

**African American Women's Self-Esteem Reflected in Maya
Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's*
*Blessed Assurance***

THESIS

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
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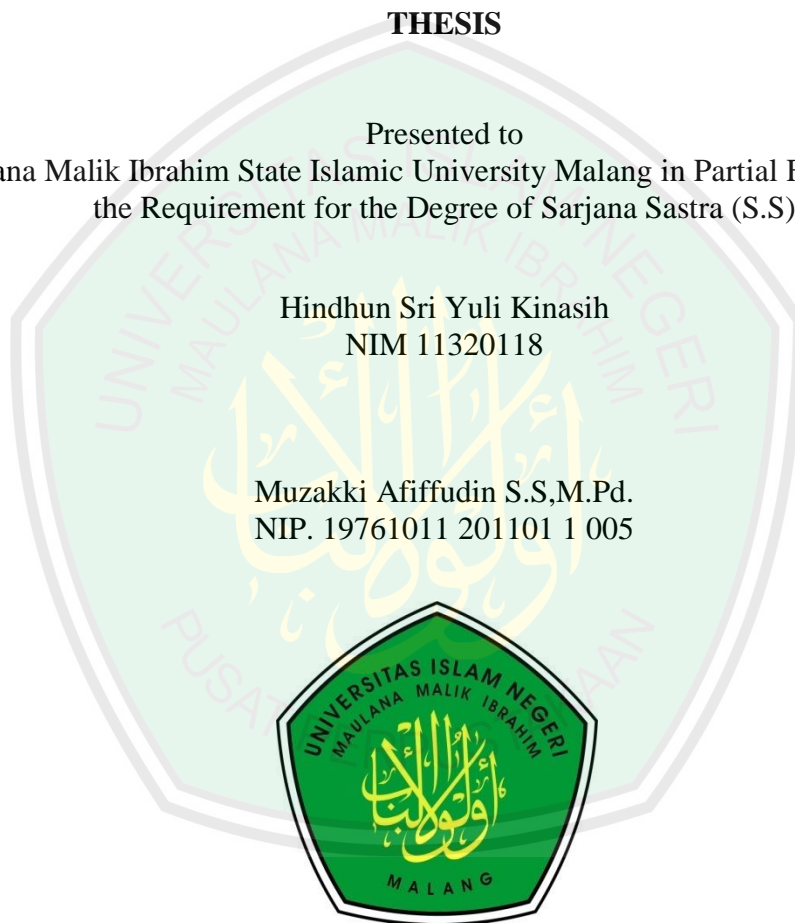
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THESIS

Presented to
Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S)

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2015

APPROVAL SHEET

This is to certify that the thesis entitled
**“African-American Women’s Self-Esteem Reflected in *Phenomenal Woman*,
Woman Me, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* by Maya Angelou”**

written by Hindhun Sri Yuli Kinasih has been approved by thesis advisor.

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LEGITIMATION SHEET

This is to certify that thesis entitled “African-American Women’s Self-Esteem Reflected in Maya Angelou’s *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women’s Blessed Assurance*” has been approved by the Board of Exainers as the requirement for the degree of Sarjana Sastra.

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MOTTO

“Do whatever you like, be consistent, and success will come naturally.”



DEDICATION

This thesis is proudly dedicated to my mother, Dra. Ulfa, and my father (alm.), Winartono, S.Sos as my motivation and spirit to finish this thesis. A thousand of thanks also gave for my beloved younger sisters, Niken Ayu Damayanti and Hananing Kumalasari, and my “emergency” friends.

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The researcher expresses her gratitude to Allah SWT. for His Blessing and Mercy she can accomplish her mini-thesis entitled “African-American Women’s Self-Esteem Reflected in Maya Angelou’s *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*” as the requirement for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra. Sholawat and Salam are also delivered toward Rasulullah SAW, who has guide his followers to the rightness.

In arranging this thesis, a lot of people have provided motivation, advice, support, and even remark that had helped the researcher. The researcher aims to express her gratitude and appreciation to all of them. First the researcher’s deepest appreciation toward her beloved parents Winartono,S.Sos and Dra. Ulfa. Secondly, the researcher presents her appreciation toward her advisor Muzakki Afiffudin S.S,M.Pd who has given advise to complete her research. The greatest thanks is also delivered toward all of lecturers of Humaniora Faculty who has taught the researcher for four years. The last, the researcher gives her thanks to all of her friends in English Language and Letter Department.

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The Researcher

ABSTRACT

Kinasih,Hindhun.2015.African American *Women's Self-Esteem reflected in Maya Angelou's Phenomenal Woman, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. Thesis,English Language and Letters Department, Humaniora Faculty,.Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang
The Advisor : Muzakki Afiffudin S.S,M.Pd.
Key words : African American Women, Black Feminism, Womanism,Self-Esteem

As Black slavery in America has been abolished in 1865, many people think that the discrimination toward Black African American people has been deleted too. However, discrimination and humiliation are still perceived by African American people, especially African American women who are considered having greater discrimination rather than African American men since they experience both racial and sexual discrimination. Knowing this situation, it logically causes the low self-esteem of African American women. Yet, the recent study by Patterson (2004) argues that African American women have high self-esteem and proud to be an African American woman. Patterson's research makes the researcher questions about the result of Patterson's research, especially from literary point of view. Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate African-American Women's Self-Esteem Reflected in literary works of Maya Angelou, *Phenomenal Woman, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*.

To find the goal or the aims of this research, the researcher did several steps. The researcher firstly explicated each poem to identify the whole meaning of each poem. The second step is identifying figurative language and imagery in each of these three poems since the researcher assumes that Maya Angelou delivers her idea about African American Women's Self-Esteem by using figurative language and imagery in poems *Phenomenal Woman, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. After analyzing figurative language and imagery, the researcher identifies the meaning and the self-esteem of African-American women which is reflected in these three poems through figurative language and imagery. The last step is making the conclusion of the research.

The result of this research shows that Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* tend to reflect the condition that African American women have high and positive self esteem through the imagery and figurative languages used which show the confidence, the pride, and the positive self-evaluation of African American women. Those are the signs of people who have high self-esteem or healthy self-esteem.

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ABSTRACT

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African American women is one of inferior groups who have experienced multi discrimination in America (Shokraii, 1998) which cause them having a negative self-esteem (Kardiber & Ovesey, 1951). Yet, the recent study by Patterson (2004) argues that African American women have high self-esteem and proud to be an African American woman. Patterson's research makes the researcher questions about the result of Patterson's research, especially from literary point of view. Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate African-American women's self-esteem reflected in literary works of Maya Angelou, *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*.

To find the aims of this research, the researcher applies several steps pffered by Lye (1996) to analyze the poems. He states that there are several elements which have to be noted to analyze poems, which are title, genre, voice, theme, structure, setting, imagery, figurative language, sound, historical and cultural distance from the poems, and the ideology behind the creating process of the poem. In this research, the researcher is more focusing on imagery and figurative language since Rahmawati (2011) states that imagery and figurative language employed in Maya Angelou's poems can function to depict the condition and the image of Black African American women. As analyzing imagery and figurative language employed in *Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*, the researcher applies the theory of Womanism by Alice Walker to identify the self-esteem reflected in those three poems.

The result of this research shows that Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* reflect the condition that African American women have high and positive self-esteem even though they are discriminated and seen negatively by other people. Most of people consider them as a woman who is not beautiful and humiliated sexually, yet they are still confident and proud to be an African American woman. The high self-esteem of African American women is gotten from the support of their family and their group.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and research method. The background of the study explains the reason why the researcher was interested in studying the title. The research questions contain the problems or questions which will be solved by the researcher. The objectives of the study show the aims of this study. The significance of the study explains about the importance of the study. The last is the research method which explains how the researcher collects and analyzes the data to do this study.

1.1 Background of The Study

America is a liberal country that always shouts about freedom and equality. Every people from different gender, race, and social class should live in harmony without perceiving any discrimination. However, in fact there is still oppression and a discrimination experienced by the people of this country. Race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, age, and ethnicity are the target of oppression that happen in America (Krisna&Soelistyo, 2013)

One of the discriminations which have become a huge concern is the race discrimination toward Black people in America. It is assumed that it is related to the Slavery Period which has been shown in American History. It starts from 1600's when African people were brought by British colonies in American land to be slaves (Hallam, 2004). They worked for White people, especially in the field or as a house maid and other uneducated work. Black people have family and

children in America and they are frequently called African-American people. Their families also work as their parents. Because of the lower position and lack of education for African-American people, societies especially White people humiliate and discriminate them physically and ideologically.

