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İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Women's Aspirations for Racial and Gender Equality in Maya Angelou's Works

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İSTANBUL, December 2022

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MA THESIS

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İSTANBUL, December 2022

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

In this project, I prepared my manuscript in accordance with the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University and I hereby declare that;

- I have obtained the data, information and documents provided within the thesis within the framework of academic and ethical rules,
- I have submitted all information, documents, evaluations and results in accordance with the requirements of scientific ethics and moral rules,
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- I have not made any changes to the data used,
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27/12/2022

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PREFACE

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Gunseli Isci for the continuous support during my study and research, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. I highly appreciate her kind efforts with me. She devotes her valuable time to read my thesis and tell me her precious comments. I would also like to thank My supervisor Prof. Dr. ERENDIZ ÖZBAYOĞLU for encouraging me to study hard and finish my thesis study. And also without the support, sincere guidance and unceasing intellectual support of my friends and colleagues, this thesis would not have been possible. Their critical remarks, constructive criticism, extinguished thinking, unconditional support. and valuable time were always my stimulants to take into consideration the impact of Maya Angelou's public speaking to the academic domain which has lent a helping hand to my academic development and boosted this thesis significantly.

I thank my father who supported me throughout my studies, but God did not want him to stay, may God have mercy on him.

Special thanks are directed to my dear family for supporting me in every step of the way. Your endless encouragement, confidence and sincere feedback lent me a helping hand to accomplish my work. I also pay tribute to Maya Angelou and the peerless heritage she endowed us with. Her stories have a perpetual effect not on me and moved me to a great extent. This research gave me the opportunity to indulge completely in her stories that are full of hope, insight and support which culminated in a concurrent process of self and academic development.

In effect, during the occasional solitary times of both preparing and finalizing this thesis, no other partner was most welcome than Maya Angelou's interviews and poems which stimulated me to struggle for quality and extended me with a feeling of commitment to examine Maya Angelou's stories and legacy justice.

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ÖZET

KADININ IRK İLE İLGİLİ HEDEFLERİ VE MAYA ANGELOU'NUN İŞLERİNDE CİNSİYET EŞİTLİĞİ.

Bu çalışma, Afrika kökenli Amerikalı kadınların azat edilme arzularını ve Maya Angelou'nun şiirlerinde ve röportajlarında direniş ve kimlik ruhunu kitlesine aksettirmeyi nasıl başardığını incelemektedir. Araştırmacı, Maya Angelou'ya ait dört adet şiirin yanı sıra 1975-2014 yılları arasında yayınlanmış konuşmalarını ele almaktadır. Çalışmada konu edilen şiirler *Still I Rise, Phenomenal Woman, Equality ve The Caged Bird* adlı şiirlerdir. *Ain't That Bad* ve *Human Family* başlıklı iki diğer şiire ise karşılaştırma amacıyla yer verilmiştir. Dayanıklılık ve metanet sayesinde, söz konusu Afrika kökenli Amerikalı kadınlar öfke, acı ve adaletsizlik duygularını umuda dönüştürmeyi başarmıştır.

Kadınların ırkçılığa ve cinsiyetçiliğe karşı umutlarının Maya Angelou'nun eserlerinde nasıl tasvir edildiğini tespit etmek amacıyla çalışmada üçlü bir sosyolojik sınıflandırmadan yararlanılmıştır. Bu sınıflandırmanın ilk iki kategorisi yazarın sosyal çevresi ve yazarın eserlerinin içeriği aracılığıyla yansıttığı felsefesi ve bu felsefenin toplumsal sorun ile nasıl ilintili olduğu konusudur. Üçüncü kategori ise edebi eserin toplumsal etkisi ve okuyucu problemidir. Bu durum edebi eserlerin sosyal çevre, toplumsal dönüşüm ve toplumsal ilerlemeye ne ölçüde dayalı olduğu ile ilgilidir.

