

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains five sub-chapters that are background of the study, research question, research objectives, scope and limitation of the study and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Women and men are different. They have their own characteristics. The differences between men and women occur because their body, feeling, thought and culture. These differences make men and society often misinterpret women. Men and society usually treat women by the way of their concept about women. In fact, women have their own concept about their live. What women think is not the same as what men think. Men and society force women to follow their concept about what women should be. Women must do the role that was given by men and society. A woman is supposed to be an ideal wife, a mother, and an excellent homemaker with multifarious roles in the family (Punniavathi, 2013: 4). Women cannot freely choose what they want to be or what they want to do. Society assumes that males are superior to females and therefore are better thinkers, more rational, more serious, and more reflective than women (Bressler, 1994: 108). This condition occurs from past until now.

In the past, men misinterpret women not only in real life but also in their literary work. They usually portray women as their own concept about women. Men's literary work have frequently stereotyped women as angels, barmaids, bitches, whores, brainless housewife or old maids (Bressler, 1994: 107). They just

use their own interpretation to create female characters in literary work because they cannot feel what woman feel and cannot think what women think. To solve this problem, women start to write on the basis of their point of view. Women write literary work as narrative strategies in the service of unfolding the untold stories of women (Petković, 2014). Thus, women create female characters that are different from female characters in men's literary work to show the truth about women. Through their literary works, women expect men will not misinterpret them again.

The other reason why women start to write literary work on the basis of their point of view is because women wish to stop male domination in literary canon. Women do not have place in literary canon because works which were written by women do not describe experience from a male point of view. Their literary works were not considered universal (Tyson, 2006: 84). Female writers must copy the theme or the language of men's literary work in order to make their literary work can be accepted in society. Female writers as Kate Chopin from America, Doris Lessing from England, and Monique Wittig from French keep writing literary work on the basis of their point of view although their literary works are not well accepted by society. Finally, in the decade of 1960's readers turned their attention to historical and current work by female writers (Bressler, 1994: 105).

Today there are many literary works which are written by female writers. Women's literary work have been well accepted by society. Many of them also get appreciation from society. Now women are free to write. Although women accept their goal to have place in literary canon, female writers still write literary work that

talks about women's experience. It occurs because there is always gender inequality in both the traditional and contemporary literary canons (Djajanegara, 2007 as cited in Asri, Hayati & Adek, 2019). Therefore, female writers still raise women's issues in their literary works.

Gender inequality not only occur in literary canon but also in society until today. There are some countries that give unfair treatment between men and women because the tradition for example is Indonesia. Patriarchy still occurs in Indonesia. Most Indonesian still think that a woman can only become a home-based woman in the end (Wahdiniwaty and Rustam, 2019). This condition that also motivates female writers to keep writing about women's experience. Through their literary works, they try to tell about their feeling, what they really want and show their thought or opinion about those conditions that occur to women.

One of female writers that write about women's experience is Susan Nguyen. Through her poems that are *All the Good Women are Gone*, *I want to break open* and *Museum of Menstruation*, Susan Nguyen presents women's life or women's experience. Thus, the writer uses the three poems as the source of data. Furthermore, these poems were published in Diode Poetry Journal and one of the poems that is *Museum of Menstruation* became one of Diode Poetry Journal's "Best of the Net" Nominees in 2016.

Susan Nguyen is an Asian-American writer and teacher of creative writing in Arizona State University and the National University of Singapore. Her poetry is often interested in the body. How geography, history, and trauma leave markers both visible and invisible in a person. Her poems that are *All the Good Women are*

Gone, I want to break open and *Museum of Menstruation* were published in 2016. Susan Nguyen wrote her three poems that ‘carves out space’ for her body and identity as an Asian-American woman (Hijazi, 2018). *All the Good Women are Gone* is about American woman that experiences unintended pregnancy and she choose to abort her baby. She aborts her baby because her boyfriend celibates which means her boyfriend will not marry her. She is also only a waitress in Virginia that does not have much money to fund their lives, she and her baby. *I want to break open* is about an American woman that feels sad because her mother was passed away. She wishes to break open, out from the sadness that makes her sick. *Museum of Menstruation* is about Asian-American woman’s experiences when she got menstruation for the first time until she become an adult. As the title *Museum of Menstruation*, this poem contains a collection of memories of menstruation that occur to the speaker. Museum is a place of memories.

This study uses gynocriticism theory. Gynocriticism theory is used to analyse literary work that is written by women writers. The purpose is to study the history, styles, themes, genres and structure of literature by women (Showalter, 1997: 216). Gynocriticism theory has four models. First, women’s writing and women’s body that analyses the biological imagery of women in women’s literary work. Second, women’s writing and women’s language that analyses women’s language that is used in women’s literary work. Third, women’s writing and women psyche that analyses the author’s psyche in writing process that influences their works. The last is women’s writing and women’s culture that analyses the women’s culture that is influenced by society in their literary works. These four models of

women's writing are used in this study to know the specialty of Susan Nguyen's writing.

The writer found five previous studies that used gynocriticism theory to analyse women's writing. First is a thesis entitled *Identifying the Specialty of Margaret Dilloway's Writing in How to Be an American Housewife (A Study of Gynocriticism)* by Dewi Purwatiningsih in 2017. Second is a thesis entitled *Gynocentrism in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* by M. Prabha Punniavathi in 2013. Third is a journal article entitled *Women's Perspective on Love, Loyalty, and the Other Women in Indonesian Literature* by Yasnur Asri, Yenni Hayati and Muhammad Adek in 2019. Fourth is a journal article entitled *A Gynocritic Study of Rupi Kaur's Milk and Honey* by Mohammad Tanvir Islam in 2020. Fifth is a journal article entitled *Madurese Women and Binding Culture in Muna Masyari's Martabat Kematian: Gynocriticism Analysis* by Erika Citra Sari Hartanto and Miftahur Roifah in 2020. Referring to those previous studies, there is no study use poem by Susan Nguyen as the source of data. Thus, the writer will analyse three poems that were written by Susan Nguyen to know the specialty of Susan Nguyen's writing.

1.2 Research Question

The focus of this study is the specialty of women's writing in selected poems by Susan Nguyen. The writer translates the focus of this study into question bellow:

1. What is the specialty of Susan Nguyen's writing portrayed in poem *All the Good Women are Gone, I want to break open* and *Museum of Menstruation*?

1.3 Research Objective

From the research problem that the writer mentioned above, this study is intended to:

1. Discover the specialty of Susan Nguyen's writing portrayed in poem *All the Good Women are Gone, I want to break open* and *Museum of Menstruation*.

1.4 Theory and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on four model of women's writing that are women's writing and women's body, women's writing and women's language, women's writing and women psyche and the last is women's writing and women's culture. This study has some weaknesses and limited scope. The limitation of this study is the source of data. This study only uses three poems by Susan Nguyen to seek the specialty of her writing. The next researchers may use more source of data to seek the specialty of women's writing.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Significance of this study is divided into two points that are theoretical and practical. The theoretical significance is that the finding of this study supports the existing theory of gynocriticism. This study is expected to find the specialty of Susan Nguyen's writing through her poems that are *All the Good Women are Gone, I want to break open* and *Museum of Menstruation*. The specialty of Susan Nguyen's writing can be seen from her poems if the poems are analysed with gynocriticism theory. Meanwhile the practical significance is the finding of this study can be a reference for next researchers.