Although the Government of America has abolished the slavery since 1865, the discrimination toward African American people cannot be deleted yet among American society until the present day, although its number is not as big as in the previous years. It can be proved by the result of the statistical research done by Partnership Women and Families (2014) which stated that African American people, especially African American women, have lower salary and the quality of life compared to men, White people and other races in America. The oppression and discrimination toward African-American women is considered to be worse compared to African-American men since they are unlike African-American men who are discriminated only because they are black, African-American women experience multi discrimination since they are women, black, and have a lower social class. They are oppressed because of their gender, their race, and their social class.

Living as the inferior among White people, African American women consequently feel discriminated and have low self-esteem to face the life in their society. However, the recent study by Patterson (2004) surprisingly found that African American women have high self-esteem, as well as European American women. The main factor of their high self-esteem is from the support of their social group and their family. In fact, they feel proud of being black. The high self-esteem owned by African American women is reflected by the works of one

of the greatest black scholars, Maya Angelou. Most of her literary works show the pride and the confidence of African American women although they are humiliated by other people. She stated that she speaks on behalf of herself and other African American women (Janouskova, 2005). It means that she basically represents the image and the way of thinking of African American women generally through her works.

A number of Angelou's works which reflect African American women self-esteem are *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. These poems show how confident the African American women are in showing their competence and their beauty. *Phenomenal Woman* tells the women, especially African American women, to not feel inferior only due to them being ugly and black. Angelou motivates the African-American women to be confident that they are beautiful the way they are. *Woman Me* tells about woman strength which consists of smile, tears, and laughter. This poem is addressing women generally, and especially for African American women. *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* tells about seven women who have different characteristics and appearances. However, all of them state that they can attract men no matter how their performances are. These poems were written based on Angelou's life experience as an African American woman. Therefore it is also needed to give a brief description of Maya Angelou's biography which is the background on why the poems were written.

Maya Angelou was born on April 4 1928 in St. Louis Missouri (<http://salempress.com>). She was a poet, a novelist, an actress of drama and movie, a director in Hollywood, and active in the human right associations

(Janouskova, 2005). Her child name is Marguerite Annie Johnson. She is the daughter of Vivian Baxter and Bailey Johnson. However, her parents were divorced and she was sent to her grandmother, Annie Henderson. Through her childhood, she experienced sexual abuse and social discrimination, and when she was in St. Louis to her mother at 8 years old, she was raped by her mother's boyfriend. After this incident, she stopped talking for almost five years and was sent to her grandmother. During her silence, she wrote a number of poems which express her feelings at that time. And then at the age of fifteen, Angelou found herself pregnant. She graduated from high school a few weeks before giving birth to her son Guy.

Having a tough life, Maya still had spirit and confidence to continue her education and her career. Her mother and grandmother taught her how to be a girl who has spirit and pride to respect her and others (Janouskove, 2005). She started her career as a professional entertainer in 1950 as a singer and dancer at the Purple Onion after graduating from California Labor School. Then she played drama in various theatres. While doing those careers, she wrote some poems and fictions based on her life experience as a Black African American women. Her most important contribution is a series of autobiographies *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and followed by subsequent autobiographies and several volumes of poetry.

Since her works are considered important in the struggle process of African American women, there are a number of studies which have discussed about the works of Maya Angelou from different points of view. Most of the studies employ a feminist approach to identify black women's life and black women's struggle against White oppression. Rahmawati (2011) investigated about The Image of

Black Women in three selected poems of Maya Angelou. She analyzes both intrinsic and extrinsic elements and focused on how imagery and figurative language shows the image of Black Women in Angelou's poems. Two studies discussed about the oppression and discrimination experienced by Black women, Ghani and Naz (2007) and Assafie (2012). Ghani and Naz discussed about the struggle process of Black women against racial and identity oppression. Assafie investigated the experience of Black women as marginalized women and society in America depicted in the poem *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. It shows that black women experienced racial prejudice, resistance, disrespect, disheartenment, and discrimination. In 2013, Krisna and Soelistyo analyzed the Black Power in *Still I Raise, Phenomenal Woman and Weekend Glory*. The theme is also the major focus on the study about Maya Angelou's poems, such as in the study conducted by Janouskova (2005) and Du (2014). Janouskova focuses on theme of survival while Du focuses on self-actualization theme in Maya Angelou's selected poems. The last is the investigation by Paramita (2012) which reveals sexuality of Black women depicted in Maya Angelou's poems. The result of her study is that the poem of Maya Angelou contains sexuality elements which can attract men to love women.

Most of the studies about Maya Angelou's poems only reveal the life, the discrimination, and the struggle faced by African American women. There is still limited investigations which focus on the aspects which make the poems motivate the people, especially African American women. Therefore, this study will investigate self-esteem, as one of the motivated aspects in Maya Angelou's poems, of African American women reflected in three poems *Phenomenal*

Woman, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance viewed from figurative language used in these poems. The researchers will analyze these three poems with a black feminist perspective since it talks about Black women. It employs Black Feminist theory of Alice Walker, which is called Womanism.

This theory is focusing on the view that women must love their own selves as well as other women. This study is important to conduct to revise the way people look at their own selves and the relationship between males and females as well as between black women and white women. This study has two contributions toward literature fields and humanity. It is hoped to give contribution toward literary studies development especially about black feminism. It also hopes to give contribution toward humanity so that people should abolish humiliation toward African-American women and the relationship between Black and White becomes better.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research question is “How is African American women’s self-esteem reflected in Maya Angelou’s *Phenomenal Woman, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*?”

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the problems of the study, this study aims to identify “the African-American women’s self-esteem as reflected in Maya Angelou’s *Phenomenal Women, Woman Me, and Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*”.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The research focuses on how the African-American women's self-esteem is reflected in Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. The poems which will be analyzed are: *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. Alice Walker's Womanism theory is employed to identify the research questions. The researcher employs this theory since this theory concerns with the struggle process of Colored Women, especially Black African-American Women, toward the oppression by men. Besides, it does not judge and blame the oppressor about what have been done toward the women. Womanism tends to make women love herself and other women in facing the oppression toward women. The researcher will also analyze the intrinsic features of the poems. Yet it is only the figurative language and imagery since the researcher assumes that Maya Angelou delivers her idea about African-American Women's self-esteem mostly through figurative language and imagery in her poems.

1.5 Significance of The Study

This study will give some contributions into theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study is expected to extend the discussion in literary studies, especially about black feminism, so that it will help the other researchers to conduct further research on Womanism and Black Feminism of African-American women.

Practically, this study attempts to offer the way people should revise and reinterpret the world. People should view the world in a balanced way, which means people should treat all people equally. Therefore, it is hoped to make better

the relationship between males and females as well as white society and black society.

1.6 Research Method

This part contains research design, data source, data collection method, and data analysis method.

1.6.1 Research Design

This study is classified into literary criticism design. The literary criticism employed is black feminism since the subject of this study is colored African-American women. The researcher signifies the criticism with Womanism theory of Alice Walkers. This theory concerns on colored people struggle and tends to make colored people survivors love their own selves without attacking other people. Since the poems which will be analyzed do not tell that African-American women struggle against discrimination by having physical war, mocking the man, or other radical ways yet by loving their selves and tend to encourage people to revision on how they look at Black African-American women.

1.6.2 Data Source

The data are taken from Maya Angelou's selected poems. Those poems are taken from Maya Angelou's poems collection book entitled *The complete collected poems of Maya Angelou*. It is published in Random House,

New York, in 1994. The poems which will be analyzed are *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*

1.6.3 Data Collection

The data of this research is the figurative language and imagery which reflects self-esteem of African-American women in poems *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. To collect the data, firstly, the researcher reads carefully and understands deeply the poems which are analyzed. Secondly, the researcher explicates the poems to know deeper about the theme and content of the poems. After explicating the poems, the researcher tries to underline the figurative languages which show African-American women's self-esteem. Then thirdly, the researcher attempts to classify and describe the data based on the research questions.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

After collecting data, the researcher will analyze the data by doing several steps. Firstly, the researcher will explicate each poem to identify the meaning and the characteristic of each poem. Then, the researcher will describe the data which figurative languages in *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. It is necessary to analyze since figurative language contains hidden meaning and symbol to help the reader in understanding the context of the poems. After understanding the figurative languages, the researcher will correlate the meaning of each figurative language with Womanism aspects which shows the self-esteem of African-American Women in *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. In other words, this

research is attempting to identify the self-esteem reflected in these three poems through the figurative language used by the author.