Çalışmada, Maya Angelou'nun şiirlerinde sosyolojik yaklaşım ve yapısal analiz kullanılarak ırkçılık ve cinsiyetçiliğe karşı yöneltilen doğrudan ve sert eleştiriler ortaya konmaktadır. Güzel söz söyleme sanatı, söz sanatları ve sözcük seçimi aracılığıyla, Angelou bağnazlık ve cinsiyetçilik temalarına ışık tutmayı başarmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, Angelou genel anlamda siyahilere, özelde ise kadınlara karşı uygulanan ayrımcılığın sebebiyle ilgili tüm dünyaya yüksek tonda bir çığlık duyurabilmek için mümkün olan her çabayı sergilemiştir. Bu çabalar içerisinde şiirleri, öyküleri, röportajları ve söylevleri bulunmaktadır.

Ayman, H. S. AL-NAIMI, December 2022

Anahtar Kelimeler: özgürleşme, ırkçılık, cinsiyetçilik, istekler, eleştiri,

ABSTRACT

WOMAN'S ASPIRATIONS FOR RACIAL AND GENDER EQUALITY IN MAYA ANGELOU'S WORKS.

This study analyzes aspirations for emancipation of African American women and how Maya Angelou manages in her poems and interviews to highlight the spirit of resistance and identity to her audience. The researcher chose Maya Angelou's broadcasted speeches between 1975-2014 besides four of her poems. Those are *Still I Rise, Phenomenal Woman, Equality and The Caged Bird*. Two other poems, *Ain't That Bad* and *Human Family* are used for comparison. Through resilience and steadfastness, those Afro American women could transform the resulting feelings of extreme anger, deep pain and sheer injustice into rays of hope.

In order to find out how women's aspirations against racism and sexism were initiated and delineated in Maya Angelou's works, the researcher considers the three classifications for sociological approach: the social environment of the author, the author's philosophy reflected in further acts as well as writings via the content of their literary works and the way they are relevant to the social question. The last one is the social impact of the literary work and the reader problem, which is about the extent literary works relies on the social environment, social transformation and on the social progress.

The study reveals how Maya Angelou's poems direct severe criticisms against types of racism and sexism using the sociological approach and the structural analysis. Through elocution and speech, figures of speech, and selection of vocabularies, Angelou could shed light on the themes of bigotry and sexism. In other words, Angelou has used every effort possible to send a loud cry to the whole world about the cause of discrimination against blacks in general, and women in particular. This cry has been materialized by her poetry, narrative works, interviews and talks.

Ayman, H. S. AL-NAIMI, December 2022

Key words: emancipation, racism, sexism, aspirations, criticism,

INTRODUCTION

This study dissects women's aspiration for ethnic and sexist equality in Maya Angelou's broadcasted speeches between 1975-2014. It also deals with four of her selected poems: *Still I Rise, Phenomenal Women, Equality and The Caged Bird*. Some other two poems, *Ain't That Bad* and *Human Family* will be used for comparison. Those works contributed to the representation and emancipation of black culture through highlighting Afro American aspirations.

This research highlights Angelou's participation in the portrayal of black culture aspirations in general and black women's aspirations in particular keeping in mind that there are many shapes through which a matter can be depicted. This is due to the fact that at the roots of depiction reside the explanations and the outlooks. As a matter of fact, Angelou excelled in delineating the black aspirations through her own perspective, extremely personal. An achievement, though, since the black community has strived since slavery to be represented. (Eyerman, R. 2009, p.2).

The major problem of this research is to find out how race and gender discrimination is reflected in Maya Angelou's poems. We aim to demonstrate that the root of the problem that is implanted beneath the injustices African Americans encountered in the United States during the nineteenth century and onwards. Race oppression imposes physical, emotional, and psychological pain on the oppressed. This pain changes the character to another character and the former one is more or less eliminated. But the instinctive sense of living in freedom which exists in all living creatures such as breathing, eating and drinking remains.

