaping and wide," this line shows the character identity or race is a Black woman.

This poem begins energetically, speaking to unknown person (or maybe persons):

You may write me down in history With your bitter, twisted lies, You may trod me in the very dirt But still, like dust, I'll rise. Because of the character or the speaker in this poem is a Black American, "you" here can identify as White people. The reason is we can see in that stanza which shows the form of discrimination such as from lines "*You may write me down in history*" and "*You may trod me in the very dirt*". "*You*" here wants to make the speaker looks bad and worthless as a human, they look her as dust that has no value and means nothing in society.

Despite the White people do that to her, the character "*T*" in this poem looks confident, brave and pride as Black people. It is showed by the third and fourth lines in the second stanza "*Cause I walk like I've got oil wells*" and "*Pumping in my living room*", those lines presented about her pride as Black people. She considered that she walks like she got oil wells, "*oil wells*" here means something valuable. Hence, she is pride and confident if she has something different and valuable so that she is not afraid with White people.

4.1.3 Setting

Based on the character of the poem *Still I Rise* that the character "I" is Maya Angelou and "*you*" refers to White people who live around her. Although the setting of is not mentioned specifically in this poem, it seems that the setting is where Maya lived. The setting in this poem was showed by the tone of this poem. The tone of this poem is angry, because Maya feel different treatment from White. It can see in some lines of discrimination acts that experienced by Maya from her environment.

You may write me down in history With your bitter, twisted lies, You may trod me in the very dirt But still, like dust, I'll rise.

She was lived in America, exactly in Stamps Arkansas since she was three years old. Arkansas was a racist area divided between Black and White. At the time, the society was controlled by White people. The discrimination and segregation appeared, such as laws there forbade Blacks from being seated at restaurants (Stewart 14).

4.1.4 Theme

After knowing the character "*I*" is a Black American and the setting is a place where White people are the majority group and at the time Black people was controlled by White people, automatically we concluded that the main theme that suitable for the poem *Still I Rise* is discrimination because the content of this poem shows the kinds of discrimination acts by White people and Maya also had experienced it when she lived among White people.

Some acts can be identified as kinds of discrimination in this poem seen in some lines of this poem.

You may write me down in history With your bitter, twisted lies, You may trod me in the very dirt But still, like dust, I'll rise.

In the line "You may write me down in history" and "You may trod me in the very dirt" shows racial prejudice of White people around her, they look Black people as dust that has no value and means nothing in society based on the painful history of African American people which came to America as a slave to be sold. Their history makes bad stereotype about Black people.

> You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness, But still, like air, I'll rise.

The stanza shows clearly about the discrimination acts of White people who dislike even hate her and they like to insult to Black people. Those lines above explain the painful condition of discrimination was faced by Maya Angelou since she lived in White environment.

4.1.5 Relation between Still I Rise with Maya's Life

Based on the theme of *Still I Rise* above, it is discrimination. It seems clearly the relation between Maya Angelou's life experiences with this poem that she had experienced of discrimination since she was a child and lived with her grandmother in Arkansas exactly Stamps. Stamps was a hot, dusty town, held together by a lumberyard and cotton fields and split down the middle by racial prejudice.

"In Stamps, the segregation was so complete that most Black children didn't really, absolutely know what Whites looked like," (Cox 12)

Her early years lived with her grandmother in Stamps was happy, but it was not longer. Eventually, she had learned and realized there were still segregation and practice of discrimination in Stamps.

The first discrimination was experienced by her is act of disrespect by some girls to her grandmother. Those girls which Maya called "poWhitetrash" had insulted and mocked her grandmother in her grandmother's store. They posed the physical appearance of her grandmother as an ape. Their act appropriate with Maya's *Still I Rise* in sixth stanza which explained about what White people around her did to Black people, those are insulting and mocking because they dislike even hate to Black people. You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes, You may kill me with your hatefulness, But still, like air, I'll rise.

In response to what the girls did, Maya was anger and resentment. When the girls aped her grandmother's posture, Maya wept and thought of getting her uncle's rifle, and wanted to throw lye and pepper on them and to scream at them. It was contrasting with what her grandmother did, she did not feel angry or resentment even when the girls left her store, she still called them "Miss" politely. Her grandmother's action made her realized that there is a more effective strategy for reacting to racism and segregation than rage.

The act of discrimination also had experienced by her. It happened when she was in seriousness in the pain of toothache. Her grandmother took her to a White dentist who he has debt to Maya's grandmother. He refused to treat her because she was Black. Moreover, he said painful thing that he would "rather sick my hand in a dog's mouth" than in a Black person (20).