The next step is drawing conclusion based on the description and investigation which have been done. The researcher is also going to have verification since it is also needed to check the validity of this study. The researcher will do data verification and expert verification. Data verification is for verifying the validity of data, while expert verification is for verifying the validity of the analysis.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To make easier the reader to understand this study, the researcher offers some definition of key terms of this study:

- a. **African-American women:** women who are descendant of Black African women who live in America
- b. **Womanism:** the theory of black feminism which concerns with colored people struggle and tends to make the survivors love their own selves without attacking other people.
- c. **Self-Esteem:** the way how someone appreciate their own selves by looking at the uniqueness of self.
- d. **Phenomenal Woman:** a woman who realize what is becoming her lack, yet she does not seen negatively toward herself, feels confident, and thankful of what God has given

CHAPTER II

LITERARY REVIEW

This chapter will explain the literary review or theoretical framework which is related to points which are discussed in this research. It is divided into five sub-chapters. The first is Black Feminism and Womanism. It explains Black Feminism theory and how it is related to Womanism theory. The second is African-American Women's self-esteem which explains the previous research about African-American's self-esteem and definition of self-esteem itself. The third and the fourth are Figurative Language and Imagery which explain the definition and types of figurative language and imagery. The last is Previous Studies which explains several previous studies related to Maya Angelou's poems and African-American women.

2.1 Black Feminism and Womanism

Feminism is basically a political movement that includes the acting, speaking, writing, and advocating on behalf of women's issues (Asseffie, 2012) in its development. There are several types of feminism which represent the different struggle which are experienced by women in the world. They speak as though they represent all of the women's voices in the world (Asseffie, 2012) that are oppressed by patriarchal systems. However, they only focused primarily on the problems faced by white middle-class women (Dreserova, 2006). Feminism is continued by making the separation or divisions of feminist's depending on nationality, race, language, and religion (Asseffie, 2012).

Because of these divisions and the apathy of white feminists toward the problems of women who are different from their groups, they neglect to notice the struggle of women of color (Dreserova, 2006) like African-American women although they are actually sister and live in the same land. In addition, white women refused to support the struggle of black women for their rights (Izgarjan&Markoz, 2014). Knowing this fact, Black scholars create a new movement called the Black Feminist movement. Black feminism is a political and social movement which focuses on the liberation of black women by ending the interlocking system of racism, sexism, and classism on the economic, political and ideological levels (Dreserova, 2006; Collins,2000,cited in Rahmawati, 2011).

Although the name of the first black women movement is black feminism, most of them are not willing to call themselves “feminist” since they think that feminism is the exclusive term for white women, not black women. They refer to themselves as “womanist” (Collins, 2000 ;Gilyar and Wardi, cited in Dresserova, 2006). This term is believed to be the representation of Black women or colored women who struggle from oppression and discrimination.

The term Womanist is firstly coined by Alice Walker in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* which was published in 1983. She states several definitions of Womanist as follows: (1) a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually, (2) appreciates and prefers women's culture, women who have emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), (3) sometimes loves individual men sexually and/or non-sexually, and (4) committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.

The first time Womanism appeared, it is the term and theory used for revealing the Black African-American women struggle against discrimination and oppression by Whites as Torfs (2007) states that Womanism reflects the decision of colored women to clearly state their objections to such an exclusive position of white feminist and to create a paradigm which would incorporate values important to them. In addition, Womanism grows into a larger form of political activism and provides the framework for the empowerment of colored women and women from ethnic minorities all over the worlds. However, in the present day, it has developed to be dedicated to colored women who are oppressed and willing to struggle without attacking other groups and other genders.

As stated above that Womanists basically loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually, “especially for those things that make them female, like their specific female culture, their emotional life, and their strength” (Torfs, 2007). They also love men sexually and/or non-sexually. It means that the purpose of Womanist is to help the struggle of colored women without any hatred toward others. Collins (2000) states that womanism offers a distance from the enemy, in this case white people generally and white women in particular, yet still raises the issue of gender.

There are some questions about the differences among Womanism and Black Feminism. It is answered by Walker (1983) that Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. The lavender here can be interpreted as a color and a flower. As purple and lavender are almost identical colors, the terms womanist and feminist stand equal. Moreover, as purple can be a shade of flower lavender, similarly womanism can offer a peculiar tint to feminism (Dreserova, 2006).

2.2 African-American Women's Self-Esteem

Self-esteem (also known as self-regard) is defined as people's evaluation about their own worth, competence, and desirability (Konrath, 2012). This definition is added by Shokraii (1998) who states that self-esteem is also the form of one's reaction toward and feeling about oneself (Shokraii, 1998). Someone who has high self-esteem has several signs as follows: confidence, self-direction, non-blaming behavior, and awareness of personal strengths, an ability to make mistakes and learn from them, an ability to accept mistakes from others, and optimism (<http://www.cedu.niu.edu>).

It is the further concept of self after someone knows the self-concept. As someone realizing her or his concept and knowledge about herself or himself, then one can improve that knowledge to raise the healthy self-esteem. Konrath (2012) states that there are two types of self-esteem, which are personal and collective self-esteem. Personal self-esteem is how people typically define self-esteem as applying to their individual characteristics and abilities. Collective self-esteem is a feeling of self-worth that is based on group membership. Konrath also describes that the function of having self-esteem is to allow people to know to what extent they belong in their social environments. Therefore it is important for every person to feel that they belong, especially the oppressed groups who mostly feel inferior in society.

Black African-American women, who experience multi discrimination, "have been described as having a negative self-concept and self-denigration as a result of inferior status in this country" (Shokraii, 1998). Therefore, African-

American women face multiple challenges to their self-esteem (DeFransisco& Carpenter, 2000). It is proved by the notions of a number of scholars who specialize in the classical self-esteem theory. Progansky and Newton (1968) state that African people in the United States who feel hatred toward their own racial group are to some degree expressing hatred for themselves as individuals. Similarly, Kardiber andOvesey (1951) remarked that African-American people have no possible basis for a healthy self-esteem and every incentive for self-hatred. These notions are agreed and strengthen by Crocker and Major (1989), they put forth three possibilities buffer mechanism related to self-esteem of oppressed groups. The first involves giving negative feedback to prejudiced attitudes toward their groups. The second is that oppressed groups may use is to make in-group comparisons in which some members would fare relatively better in comparison with other oppressed group members than with most members of the oppressing group. The third is to put less value on some performance dimension that suggests that the individual or the group which he or she belongs to does poorly or not as well as other groups.

However, the notions above are the obsolete findings since there is a numerous recent research which document that Blacks have high self-esteem. The empirical evidence on high self-esteem of African-American people was started in the 1970 as what Wright (1985) observed that there has been a noticeable shift to a more positive self-image from African-Americans. It is evidenced by the research of Porter and Washington (1989) which shows that personal self-esteem among African American tends to be fairly high, at least as high as it is for European American. Other evidence is from Patterson (2004). He found that

African American women have high self-esteem, as well as European American women. Though both these researchers show the difference of the scale of self-esteem compared to European American's self-esteem, they still have agreed that African American women have high self-esteem.

This positive shift is influenced by Civil Rights and Black Power movements. It emerged black racial pride which resulted in positive personal self-esteem for black people. Besides, collectivistic culture of African American group is the most prominent factor which can influence the self-esteem. They are frequently supported by their group. Social support of African American women comes from families, friends, churches, and communities (Defransisco, 2000).

This kind of support is also what Maya Angelou experienced during her childhood. She was supported and encouraged by her mother and grandmother to be a girl who has a pride and to not feel inferior only because she is a black girl. Then it inspires most of her poems about African American women's confidence and self-esteem.

2.3 Steps to Analyze Poems

There are a number of ways to analyze the poems offered by scholars. In this research, the researcher applies the guide by Lye (1996) to analyze the poems. Lye suggests several steps to analyze a poem. Firstly is looking at the title and then reading the poem for the major indicator of its meaning. He states that reading poetry well is a balance among and conjunction of qualities: experience, attention, engagement with the qualities which make the poem resonant or compelling, close reading of structure and relationships. The second is that dividing the poem

into parts to understand the structure, setting, tone, and other elements which create the meaning of the poem.

He states there are several elements which have to be noted to analyze poems, which are title, genre, voice, theme, structure, setting, imagery, figurative language, sound, historical and cultural distance from the poems, and the ideology behind the creating process of the poem. These elements are important to analyze a poem since these elements are frequently used by author of poem to create the point and the meaning of the poem. However, the researcher here only analyze deeper about figurative language and imagery since Rahmawati (2011) states that imagery and figurative language in Maya Angelou's poems can function to depict the condition and the image of African American women.