The researcher aims to deeply analyze the poems in the second chapter and the interviews in the third chapter. The researcher seeks to spot light significant literary manifestations in the poems in order to understand the elements, purpose, messages,

indications, and the issue of American identity as a unique identity. The study is accomplished in qualitative approach.

Ronald Jackson et al say in *What Is Qualitative Research? Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* that qualitative research helps the researcher since "This humanistic, interpretive approach is also called 'thick-descriptive' because of the richness and detail to the discussion." (p.23). They also postulate that qualitative research helps grasp human experiences and contemplations on those experiences. "In other words, the focus turns to understanding human beings' richly textured experiences and reflections about those experiences." (Jackson, R.et al 2007, p.22).

The first chapter of the research is an elaborative study on feminism. It aims to analyze numerous definitions of feminism along with illustrating several examples from the poems related to feminism. It also discusses many points related to feminism such as its characteristics, strategies, devices and purpose. This chapter also sheds light on feminism as a way of contemplating literary works. The second chapter of the study is an analysis of Maya Angelou's selected poems, major themes, effective techniques, dialects, visual images, and meaningful figures of speech.

Finally, the last chapter of the study analyzes Maya Angelou's interviews in order to understand Angelou's techniques. Then, it delineates how she handles the themes of resistance and identity. Also, it delves into Angelou's beauty Standards. Lastly, it illustrates the impact of religion on her life and work. This chapter is necessary because it clarifies the different shades of meaning related to women's aspirations for racial and gender equality.

It is through resilience and steadfastness that those Afro Americans could transform the resulting feelings of extreme anger, deep pain and sheer injustice into rays of hope expressed through songs and spirituals in order to assist them cope with the status quo.

Those benefiting from that oppression contend that someone in pain could never sing: Those people enjoy a normal life and their singing is the evidence. Not true, singing is a similar attitude to the silence Ghandi adopted in his fight against colonialism, leading to intellectual and organic aspiration.

The feminist approach is premised on finding suggestions of misogyny within pieces of literature and exposing them. The second step is exposing the undervaluing of women in literature that has been traditionally accepted as the norm by both men and women because the patriarchal system was depicting a harmful image of women as the subordinate gender or rather man's "other" according to which women have been characterized by their deficiency in comparison to men. Feminist theory endeavors to reveal where the patriarchal ideology that women can only have two identities: Madonna (Virgin) or whore or rather either reinforced or broken.

In effect, Afro-American women have suffered from two masters: The white man before emancipation and then the black man who substituted the white man after the movement. Every matter of life was dominated by man: Education, Clergy work, medicine and she had no say whatsoever, in addition to the strenuous work she did at home: Still housework was part and parcel of woman's duties even if she had a job. Moreover, The Feminist Movement of the 1970's was male controlled which led African American women to launch another kind of strife to gain equality.

Feminism questions how gender intersects with all other forms of oppression including that based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, class, or age. Finally, it can be said that feminist research is motivated by a desire to make positive change in the world. People do feminist research in order to achieve social justice. Feminist researchers move beyond theory into practice; or sometimes the term Feminist praxis is used as the way the feminist theory is fulfilled in action. Again, this is what is noticed in Maya Angelou's poetry and interviews.

It is contended that "since there is no single, unchanging black community, the 'burden of representation' involves varying viewpoints, differing degrees of objectivity and subjectivity, and competing facts and fictions." (Klotman, P. & Cutler, J.1999 *YouTube*). Premised on the interviews she gives, Angelou intends to find a varied and large audience. For instance, Angelou appears in some celebrated programs such as "Going Home" and visits her hometown only to depict how she was raised in such a biased atmosphere. One of her aims is to delineate how Afro-Americans were able to survive gender and race segregation in the United States.