"Annie, you know I don't treat nigra, colored people." "I know, Dentist Lincoln. But this here is just my little grandbaby, and she ain't gone be no trouble to you ..." "Annie, everybody has a policy. In this world you have to have a policy. Now, my policy is I don't treat colored peop le... My policy ..." He let go of the door and stepped nearer Momma. The three of us were crowded on the small landing. "Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's." (qtd in Assefie)

Our name is an important part of our identity, if someone deliberately changes our name; it is a lack of respect for our identity (Assefie 40). It include of violation's act of Marguerite's identity since she is Black. She had experienced it when she worked as a domestic-in-training for Mrs. Cullinan. She was a White woman. She changed Maya's name from 'Marguerite' to 'Mary' without her consent because she thought that 'Mary' is easier in pronouncing than 'Marguerite'. It shows the lack of respect White mistresses have for their servants, who are considered as inferior just because they are Black. This act reminds her of the slavery times when Blacks were named on the will of their masters (40).

> "I want Mary to go down to Mrs. Randall's and take her some soup. She's not been feeling well for a few days ." Miss Glory's face was a wonder to see. "You mean Margaret, ma'am. Her name's Margaret." "That's too long. She's Mary from now on" (41)

Based on Maya's experiences was described above, those show the kinds of discrimination acts to Black people of White people. Maya skillfully presents her experiences of discrimination in her poem. Those experiences of discrimination make her easier to express, reveal her feeling and thought of discrimination in creating poem *Still I Rise* because she had experienced it by herself in her life. By this poem she wanted to convey that she had experienced of discrimination from White people.

4.2 Equality

4.2.1 Explication of Equality

Equality is Maya's poem was published in 2001. This poem is almost same with the poem before, *Still I Rise*. This poem also conveys about discrimination acts. However, this poem seems clearly shows the wish of the speaker in equality. With the

repetition of sentences '*Equality and I will be free*', this sentences shows that the speaker really wants to be equal with others. The tones in this poem seem powerful and brave in describing the speaker's desire and feeling. In *Equality*, Maya Angelou wants to address the importance of equality and freedom without segregation, discrimination and racism.

4.2.2 Character

Similar with poem *Still I Rise*, the speaker or the character here is Maya Angelou herself since the poem is also about Black American who lives among Whites in America where White people is the majority group. However in this poem more explain about the speaker's desire to be equal with White from all kinds of equality such as gender, race, age, etc.

The character here uses first person point of view "*I*". It can be analyzed by psychological character because Maya Angelou explained the character in this poem through the character's thought and the response about what White people did to her and what she wanted.

Because the character "I" here is a Black woman, the "*you*" here definitely White people. We can see from the first stanza that shows how White people seen to the speaker. They did not consider of the existence of the speaker.

> "You declare you see me dimly through a glass which will not shine, though I stand before you baldly, trim in rank and making time"

The following line *"while my drums beat out the message and the rhythms never change"* shows the speaker's desire to be equal with other. The word *"drums"*

presented the speaker's heart to ask for her right to be equal because "*drums*" is a thing sounds strong and loud. Her desire also showed in the repetition of line "*Equality, and I* will be free".

4.2.3 Setting

Similar with poem *Still I* Rise, the character of the poem *Equality* which the character "*I*" is Maya Angelou and "*you*" refers to White people who live around her. The setting in the poem also in a place where Maya lived, it is in America which the majority people are White people and the minority is Black people at the time. She lived in Arkansas, the place where races were divided between Black and White and discrimination and segregation still appeared. The setting was showed by the tone in this poem. The tone is powerful which Maya wants to get equality like everyone else because she got different treatment and bad stereotype from White people.

You announce my ways are wanton, that I fly from man to man, but if I'm just a shadow to you, could you ever understand ?

4.2.4 Theme

The most suitable theme for this poem is equality same with the title because the content of this poem is about the way of White people see and treat her, and how she wants to be treated.

"You declare you see me dimly through a glass which will not shine, though I stand before you baldly, trim in rank and making time"

In this poem, Maya wants White people to treat her equally as everyone else. "you" or White people in this poem reflected as a blind and deaf people because they pretends or even did not know about the sadness of Black people who did not have same treat as other people. It showed in the lines as below.