2.4 Figurative Language

Figurative language is the language using figures of speech and the language that cannot be taken literally (Perrine, 1978,p.605) to captivate readers' interest and deliver our idea and imagination in a more entertaining way (Swardhani, 2013) . This kind of language is frequently appeared in a poem to make the readers more interested even though sometimes there must be a different interpretation in interpreting the figurative language. Using figurative language is more effective to say what people mean rather than using a direct statement since figurative language afford people imaginative pleasure, it is a way of bringing additional imagery into verse, is a way of adding emotional intensity to otherwise merely informative statements, is a way of saying much in brief compass (Perrine, 1978).

There are a number of different types of figurative language which on account of this study investigation. They are:

a. Simile

Simile is the comparison expressed by the use of some word or phrase, such as like, as, than, similar to, resembles, or seems” (Perrine, 1978, p.605). For instance the poem by Robert Burn which contains the simile “My love is like a red, red rose”. It connects the comparison between love and red rose using the word “like”.

b. Metaphor

Metaphor is a direct comparison (Swardhani 2013) made between things that are essentially not alike (Perrine, 1978). In contrary, Wainwright (2005) states that metaphor can be described as a *figure* which expresses one thing in terms of another by suggesting a likeness between them. These definitions can be concluded that metaphor is comparing two things which are essentially different, yet they have a thing which can be compared. For instance Shakespeare once stated that “All the world’s a stage”. Two things compared here are world and stage. They are different thing, yet they have something alike. World is compared to a stage since world contains people who act and pretend like an actor on the stage

c. Personification

Personification consists of giving the attributes of human to animal, and object, or a concept. It a subtype of metaphor and implied comparison

in which the figurative term of comparison is always a human being (Perrine, 1978). It offers the reader to imagine the nature of the things compared. For instance the poem from James Stephens “*the night was creeping on the ground! She crept and did not make a sound*”. Stephens called the night as analive thing by using “she” meaning a woman.

d. Metonymy

Metonymy are the use of something closely related for other thing actually meant (Perrinne, 1978). One of the examples of metonymy use is like when American state “White House”, it is associated as the American Government.

e. Symbol

Symbol may be roughly defined as something that means more than what it is (Perrine, 1978). In addition, symbol is something that stands in for, or represents something else (Wainwright, 2005). Compared to other types of figurative language, it has the richest meanings and interpretations. However, at the same time it is also the most difficult to interpret since the poet frequently does not state the general symbols which can be understood by other people generally. Moreover, Wainwright (2005) states that symbols evolve, or are invented because the “something else” is usually a complex idea or emotion, and an abstraction not easily expressible. It can have conventional meaning, for instance the color red conventionally symbolizes danger and anger. However it also has other meaning which needs deeper understanding about that symbol.

f. Hyperbole

Hyperbole, or overstatement, is simply exaggeration, but exaggeration in the service of truth (Perrine, 1978). This overstatement can create some effects such as humor, grave, fanciful, restrained, convincing, and unconvincing. When someone says “I will eat you if you do not love me;”, it means that he wants his partner love him instead of beating his partner.

2.5 Imagery

According to Perrine (1978), imagery can be defined as “the representation through language of sense experience”. In poetry, the author frequently employs imagery to picture some things and some conditions. It is very effective to evoke readers’ sense to feel what the author feels. There are several kinds of imagery, which are:

1. Visual imagery

Visual imagery is the image which can be seen in the mind’s eye such as color and shape of something. One of the examples is a stanza from the poem by Robert Browning *Meeting at Night*. This poem is a poem about the happiness and the experience of having love. However, the writer of this poem does not directly tell about love and even not use the word “love”. Browning prefers to compare the happiness of love to the view of the beautiful sea. He states:

*The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low:
And the startled little waves that leap*

In fiery ringlets from their sleep...

It can help the reader to feel the gray of the sea, the yellow of half-moon, and the wave which have little splash. These things can be seen by eyes and can evoke the sense of the reader to feel what the writer have seen.

2. Auditory imagery

Auditory imagery is the image which s related to the sound and something which can be heard. It can be the sound of wave, sound of laugh, sound of crying, groan, sound of birds, and many more.

3. Gustatory imagery

Gustatory imagery is imagery which is related to the sense of taste. It describes something which make the readers think of taste. For instance “The salty sweet flavor of salt water taffy was Carrie’s very favorite thing about going to the beach for summer vacation”. The phrases “the salty sweet flavor of salt water” give the depiction about the taste of water in the beach.

4. Tactile imagery

Tactile imagery the image which functions to evoke the reader’s sense related to the smell of something such as newly baked bread, new mown grass, and the smell of land when the first rain comes.

5. Organic imagery

Organic imagery is the image which arouses an internal sensation such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, or nausea.

6. Kinesthetic imagery

Kinesthetic imagery is the image which pictures the sense of temperature, touch, feelings, and the movement or tension in the muscles or joints.

2.5 Previous Studies

A number of studies have explored and investigated about the poems of Maya Angelou. They analyze poems of Maya Angelou from several different points of views such as the image of Black Women, the struggle of Black women against oppression, the black feminism theme and many others. Most of them relate poems of Maya Angelou with the struggle of Black African American Women through the view of feminism.

The first study which researcher found is the study conducted by Janouskova (2005). His paper focuses on survival theme in Maya Angelou's poetry. Janouskova does not state which poems which he analyzes, however it is indicated that he investigate all poems in Maya Angelou's collection poems book since the analysis of his paper includes numerous titles of Angelou's poems. The result of Janouskova's research is that the survival theme in Angelou's poems can be viewed from the struggle, pride, and courage of black women. The survival aspect also can be known through humor, music, and religion in Angelou's poetry since Angelou created several odes as a poem, as well as give humorous and religious sense in some of her poems.

The second study is conducted by Ghani and Naz (2007). Its title is "Race, Feminism and Representation: An Inquiry into Maya Angelou's Poetry". Their

paper discuss about the struggle process of Black women to against racial and identity oppression. They assume that Angelou's poetry attempt to capture the phenomenon of resistance in the background of post colonialism. They tend to focus on the dichotomy between black and white, femininity and masculinity, minor and major, self and other, inferiority and superiority, and orient and occident which emerge the oppression with post colonialism background. Then, the struggle of the oppressed against oppression is explained clear by considering several aspects such as Maya Angelou's biography and the style of Maya Angelou's poems.

The third is the thesis conducted by Rahmati (2011) entitled *The Image of Black Women in Three Poems of Maya Angelou*. Her research aims to discover the image of black women in three poems of Maya Angelou and the kinds of imagery and figurative language. It is divided into two parts, which are analysis of the intrinsic elements and analysis of woman image by applying feminist literary criticism. The result of her study shows that Maya Angelou uses organic imagery, visual imagery, kinesthetic imager, auditory imagery, symbol, simile, hyperbole, verbal irony and metaphor. Then she states that the image of black women in three poems of Maya Angelou are independent, strong, brave, confident, outspoken, explicit, honest and mysterious. It is a good analysis since Rahmawati explores both intrinsic and extrinsic features of the poems. However, she does not state the title of the poems in her research title which can make the reader confuse which poems will be analyzed, and also she does not state clearly the reason why she divides her analysis into two parts and its connection between image of women and the intrinsic elements in the poems.

The fourth is the thesis by Assafie (2012) entitled “Experiences of Marginalized Women: Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in Focus”. It focuses on the investigation of the experience of Black women as marginalized women and society in America depicted in *poem I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The researcher employs black feminist literary criticism as the framework to identify the experience of African American women. This study tends to relate the history of black women in American society and American literature with the oppression experienced by black women in America. The result of this study shows that black women experienced racial prejudice, resistance, disrespect, disheartenment, and discrimination. Besides, sexual abuse and segregation is also the kind of oppression which is experienced by African American women. The paper is closed by showing that Angelou as the writer can reflect the multiple oppression of black women in America since she was also the part of the oppressed.

The fifth is the study conducted by Krisna and Soelistyo (2013). Its title is about the “Black Power in *Still I Raise, Phenomenal Woman and Weekend Glory*”. This study attempts to encounter in what ways black power is revealed in Maya Angelous’s poems *Still I Raise, Phenomenal Woman and Weekend Glory*. Their explanation is good enough since they can explain how the black movement history and figurative language can reveal the idea of Black power in each poem. The result of their study is that there are different ideas of black power in each poem. The black power ideas can be the way to survive in society, the way to express someone’s thought, and the ability to accept one’s identity as a black woman. In the end of the research, they conclude that the author of the poems,

Maya Angelou, is a powerful black woman. However, this conclusion is doubtful since when they present some of Angelou's arguments related to her poems, they do not give the clear resource of Angelou's arguments, whether it is from direct interview or some books.

The sixth is Paramita (2012) which reveals sexuality of Black women depicted in Maya Angelou's poems. Paramita assume that because most of Maya Angelou's poems tell about Black women therefore there must be feminine aspects in her poems. This femininity also contains sexuality elements of women. The result of her study is that poem of Maya Angelou contains sexuality elements which can attract men to love women.