Locally, Maya Angelou is able to delve into the homes of quite a number of Americans, not only through her autobiographies but through interviews she had with great interviewers such as Bill Moyers, one of the most renowned journalists, programs such as *Bill Moyers Journal, NOW with Bill Moyers,* and *Moyers & Company*. On the international scale, Angelou also had a great spotlight. She was interviewed on BBC talk shows such as *Hard Talk.* She started this show at a very early section of her career. These shows were not aired in America at that time. This reveals Angelou's target to broaden her viewers outside America as well. This also reveals that she targets the implicit messages of her stories about equality to achieve a worldwide influence. In one of the trumpeter and vocalist Armstrong Louis's succeeding interview with Angelou (1901-1971), she illustrated that she aspired to be a "shero".

The Feminist Movement tries to change perspective on Western literature. By reconstituting methods of literature evaluation to include women's multiple points of views, concerns and values. This theory is incessantly encompassing new theories in order to grasp the subjugation of women, particularly Freud's Psychoanalysis in which, "[p]sychoanalysis can be used to help understand the psychological effects of patriarchal ideology as well as how and why women and men internalize it" (Tyson, 2018, p. 94) and Marxism to "help understand how economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and custom to keep women economically, politically, and socially oppressed as an

underclass" (Tyson, 2018, p. 89). The theory endeavors to extend more realistic depictions of women in texts.

Yet, it is noteworthy that the most crucial problem before being heard or having a say in life is: Survival which is a word inherent in the way of establishing the Africans uprooted from Africa, their homeland, sent as enslaved victims to the New World, to the Americas where they were considered as property, as a labor force, but denied the new homeland citizenship. Not only their humanity but also their civilization which encompassed their gods, their music and their creed were repudiated. Yet, the most disastrous blow was when their language, or how they conveyed their convictions, concepts as well as reflections, was eradicated. Angelou mentions in her autobiography that "It is language alone which separates him [man] from the lower animals" (Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* p.96)

In a fundamentally white controlled atmosphere, there exists "a vital need for African Americans to present their lives, past and future, as of equal importance in the 'American story'." All through their lives, Afro-Americans have been resisting enforced stifling and brutalization and marginalization via language. Their tradition of oral storytelling has been retained and inherited by their descendants. (Campbell, N. & Kean, A. 2016, p.78).

Ultimately feminism is looking at the conflicts and biases that women face throughout literary works particularly in a masculine centric ideology. This can be very closely tied to socio-economic race criticisms and the socioeconomic criticism would be Marxist Theory. So, there are three essential things that the feminist criticism embraces. First, it observes analyses and challenges the language institutions and powers that have reflected a patriarchal interest and these interests that have a profound impact on women's expression and quality of life. The second point is women's resistance and subversion to patriarchal oppression, how they fight back, how they free themselves from the oppression

they face in their lives. Finally a more modern point is about the empowerment for women through representations, through women writing about women, sharing their beliefs, their experiences and really challenging the status quo through having a voice. Naturally, her works delineate her occupation with all phases, but for the most part Maya Angelou's sole concern is this phase with its empowerment.

In her works, specifically poetry, Angelou deals with the themes of marginalization, stereotyping, suppression and segregation. In addition, she concentrates on the conditions of black women; she approaches the perpetual battles endured by African Americans in an isolated society. Her ideas with regard to human self-esteem and social parity rank her as one of the most prodigious figures. Angelou's autobiography confirms that she underwent subordination and degradation in her teens because of racism, a status that she still underwent as she grew up. She retrieves the past, and fully grasps her circumstances in the present, and that she is in charge of defending her own rights as an individual but also her community's rights and particularly her sex is never out of her sight.

Topically, Angelou delineates the Afro American culture's intellectual, psychological and social characteristics. Angelou's writings tackle the themes of passion, rejection, recognition, devotion and racial antipathies. Her work explores several themes: psychological mediocrity, longing for freedom and social inferiority, need for freedom and wrath against depreciation patterns.