> "Take the blinders from your vision, take the padding from your ears and confess you've heard me crying and admit you've seen my tears"

4.2.5 Relation between Equality with Maya's Life

Equality is something never felt by Maya but on the contrary she often treat inequality from people in her environment because she is a Black woman who lived in White people environment. She had been treated like that when she lived in Stamps, Arkansas with grandmother which at the time the discrimination and segregation still appeared.

> These early years in Stamps were largely happy ones. But as loved as Maya felt by Momma and Uncle Willie, she was learning that there was ugliness about the town, too. Like the rest of the South in the 1930s, racial inequality was normal. Although slavery had been abolished since President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, little had changed for African Americans in the following seventysome years (Stewart 14).

In her environment, the practice of segregation still found. For example in the Stamps most Black residents worked for White plantation owners, they picked cotton or worked as maids in White homes (15).

She had experienced of segregation since she was a child. Oneday she and her brother wanted to go to movie. There, the ticket seller did not allow them to watch the movie in same place with White children but the seller took their money. At the time, there was a White girl bought a ticket, the seller gave her and politely asked her to watch the movie (17).

The different treatment of White people to Maya also had experienced when her eight-grade graduation ceremony in 1940. The graduation speaker, a White politician said in his speech about White schools in Arkansas and how graduates from those places would have many opportunities in life. Some might go on to be artists, inventors, or scientists. He emphasized that Blacks and Whites were not equal and Black opportunities were different. According to him, the opportunities of Black in careers as maids, handymen, and if they were very lucky, they could be athletes. However, they really had no future anywhere else (Stewart 31). His words were terribly depressing to her whereas she was excited in her graduation before. She became more sorrowful when she did not hear her name called or her honors listed since she was one of the top students in her class (Cox 19). Unequal act also she experienced from White dentist when she was toothache. This act has explained before in analysis of poem *Still I Rise*.

Those are some examples of unequal act or segregation that had experienced by Maya Angelou since she was a child. She often got different treatment when she lived in Stamps. Because of those experiences, she wants to get same treatment as other people. She wants to get equality, freedom and same right with White people. By her desire of get equality, she can reveal and express it into her poem *Equality* because she ever experienced of treated differently and segregation. She wants Black people have same right with other people and did not get racial prejudice again.

4.3 Woman Work

4.3.1 Explication of Woman Work

Woman work is one of *Maya's* poems about motherhood. It is a domestic poem was published in 1978 same with *Still I Rise*. This poem depicts the routine life of a housewife or a mother who performs her daily chores and her desire to take a rest from her chores.

I've got the children to tend	
The clothes to mend	
The floor to mop	
The food to shop	

Those lines are the example of the kinds of a housewife chore. Those lines show that a housewife is tending her children, mending some clothes, mopping the floor and cooking. However, this poem also shows her exhausted and depressing in doing all chores everyday.

> Storm blow me from here with your Fiercest wind Let me float across the sky Till I can rest again

4.3.2 Character

The character in this poem can be identified by psychological character which Maya explained it through the character's thought and response about being a housewife with all the chores. Similar with poem *Still I Rise*, The character in this poem also uses first person point of view which it showed by word "*T*". Based on the content of this poem, the character "*I*" seems a woman, a housewife or might be a mother because this poem explained some chores of a housewife. I've got the children to tend The clothes to mend The floor to mop The food to shop

The character in this poem also can identified as Maya Angelou herself since she had experience being a wife with some chores everyday because her husband did not permit her to do some works outside the house (Cox 50).

4.3.3 Setting

The setting of event in this poem is the routine life of Maya Angelou life when she becomes a housewife with all her chores everyday. In the first stanza shows some woman's works as housewife, it explains the numerous of works that must do everyday by a housewife.

> I've got the children to tend The clothes to mend The floor to mop The food to shop

4.3.4 Theme

Regarding with the character "I" is Maya Angelou herself and the setting of event is her routine life when she was a housewife. The theme that suitable with this poem is woman's works or chores because this poem shows the long list of woman's chores must do in the home. The character "I" in this poem wants to show what she should do everyday as a housewife.

> I've got the children to tend The clothes to mend The floor to mop

The food to shop Then chicken to fry The baby to dry I got company to feed The garden to weed I've got the shirts to press The tots to dress The cane to be cut I got to clean up this hut.

4.3.5 Relation between Woman Work with Maya's Life

Based on the theme of this poem is woman's work. The experiences about woman must do her chores as housewife had experienced by Maya Angelou when her husband are Tosh Angelos and Vasumzi Make.