The last is the study conducted by Du (2014) with the title "Exploring the Theme of Self-actualizations in Maya Angelou's Poetry". As its title, the paper focuses on exploring self-actualization of African American women reflected in Maya Angelou's poetry. Du found that the aim of Angelou wrote a poem is to encourage African Americans to inherit their cultural heritage and affirm their black identity.

Most of the studies which have discussed about Maya Angelou's poems tend to reveal the life, the discrimination, and the struggle faced by African American women through the eye of feminism. However, they do not specify which feminism thought that they employ since the poems of Maya Angelou discuss only about Blacks and Black women. Therefore, the researcher will employ Black Feminism which is considered as the real thought and freedom of Black African American women in this research. It is seen that the study which

concern on the self-esteem of African American women reflected in Maya Angelou's poems is still limited so that the researcher attempts to African American women reflected in Maya Angelou's poems *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*.



CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into four sub-chapters. The first is the analysis of *Phenomenal Woman*, the second is the analysis of *Woman Me*, and the third is the analysis of *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*. These three sub-chapters explain the explication, figurative language, and imagery in these three poems. Then in the fourth sub chapter describe the African American women's self-esteem which is reflected in these three poems.

3.1 The Analysis of *Phenomenal Woman*

Phenomenal Woman

*Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.*

*I say,
It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.*

*I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.*

5

*I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.*

10

15

*I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,*

20

<i>And the flash of my teeth, The swing in my waist, And the joy in my feet. I'm a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That's me.</i>	25
<i>Men themselves have wondered What they see in me. They try so much But they can't touch My inner mystery. When I try to show them, They say they still can't see. I say, It's in the arch of my back, The sun of my smile, The ride of my breasts, The grace of my style. I'm a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That's me.</i>	30
<i>Now you understand Just why my head's not bowed. I don't shout or jump about Or have to talk real loud. When you see me passing, It ought to make you proud. I say, It's in the click of my heels, The bend of my hair, the palm of my hand, The need for my care. 'Cause I'm a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That's me.</i>	35
	40
	45
	50
	55
	60

This poem is written by Maya Angelou in 1995. It consists of four stanzas.

Each stanza has the same structure. All stanzas begin by describing the author's situation or how people act towards her. In the middle of the stanza she lists a

variety of her body features like her arms, hair, step, lips, and breasts. And in the last four lines of every stanza state “*I’m a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That’s me.*” The writer of this poem also acts as the narrator since she employs pronoun “I”. However, the “I” in black poetry means “we” as it speaks of collective consciousness (Janouskova, 2005). In other words, Angelou does not only expect to tell her experience but also as the deputy of the voice of African American women in general. She attempts to show her confidence in every line of this poem and then states what parts of her body which show her confidence and inner strength.

This poem starts by giving comment in the first stanza that the narrator does not belong to beautiful type in the society. She also states that “pretty women” (it can be interpreted as White women since in society they are considered more beautiful especially in former American society) wonder where the secret of her success lies. They do not believe that the narrator can be success. Then this wonderment is answered by the narrator that it comes from her confidence, the way she stretches her arms, the way she walks, the rhythm of her hips and also the way she smiles. The second stanza tells that the reason of the men swarm around the narrator like bees is because of her beautiful eyes, teeth, waist, and feet. Then in the third stanza, it is continued with the wonderment of men why they like to the narrator. The narrator answers that it because of her inner mystery which cannot be seen by them. It is also because of her beautiful back, smile, breast, and style. In the last stanza, the narrator emphasizes that she does not want to be humiliated and feel unconfident since the narrator realizes that

all women are phenomenal and have their own beauty. She states once again that she is proud of what she is because of her heels, her hair, her hand, and her care.

By knowing the meaning of every stanza, it can be known that this poem talks about a woman who is proud of being her even though according to the society, she is not considered as beautiful. Besides, Angelou also attempts to change the stereotype and the definition of the women's beauty among society, especially in American society since being beautiful is not only viewed from women's physical appearance or the beauty standard in the society, yet it tends to come from the inner goodness.

Angelou delivers her thought about being confident, positive thinking, and proud to be what we are through figurative language and imagery. The researcher has found that Angelou employs metaphor, simile, and symbol. She also depicts the situation of her thought through visual imagery and kinesthetic imagery to make the reader can feel what she feels in this poem.

3.1.1 Metaphor

The first metaphor in the poem is in lines 19 and 20:

*Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees. (lines 19 & 20)*

These lines make direct comparison between *me* with *a hive* and the men with *honey bees*. The men who swarm around *me* are compared to honey bees swarming around a hive since it is the place for bees to live. According to Oxford

Dictionary (2005), swarm as a noun means “a large group of people or insects, especially bees, moving together in the same direction”, and as a verb means “to move around in a large group”. From these definitions, it can be concluded that swarm means a group of people or insects moving together in the same direction in a large group. Therefore, the meaning of the first metaphor here is that the men move around one direction, which is *me* since *me* might has something which is loved by men such as beauty and attractiveness.

The second metaphor is in the second stanza line 22 “*it's the fire in my eyes*”. According to Oxford Dictionary (2005) fire is “light, flame, and heat or something that are produced when something burns”. It is also the representation of the heat of feeling, readiness to act, passion, fervor, enthusiasm, or excitement (World Book Dictionary, 2005). Having known these definitions, it can be concluded that *the fire* is compared to passion, fervor, enthusiasm, and spirit which is burning. Therefore, metaphor *it's the fire in my eyes* means that the eyes of *my* or the narrator reflect her personality which are joyful, personality which is spirit, enthusiastic, and passionate.

The last metaphor is in line 39 “*the sun of my smile*” also belongs to metaphor since it compares smile and sun directly. Sun always gives brightness and light to the people while smile always give the happiness to the people. They are almost the same in term of their advantage to make people happy and bright when people look at them. In other word, this metaphor means that the smile of the narrator (the woman) gives the warmth and joy to every people like the sun.

3.1.2 Simile

Angelou employs simile in lines 14 and 15:

*I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please* (lines 14 and 15)

She compares the way the narrator walks and the way *pretty women*. She states that she walks as cool as *pretty women*. The definition of cool according to Oxford Dictionary (2005) is fairly cold, calm, not friendly and confident. In this context, we can identify that *as cool as you please* means that the narrator walks calmly and confidently, just like *pretty women* do.

The African American women who used to have low education and low personality typically do not walk like a model or like an educated woman. However, here the narrator of the poem states that she walks as nice as *pretty women*. The meaning of pretty women here is White women since when Angelou wrote this poem, White women were considered more pretty rather than Black women in America.

3.1.3 Symbol

The symbolism employed in this poem is “*phenomenal woman*” in the last lines of every stanza which is also the title of this poem. It is repeated several times to strengthen the idea of a woman who is phenomenal. The meaning of phenomenal is extraordinary, exceptional, and remarkable. Therefore phenomenal

woman can be interpreted as the symbol of the woman who has extraordinary ability and exception beauty.

The symbol *phenomenal woman* which is employed by the narrator to depict herself as the deputy of African American women indicate that African American women has a very high confident. They can bravely state that they are a phenomenal or extraordinary woman. They realize their condition which is not considered beautiful in society and not built to suit a fashion's size. However they also realize that this lack can be their uniqueness which can attract people. They even do not even shy when some of people call them ugly due to their black skin, curly hair, and big nose since they call it as a uniqueness.

3.1.4 Visual Imagery

To make the readers feel and imagine the spirit of the poem, Angelou adds several visual imageries in the poem. She employs visual imagery first in line 2

"I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size". (line 2)

The visual imagery is shown in the words "not cute" and phrase "fashion model's size". When the readers imagine about a women who is not cute, there have to be the image of cute. Every woman must have standard of cuteness. Then the image of "not cute" here is elaborated and emphasized with the visual imagery "fashion model's size". Everybody knows that size of model is slim, tall, and beautiful. It makes the readers imagine that the narrator or the woman is not considered as slim, tall, and beautiful as a model.

She does not have skin body, bright skin, and long straight hair. It makes the reader imagine how the narrator's body. It might be fat, dark-skinned, and curly-haired woman.