Maya had married three times in her life. In 1950, she married with Tosh Angelos, a Greek sailor. Marrying with Angelos made her must still in the home, he did not allow Maya to work. She became a good housekeeping advertisement, cooking well-balanced, gourmet meals and molding fabulous jello desserts. My floors were dangerous with daily applications of wax and our furniture slick with polish (Cox 34). It is one of her experiences of being housewife who did not permitted by her husband to do other job outside from her house. After two and a half years, Maya felt that her marriage was not happy and they decided to divorce (34).

Besides married with Tosh Angelos, she also ever married with Vasumzi Make, a South African activist in 1960. She was proud being his wife, an activist man which she was fell in love with him because her spirit to struggle against injustice in his country. Although she was proud with her husband do, she was less happy about the

restrictions that he put on her life. He wanted Maya to be an African wife, which meant she should be obedient to her husband. He did not want her to work, but rather spend her time keeping their apartment clean (Stewart 65). Once again, she became a meek housewife.

> "It seemed to me that I washed, scrubbed, mopped, dusted, and waxed thoroughly every other day. Make was particular. He checked on my progress. Sometimes he would pull the sofa away from the wall to see if possibly I had missed a layer of dust." (qtd in Cox)

Actually, at the time she has a job and she must resigned from her job because her husband's desire. He gave her a household and food allowance, a little cash, but would not tell her where he got his money. For months, she faced to difficulty of finances in her family and she decided to work without permission of her husband. When she told to her husband, he was furious with her for not being a good African wife and he shouted, "You took a job without consulting with me? Are you a man?" (Stewart 69).

Based on Maya's experiences was described above, her life as a housewife with Tosh Angelos and Vasumzi Make made her should be an obedient wife and do all chores as a housewife. Those men did not permit her to do other job except in the home. Through her experiences being an obedient wife as her husband wants, it was made her easier when she create poem *Woman Work* because she experienced about it. In this poem, she wants to convey what she done when she became those men's wife.

4.4 Touched by An Angel

4.4.1 Explication of Touched by An Angel

Touched by An Angel was published in 1985. This poem talks about the power of love and the meaning of love from the time before love comes to us until it gives us the effect from its coming. Unlike three poems before, this poem only consists of three stanzas. Although this poem consists of three stanzas but this poem is difficult to understand than the previous three poems before because Maya Angelou uses some literary devices here, such as personification, hyperbole and metaphor. For example for using personification is the line "*Love strikes away the chains of fear*", the meaning of "*strike away*" here is love can omit us from feeling of fear. Maya Angelou through this poem wants to tell for everyone about her thought about love for her life.

4.4.2 Character

As the three poems before, the character in this poem can be analyzed by psychological character. The character can be identified in this poem because Maya shows it through her thought about love. In this poem, Maya Angelou used first person plural point of view "we" which means herself and everyone. Maya used "we" here because according to Maya, everyone also think about love as what she thinks. The character "we" here shown the importance and the power of love for human life. One of the roles of love for human life that conveys in this poem is love can bring us from loneliness into happiness. It is shown in the first stanza in this poem.

> We, unaccustomed to courage exiles from delight live coiled in shells of loneliness until love leaves its high holy temple and comes into our sight

to liberate us into life

The character here also consider love like an "*Angel*" as the title in this poem which she thinks that love is an angel that can change our life. Nevertheless, she thinks that to be touched by an angel (when love comes to our life) would be the greatest delight we could get.

4.4.3 Setting

Based on the character in this poem which wants to convey her thought about love. The setting in this poem seems when the character fall in love or feeling of love. It is appropriate with Maya's love experience which she had fallen in love for many times to some men who come in her life. She fall in love easily to some men because she considers that love can bring us from loneliness to happiness in life.

> We, unaccustomed to courage exiles from delight live coiled in shells of loneliness until love leaves its high holy temple and comes into our sight to liberate us into life.

4.4.4 Theme

After finding the character and the setting above, it is clear that the suitable theme for this poem is love because all the stanzas in this poem speak about love and the character of this poem also explains about the power and the importance of love. This poem shows clearly the power of love in each stanza.

> live coiled in shells of loneliness until love leaves its high holy temple

and comes into our sight to liberate us into life

This stanza conveys that when we live in loneliness then love comes into our lives and it will free us from the loneliness. While in the second stanza in line "*Love arrives*", "*and in its train come ecstasies*", it conveys that when love comes to us and it will take us from our sadness to bring us into joy and happiness as ecstasies can make people forget their problem and get happiness. And the last stanza conveyed that love can take away our fear, remove all our timidity and makes us be brave. The main idea of love that showed in this poem is love can change everything from us and only love can set us free from loneliness and timidity.