The second visual imagery appeared in lines 7 to 9. She states:

*The span of my hips
The stride of my step
The curl of my lips.(lines 7 & 9)*

These lines depict the narrator's hips, step, and lips. It is not stated how the span of the hips is, how the stride of the steps is, and how curl the lips is. However, here the visual image of hips, steps, and lips of the woman can be described as the hips, steps, and lips of an African American woman which has very confident personality. The third visual imagery is in lines 22 to 25:

*It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.(lines 22-25)*

The visual imagery is shown to depict how the image of the woman's eyes, teeth, waist, and feet. *The fire in my eyes* means the eyes full of spirit and passion since fire is the symbol of burning spirit. *The flash of my teeth* give the image of the teeth which shines. It also can be interpreted with the women who always smile since she shows the flash of her teeth. *The swing in my waist* depicts how the woman swings her waist when she moves. *And the joy in my feet* depicts the way the woman moves her feet with her joy.

The fourth visual imagery is in lines 39 to 42 :

*It's in the arch of my back
The sun of my smile*

The ride of my breasts
The grace of my style (lines 39-42)

These lines depict the image of the narrator (woman)'s back, smile, breasts, and style. *The arch of my back* gives the image that the back has an arch or curve. *The sun of my smile* shows the image that as if there is a sun inside of the smile. It means that the narrator (the woman)'s smile shines like the sun and make people happy when looking at the smile. *The ride of my breasts* show the depiction about the narrator (the woman)'s breasts. *The grace of my style* gives the image about the style of the narrator (the woman) which is grace, elegant, and beautiful.

Then the last is in lines 54 & 55. She states:

The bend of my hair
the palm of my hand. (lines 54 & 55)

These lines show the image about the narrator (the woman)'s hair and hand. The bend of my hair means that the hair is not straight. The woman might have a wavy or curly hair. The palm of my hand means that the narrator (woman)'s hand is like a palm's shape. The hand's curve is like a palm. Its tip is small and becomes bigger in its midpoint.

3.1.5 Kinesthetic and Auditory Imagery

Kinesthetic imagery is the imagery which gives the depiction about temperature, touch, feelings, and the movement or tension in the muscles or joints, while auditory imagery is the imagery which gives the depiction related to sounds. In line 52, the researcher found that there are two imageries since it shows the picture toward the reader about movement which can cause sound.

It's in the click of my heels (lines 52)

The imagery is implied from the movement of the woman's heels which cause the click sound when she walks. It can make the readers know that the woman in *Phenomenal Woman* does not use ordinary shoes, but the shoes which have heels, and the way the woman walks makes the attractive click sounds.

3.1.6 African American Women's Self-Esteem Reflected in *Phenomenal Woman*

Phenomenal Woman shows that African American women are phenomenal, same as other women from other races. Even though White women wonder why African American is attractive, the writer as the representation of African American women bravely states that African American Women have inner beauty which is different from other women. They are confident telling that they have beautiful body and fascinating style and appearance. In the other words, African American women actually have positive value in evaluating their selves.

The metaphor "Then they swarm around me, / A hive of honey bees" (lines 19 & 20) and the simile *I walk into a room / Just as cool as you please* (lines 14 and 15) shows that African-American women have high confidence. Even though they are frequently seen negatively by men and White people, yet they still feel confidence that men love and swarm around them. They also can walk and do something as cool as White people. The symbol *Phenomenal woman*

also shows that African-American women have high confidence since not all women can name their selves as a phenomenal woman. Yet, African-American women confidently states that they are phenomenal based on their uniqueness.

The metaphor “*the sun of my smile*” (line 39) and “*it's the fire in my eyes*” (22) shows that African-American women know what become their strength. They are not ashamed when most of people consider as people who do not have good appearance and personality. However, they know that whatever people say about them, they still believe that they still have something good and it can become their uniqueness which is different and can attract others.

The high positive self-esteem in this poem is also reflected from the imageries employed by Angelou. All of the imagery shows that African-American women are thankful of what God has given toward them. Besides, they are also proud be born as an African-American woman who has dark skin and curly hair. In other words, they struggle against oppression by realizing their strength and uniqueness which can attract people, not by blaming the oppressors. By doing this way, people will know that African-American women are also as good as White people.

3.2 The Analysis of *Woman Me*

Woman Me

*Your smile, delicate
rumor of peace.
Deafening revolutions nestle in the
cleavage of
your breasts.
Beggar-Kings and red-ringed Priests*

*seek glory at the meeting
 of your thighs.
 A grasp of Lions. A lap of Lambs.
 Your tears, jeweled 10
 strewn a diadem
 caused Pharaohs to ride
 deep in the bosom of the
 Nile. Southern spas lash fast
 their doors upon the night when 15
 winds of death blow down your name
 A bride of hurricanes. A swarm of summer wind.
 Your laughter, peeling tall
 above the bells of ruined cathedrals.
 Children reach between your teeth 20
 for charts to live their lives.
 A stomp of feet. A bevy of swift hands.*

This poem consists of three stanzas and twenty two lines. Each stanza tells about the woman's strength which is reflected through three features, smile, tears, and laughter. Unlike the poem *Phenomenal Woman* which employs pronoun "I", in *Woman Me*, Angelou addresses her subject (women) by employing the personal pronoun "you" therefore the poet can achieve a sense of intimacy. It is like Angelou attempts to talk to every woman about the women's strength which can attract very people. Shortly, this poem is made by a woman to women.

The poem begins by telling about the smile of women. Woman's smile is represented as a sign of peace, not of resignation or passivity. This smile is woman's sign of reconciliation with herself and with man. By showing a smile, a woman can attract make piece a man. In the second stanza, the woman's tears are compared to jewels in a crown. These tears can make me do everything for his woman. The narrator compares this situation to Pharaoh, a powerful man who rides the deep Nile River. It is historically that Pharaoh did it for the queen of

Egypt, Cleopatra. The third and last stanza tells the laughter of a woman. A woman's laughter is her strength to make other people, especially children. She states that every woman has a motherhood nature which can make them to care for the children. When a woman cares for their children, her smile is the most important element to make the children happy with her.

3.2.1 Metaphor

The first metaphor is found in lines 1 and 2:

*Your smile, delicate
rumor of peace. (lines 1 & 2)*

These lines compare directly between a woman's smile and rumor of peace. These two things are different. However they have the same impact toward people. The smile of a woman can make people who see it happy, as well as when people hear the rumor of peace must be feeling glad since everyone wants to live freely.

Therefore, this metaphor means that the smile of a woman can declare a peace and happiness toward people. In the next following lines, it is stated that powerful men still need women to complete their life. This condition is depicted by

Angelou by using a metaphor:

A grasp of Lions. A lap of Lambs (line 9)

This metaphor refers to that the condition in which women are wanted by men is like they are laying in *a grasp of Lions*. It is obviously dangerous when something is in a grasp of lions. However, the lions here are being enjoyed in *a lap of lambs*

therefore it cannot be dangerous anymore as long as Lion is still comfortable in the lap of Lamb.

Lions are compared to men, while Lambs are compared to women. Lion is named as the King of the Jungle. Lions have power among other animals and respected by other animals in the forest, while Lambs are the weak animals which usually grow in livestock and their meats are eaten by human. Therefore, it can be concluded that the meaning of this metaphor is the condition of women who are wanted by men who are powerful and perhaps can hurt women, yet men are happy beside women will not endanger women as long as they can make happy men's life.

In the second stanza, the metaphor depicts about how the women tears is:

*Your tears, jeweled
strewn a diadem* (lines 10 & 11)

These lines compare a woman's tears to a diadem or crown which is strewn with jewel. The tears normally are the symbol of sadness. However here, Angelo compared tears to something luxurious and expensive. A diadem can only be owned by a king, yet every people want to have that luxurious diadem. It means that the tears of woman are also valuable and luxurious. Not every people can have woman's tears since a woman only cry and give her tears toward the people who are also valuable for her.

The last metaphor is in line 22:

A stomp of feet. A bevy of swift hands (line 22)

A stomp of feet is compared to women who always move. It means that women are not passive, yet active as well as men. A bevy of swift hands is

compared to women who can handle multi jobs quickly, or it can be said that women are multi-tasking people.

3.2.2 Symbol

The symbol which is employed in this poem frequently symbolize the powerful man, however he still seeks the care and the love of a woman. The first symbol is in lines 6 to 8

Beggar-Kings and red-ringed Priests
Seek glory at the meeting
of your thighs (lines 6-8)

The symbols are Beggar-Kings and red-ringed Priest. King and Priest basically symbolize the powerful men both in political and religion (www.enotes.com). King is the male ruler of an independent state while priest is a person appointed to perform religious duty and ceremony in Catholic (Oxford Dictionary, 2005). In other word, it can be said that both of them have an authority in political and religion, and respected by other people. However, Angelou depicts Kings who has a power as *Beggar-Kings* and Priests as *red-ringed Priests*. *Beggar-Kings* can be interpreted as Kings who feel that even though they have everything which every men wants such as power, authority, and richness, they still miss a thing which can complete their life, while *red-ringed Priests* can be interpreted as Priests who are considered as pure men since they are not allowed to marry, yet they expect to get love from woman.. Ring in Catholic Church hierarchy is the symbol of authority and leaders worn by the leaders of Catholic such as pope, pontiff,

cardinal, and priest. However, in this poem, Priests are depicted wearing red-ring. Red is the color of passionate love, seduction, violence, danger, anger, and adventure (colormatters.com). Therefore, Priests who wear red ring are Priests who want to have and get the passionate love from women.

In the context of this poem, something which is expected to complete and satisfy the life of Beggar-Kings and red-ringed Priest is a woman. According to <http://www.enotes.com>, Beggar-Kings and red-ringed priests depict men who are powerful in themselves but who also seek woman's power. What they seek from women is "glory" at the meeting of women's thighs. The meaning of glory is related to sexual things which belong to women. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that Angelou depicts men in this poem as the powerful creatures rather than women, yet they still seek and need women to accompany their life. Angelou also give the image that women are the true sources of power since men's power is still not complete without women beside the men.

The second symbol is in lines 10 to 14:

*Your tears, jeweled
strewn a diadem
caused Pharaohs to ride
deep in the bosom of the
Nile. Southern spas lash fast (lines 10-14)*

The symbol in these lines is Pharaoh. Pharaoh was the most powerful person in ancient Egypt since he owned all of the land, made laws, collected taxes, and defended Egypt against foreigners (www.ancientEgypt.com). In lines 10 till 14, it is stated that women's tears caused *Pharaohs to ride deep in the bosom of the Nile*. It was likely that Pharaohs loved to a woman and would do anything to get

her love. In this poem, Maya Angelou states that as if Pharaoh would ride deep the Nile River to get the women whom Pharaohs loved.

3.2.3 Auditory Imagery

Your laughter, pealing tall
Above the bells of ruined cathedrals (lines 18 & 19)

The word which depicts about something related to audio or sound is “pealing” in line 18. According to Oxford Dictionary (2005), *peal* as a noun means a loud series of sounds and the loud ringing sounds of a bell, while as a verb means to ring loudly. In this poem, the auditory imagery in lines 18 and 19 describe the sound of woman’s laughter which is very loud, even louder than the *bells of ruined cathedrals*. It means that woman’s laughter is strong or full of joy.

3.2.4 African American Women’s Self-Esteem Reflected in *Woman Me*

Woman Me brings up that everything a woman has can give piece, life, and strength for other people. Maya Angelou in this poem attempts to talk to other women that they should realize how complete their life is. She commends the smile, the cry, and the laughter of women which are beautiful and can make men do everything to have them. Here, it can be seen that actually women are not completely in patriarchal system which set that men are more superior rather than women since historically a lot of men did something great only to have a woman whom they love such as Pharaoh who loved Cleopatra. Related to African-American women’s self-esteem, Angelou as the writer of this poem is the deputy of African-American women, and she shows how woman should treat themselves

as a jewel and do not have negative self-evaluation toward themselves. This encouragement indicates that African-American women have high positive self-esteem.

All of the metaphor and imagery employed in this poem shows that Angelou expects to show that African-American women deserve to be appreciated by their own selves and other people since they have powers which other people do not have, which are smile, laughter, and tears of them. Even the small thing like their tears is also valuable. It means that they are proud to be a woman. When someone have a pride and know their power, it can be identified as people who have high self-esteem.

3.3 The Analysis of *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*

Seven Women's Blessed Assurance

1	One thing about me, I'm little and low, find me a man wherever I go.	
2	They call me string bean 'cause I'm so tall. Men see me, they ready to fall.	5
3	I'm young as morning and fresh as dew. Everybody loves me and so do you.	10
4	I'm fat as butter and sweet as cake. Men start to tremble	15

each time I shake.

5

I'm little and lean,

sweet to the bone.

They like to pick me up

and carry me home.

20

6

When I passed forty

I dropped pretense,

'cause men like women

who got some sense.

7

Fifty-five is perfect,

so is fifty-nine,

'cause every man needs

to rest sometime.

25

This poem consists of twenty eight lines and seven stanzas. It is about seven women who have different characteristics and personalities. However, they have the same spirit and confidence. They think positively that whatever their condition, people, specifically men, will still love them. It means that they are very thankful women. The message of this poem can be for every woman in the world, but it was written by an African American woman, Maya Angelou, and actually as the encouragement from an African American woman to other African American women to always be thankful with what they have. In the other side, it also can be the representation of all African American women since Angelou states that what she writes is what other African American women feel.

3.3.1 Simile

There are two similes employed in this poem. The first is in the third stanza, lines 9 and 10:

I'm young as morning
And fresh as dew. (lines 9 & 10)

Line 9 compares the youth the third woman to the morning. It means that the woman's age is still very young and bright like morning which appears in the beginning of the day. In line 10, it compares between the freshness of the third woman and dew since dew can give the freshness toward the people who see and touch it. The definition of fresh according to Oxford Dictionary (2005) is new, clean, and full of energy. Therefore, the simile in line 10 means that the narrator or the third woman is energetic and full of spirit.

The second simile is in the fourth stanza, lines 14 and 15:

I'm fat as butter
and sweet as cake. (lines 14 & 15)

Line 10 compares the fat body to butter since butter contains of fat and grease, while line 11 compares the sweetness of the girl to the sweet taste of a cake.

3.3.2 Metaphor

In line 5, the second woman states "*They call me string bean*". This line compares the second woman to string bean. The shape of bean is flat and thin, but it is long. Therefore when a woman's body is compared to string bean it means that the body is thin but she has a very tall body.

3.3.3 Visual Imagery

The visual imagery is found in line 2, the first woman states that:

I'm little and low (line 2)

It gives image to the reader about a woman who has little and short body, yet she still looks sexy and loved by men. In line 5, the second woman states that:

They call me string bean (line 5)

This line means that people look at the second woman as the woman whose height is taller than common women. In the third stanza line 9, the third woman states:

I'm young as morning (line 9)

It is stated that the woman or the narrator is young. Her youth is compared to morning since morning appears in the beginning of the day. When it is morning, it can be stated that the day is still young since the beginning of the day activities start in the morning. From this, it can be depicted that the woman is still in the young age.

While in the third stanza employs visual imagery to show the young and fresh woman, the fourth stanza employs visual imagery to visualize a fat woman. It is depicted by visual imagery:

I'm fat as butter (line 13)

The fatness of the fourth woman is compared to butter since butter contains fat. Therefore, it can be imagined that the fourth woman is fatty and greasy. As the contrary, in the fifth stanza line 17, the seventh woman states:

I'm little and lean (line 17)

It means that she is very small and thin. Then she states that men will love her and like to pick her up to home.

3.3.4 Gustatory Imagery

Gustatory imagery tends to give the depiction about taste of something. In this poem, the researcher found that there is a gustatory imagery in line 15:

and sweet as cake. (line 15)

This line gives the image about the taste of a cake which is sweet. Even though it is actually metaphoric and compared to a woman's face, yet it makes the readers can imagine that the face of the woman is very sweet like a cake.

3.3.5 African American Women's Self-Esteem Reflected in *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*

Seven Women's Blessed Assurance tends to emphasize that women should have the ability to accept their selves as a positive and motivating person. The confidence of African-American women is very dominating in this poem. However, generally the message of this poem can be accepted for all of women. The seven women in this poem believe that whatever their body and their personality, there is always some people who love them instead of hate and bully them. They make all of things inside their selves as a personal strength which can be proud. Moreover, they do not state any blaming behavior toward other people who tease them. They just show how good they are without telling any badness from others. This point is one of the important point of Womanism which focuses on the struggling process of the oppressed group without judging the badness and the faults of the oppressor.

Almost all of the dictions employed in this poem show that the African American women are confident since they have ability to accept their condition.

The lines which tell about their physical condition such as:

*I'm young as morning
And fresh as dew. (lines 9 & 10)
*I'm fat as butter
and sweet as cake. (lines 14 & 15)
*I'm little and low (line 2)
*They call me string bean (line 5)****

show that the women know well their physical condition. Even though most of people do not consider some of their physical conditions are beautiful, yet they are very confident that people, especially men, will still appreciate them.

When people have confident, it is automatically that they also have high self-esteem inside their mind. Self-esteem and confidence here do not mean that they are arrogant and humiliate other women. It tends to show that they are thankful with what they have. They know that their condition is not considered beautiful in society. However, they also realize that this lack can be their uniqueness which can attract people. Beside their confidence, they also can accept their own selves. They see everything in a positive way, and it is the sign of people who have high positive self-esteem.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter contains conclusion of this minor thesis and suggestion for other researchers to do further research related to this thesis.