We are weaned from our timidity In the flush of love's light we dare be brave And suddenly we see that love costs all we are and will ever be. Yet it is only love which sets us free.

4.4.5 Relation between Touched by An Angel with Maya's Life

Regarding with the theme of *Touched by An Angel* is love, this thing had been experienced by Maya for many times. In Maya's life, she had experienced of falling in love for many times. Her first love was Curley, a navy man fourteen years older than she was. She met him when she worked in restaurant as cook of Creole. He was one of customers in that restaurant. His kindness touched her heart, and she quickly fell in love with this 31-ye7ar-old man (Cox 25). They had dated for two months. Someday, he said that actually he was engaged, his fiancée lived in another state and they would be getting married soon. This fact did not matter for Maya, she choose to ignore Curley's admission. She saw how good he was with her baby and enjoyed every minute she spent with him.

> It did not matter that he told her, he would marry his real girlfriend in New Orleans when her job in San Diego ended. She pushed that fact out of her mind when they played with Clyde at the park or rode the Ferris wheel (25).

Her dating was ended when her boyfriend's job was ended too. She was crushed and feeling of broken heart. Her behavior changed, she moped around, rarely ate, lose weight, whined, and cried. Her behavior made her brother disliked.

> "Now, My, if you're happy being miserable, enjoy it, but don't ask me to feel sorry for you. If you want to stay around here looking like death eating a soda cracker, that's your business". (qtd in Cox)

In order to forget her broken heart from Curly, she decided to seek other job and she found a job as dancer. In this job she has a dancing partner R.L Poole, a nightclub tap dancer. They often performed together in the front, it made Maya has special feeling for him. When she had a way to forget her ex boyfriend, Poole's girlfriend back to him and she was the dancer partner of Poole before. She was loneliness, she often imagined that she wanted to have a husband and a good father to her son. In order to forget her loneliness, she was using marijuana, to deal with the loneliness and frustration she felt (Stewart 46).

After she resigned from her job as dancer, she found other job as a cook in a restaurant. There, she was noticed by a man named L.D. Tolbrook, who as old as her father. In her loneliness after breaking heart from Poole she was fallen in love with him easily because his politeness and kindness was impressed her although he was a married. He promised to leave his wife. Her love to Tolbrook was too much, when he has financial problem Maya said to help him. She volunteered to be a prostitute for him. Although she knew that what she did was wrong thing but she was proud that she can help her man (47). She believed that after her boyfriend's problem was solved, she will out from prostitution and has good life with them and Clyde.

Her love story with Tolbrook was not long resisted when her son was taken by her baby sitter. She just realized that she oten spent her times in prostitution made her ignore her son. At the time, she decided to break up. Then she found her son in her baby sitter's home. She tried to do other job and got a job in a restaurant again. There, she met again with a man named Troubadour Martin, an addict. Once again, she had fallen in love. Because of love, she always did anything for her man. For Martin, she wanted to become an addict too so that he will more attract with her (Cox 30).

All of those man who ever become her boyfriends, there are nothing become her husband. In 1950, she met Tosh Angelos and married with him. He and Clyde liked each other. However, Maya's mother disagreed with her marriage because Angelos was a White people and poor man. Maya did not care about her mother, she believed that Angelos was a good man and a good father for her son. Their marriage did not long resist because they realized that they were not happy together (34).

In 1960, she met again with a man and married with him. He was an African, Vasumzi Make. Before Maya met with him, actually she had had a fiancé Thomas Allen. She decided to leave her fiancé because she impressed with Make which a South African activist who struggle against injustice in Africa. Her marriage also did not long resist because the restrictions he put on her own life. He wanted Maya in the home, did her duties as housewife.

Finally, in 1971, she met a good man for her and married with him, he was Paul Du Feu, a White Briton she met at a London dinner party. He was the one who accepted and liked by her mother and her brother.

Maya is a woman who believes of power of love and respect of love. It showed when she falling in love, she will do anything for her boyfriend because of love. She believes that love can give her happiness and bring her from loneliness. It showed when she was broken heart and met a man who she think a good man, she will falling in love easily. All of those love experiences of Maya Angelou might be make her easier when she create her poem *Touched by An Angel* because she had experienced it for many times.