4.1 Conclusion

Maya Angelou employs figurative language and imagery in *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* to show the confidence, the pride, and the positive self-evaluation of African-American women. *Phenomenal Woman* and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* tend to show that African and American women are very confident and proud of being an African-American woman. Even though in America, they are considered as a different race and not treated well as White women, they can think positively to have a peaceful and motivated life among their social environments. While *Woman Me* tends to emphasize that every woman should be proud of being women since they have everything which men can have like the peaceful smile, the diamond tears, and the attractive smile. In this poem, basically Maya Angelou encourages other African-American women to have positive evaluation toward them. They should not be ashamed only because they are considered as different women in American society.

Phenomenal Woman, *Woman Me*, and *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance* bring people to the reality that African-American women have high positive self-esteem. It is reflected from the diction, phrases, and sentences in these three poems. Almost all of the dictions in these three poems shows that African-

American people have confidence, pride, non-blaming behavior, and positive self-evaluation which they have and shown in these poems. It is also reflected from the way Angelou encourages other African-American women to have positive life through Angelou's poems.

Maya Angelou does not employ negative dictions to depict her self-esteem and her confident. She does not mock or blame White people. It means that she does not look negatively toward White people who oppress, discriminate, and humiliate African-American women. She delivers her self-esteem by employing positive dictions which show her confidence, pride, and positive thinking.

4.2 Suggestion

The researcher offers a number of suggestions for other researchers to do further research related to the topic of this research:

1. The other researchers can employ other theories instead of feminism to analyze literary works, especially Maya Angelou's poems, to view the poem from different aspects, such as the history, the intrinsic structures, and many more.
2. The other researchers can analyze other poems of Maya Angelou since she has many poems which tell about African-American people's life, women's love, and about Maya Angelou's biography.
3. The other researchers also can analyze other poems from different poets which tell about African-American women's life.

Those are several suggestions which might be considered by other researchers to do further research.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Analysis of Figurative Language in *Phenomenal Woman*

Number	Figurative Language	Data	Poem's Line	Meaning	Reflected Self-Esteem
1	Metaphor	<i>Then they swarm around me, A hive of honey bees.</i>	19 & 20	It compares between <i>me</i> with <i>a hive</i> and the men with <i>honey bees</i> which means that men love and follow the woman.	It shows the woman's confidence.
		<i>it's the fire in my eyes</i>	22	The woman's eyes contain spirit and passion.	It shows the woman's confidence.
		<i>the sun of my smile</i>	39	The woman's smile is warm and can make happiness toward people	It shows the woman's confidence
2	Simile	<i>I walk into a room Just as cool as you please</i>	14 & 15	The woman can walk and do as good as White people.	It shows the woman's confidence and pride.
3	Symbol	<i>Phenomenal Woman</i>	In the last line of every stanza	Extraordinary woman	It shows the woman's confidence and pride.

Appendix 2. Analysis of Imagery in *Phenomenal Woman*

Number	Imagery	Data	Poem's Line	Meaning	Reflected Self-Esteem
1	Visual Imagery	<i>I'm <u>not cute</u> or built to suit a <u>fashion model's size</u></i>	2	The woman realizes that she does not have a body like a beautiful model	The woman realizes her lack, yet they accept it and not ashamed of it.
		<i>The span of my <u>hips</u> The stride of my</i>	7-9	The woman depicts the appearance of her	It shows the woman's confidence and

		<i>step</i> <i>The curl of my</i> <i>lips</i>		hips, step, and lips which are unique	proud of her physical condition
		<i>It's the fire in my</i> <i>eyes,</i> <i>And the flash of</i> <i>my teeth,</i> <i>The swing in my</i> <i>waist,</i> <i>And the joy in my</i> <i>feet</i>	22-25	The woman depicts the appearance of her eyes, teeth, and ways in a very confident way	It shows the woman's confidence.
		<i>It's in the arch of</i> <i>my back</i> <i>The sun of my</i> <i>smile</i> <i>The ride of my</i> <i>breasts</i> <i>The grace of my</i> <i>style</i>	39-42	The woman depicts the beauty of her back, smile, breast, and style.	It shows the woman's confidence and proud of her physical condition.
		<i>The bend of my</i> <i>hair</i> <i>the palm of my</i> <i>hand</i>	54 & 55	The woman depicts her hair bend and her hand's shape which is like palm	It shows the woman's confidence and proud of her physical condition.
2	Kinesthetic Imagery	<i>It's in the click of</i> <i>my heels (the</i> <i>movement of</i> <i>heels)</i>	52	The woman depicts her movement when she walks, her heels sound click.	It shows the woman's confidence.
3	Auditory Imagery	<i>It's in the click of</i> <i>my heels</i>	52	The woman depicts her movement when she walks, her heels sound click.	It shows the woman's confidence.

Appendix 3. Analysis of Figurative Language in *Woman Me*

Number	Figurative Language	Data	Poem's Line	Meaning	Reflected Self- Esteem
1	Metaphor	<i>Your smile,</i> <i>delicate</i> <i>rumor of peace</i>	1 & 2	The smile of the woman can make a piece.	It shows that woman see positively toward

					herself.
		<i>Your <u>tears</u>, <u>jeweled</u> strewn a diadem</i>	10 & 11	The tears of the woman is as valuable as jewel	It shows that woman see positively toward herself.
		<i>A grasp of Lions. A lap of Lambs</i>	9	Lion represents the man who is powerful, while lamb represents the woman.	Woman realizes that her power literally is lower than man, yet the man still submits toward the woman.
		<i>A stomp of feet. A bevy of swift hands</i>	22	A woman is deft and multi-tasking	Woman realizes that she is also as deft as men.
2	Symbol	<i><u>Beggar-Kings</u> <u>and red-ringed</u> <u>Priests</u> Seek glory at the meeting of your thighs</i>	6 - 8	Beggar-Kings and red-ringed priest represent the powerful men who still need the care and the satisfaction from women.	The woman believes that she is needed by men, not to be oppressed, yet loved.
		<i>Your tears, jeweled strewn a diadem caused <u>Pharaohs</u> to ride deep in the bosom of the Nile. Southern spas lash fast</i>	10-14	Pharaoh represent the man who is powerful and respected, yet he still needs the love of woman.	It shows the woman confidence that even respected men needs love from women.

Appendix 4. Analysis of Imagery in *Woman Me*

Number	Imagery	Data	Poem's Line	Meaning	Reflected Self-Esteem
1	Auditory Imagery	Your laughter, pealing tall Above the bells of ruined cathedrals	18 & 19	It depicts the laughter of woman which is loud yet it makes the	It shows that woman see positively toward herself.

				happiness toward people.	
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Appendix 5. Analysis of Figurative Language in *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*

Assurance

Number	Figurative Language	Data	Poem's Line	Meaning	Reflected Self-Esteem
1	Simile	<i>I'm <u>young as morning</u> And <u>fresh as dew</u></i>	9 & 10	The age of the woman is still young and fresh.	It shows that woman have high confidence, self-esteem, and see positively toward herself.
		<i>I'm <u>fat as butter</u> and <u>sweet as cake</u></i>	14 & 15	The woman's size is big or fat yet she is sweet or beautiful.	It shows that woman have high confidence, self-esteem, and see positively toward herself.
2	Metaphor	<i>They call me string bean</i>	5	The woman's height is tall and thin, like string bean.	It shows that woman have high confidence, self-esteem, and see positively toward herself.

Appendix 6. Analysis of Imagery in *Seven Women's Blessed Assurance*

Number	Imagery	Data	Poem's line	Meaning	Reflected Self-Esteem
1	Visual Imagery	<i>I'm little and low</i>	2	It depicts the physical condition of the woman which is little and short.	The woman knows their physical confidence and does not feel shy about it.
		<i>They call me</i>	5	It depicts the	The woman

		<i>string bean</i>		physical condition of the woman which is tall and thin.	knows their physical confidence and does not feel shy about it.
		<i>I'm young as morning</i>	9	It depicts the appearance of the woman which is looked young.	It shows that woman have high confidence, self-esteem, and see positively toward herself.
		<i>I'm fat as butter</i>	13	It depicts the physical condition of the woman which is fat and big.	The woman knows their physical confidence and does not feel shy about it.
		<i>I'm little and lean</i>	17	It depicts the physical condition of the woman which is little and thin.	The woman knows their physical confidence and does not feel shy about it.
2	Gustatory Imagery	<i>and sweet as cake</i>	15	It depicts the face of the woman which is sweet.	It shows that woman have high confidence, self-esteem, and see positively toward herself.