Furthermore, she analyzes the impacts resulting from the whites imposing their ways of life on the black values and respect. Since feminism in general is striving for sexist parity, black feminism is struggling both gender prejudice and racial segregation. As a whole, black feminism is related to the identity issues of black women. Black feminists target terminating the economic and political subjugation of black women. Being an African American writer, Angelou mirrors her personal identity via picturing her civilization, ethnicity and sexuality. Hence, she pursues the black feminist movement that

targeted emancipating or rather fulfilling Afro American woman aspirations. In doing so, some critics, apply the term “Womanist” to Angelou instead of “feminist”.

The thesis will shed light on women’s aspirations toward gender and race equality as outcomes of the three axes Angelou’s public speaking and writings were based on: Narration, opposition, and identification. Narration, known as storytelling is an all-embracing topic all around this research, since the majority of Maya Angelou’s responses to queries in interviews and even her style in *Phenomenal Women, Still I Rise, Equality and The Caged Bird* and the other two poems, *Ain’t That Bad* and *Human Family* that will be used for comparison are encrusted in a narrative form. In her talks, Angelou recounted stories in order that her message would travel as far as she could, whether it is in a verse, song of praise or remembrance.

Topics of opposition and identification reside at the core of quite a number of her stories. First and foremost, Angelou was a vehement believer in the magic power of opposition and that “if you really have something to protest, you should be on the streets.” The next thing is that every human being has to uncover that “wondrous and uniqueness thing in ourselves to remind us that everyone is worthy.” (Angelou, M., Smithsonian Museum, 2014.)

The basis of the feminist movement is the fundamentally patriarchal system of the Western World which was created by man, ruled by man, viewed through the eye s of man and finally judged by man. Truly, patriarchy is not restricted to the West. It is still persistent in North Africa and the Middle East area due to many social, religious and cultural factors that need not be handled since they ae irrelevant to this thesis.

So, feminist criticism did arise from patriarchal societies in Europe and America, but this concept is inherent in most social constructs, most social beliefs that are around the world. Female writers are traditionally examined by the same standards as those of male

writers. Women were so to be unintelligent and many women unfortunately accepted this judgement. It is from these ideas that the foundations of Feminist Critical Theory developed. It was not until the Feminist Movement was well underway that women began examining all texts, reevaluating their portrayal of women and writing new works to fit the developing concept of Model Women.

The study endeavors to explore the attempts of the black woman in search of self, racism, gender and identity in Angelou's works which enunciates an autobiography and reflection of Maya Angelou's early years in addition to the black women's life experiences amid the oppression of slavery. She also wrote some other autobiographies where she delineates the experiences of her adulthood. For the most part, this study stresses the fact that Afro- American women have endured and through that endurance they were emancipated from the plight of slavery and transformed into independent beings with their own identity.

Fundamentally, the authentic nature of African American literature has scrutinized the question of racial segregation. African American writers penned in order to depict feelings of self-worth, and significance of Black Americans in society. Those protests aligned with the Civil Rights Movement and encountered grievous consequences. Nevertheless, African American writers resumed recording the inequitable conditions for black people in America and the dire need for equality among all ethnic groups.

The stories she tells on resistance incessantly maintain this argument. In fact, Maya Angelou manipulates narrating or recounting to deal with her personal injury in addition to the collective injury of slavery. In fact, her personal injury stories are skillfully used in order to highlight the likelihood to surmount affliction and misfortune. At this step springs hope and aspiration. Angelou's experience on trauma is pivotal to her concepts on opposition or resistance. She manages to switch an adverse experience into a positive one thereby giving hope to her sex mates.

This constitutes the foundation of the stories she tells about opposing disparity and affliction. That is how her stories of her personal injury or trauma link to the comprehensive target to utilize her function in the limelight in order to resume the struggle for equality. It can be said that each and every one of her poems tell a story: in her selected poems *Phenomenal Women, Still I Rise, Equality and The Caged Bird* and the other two poems, *Ain't That Bad* and *Human Family* that are used for comparison.

It can also be said that mass media is a significant asset to attain a wide range of audience. It also means to be attached to everybody in a further individual way. More than often, there were rounds and rounds of communication between Angelou and her audiences after the interviews. These contacts lend a helping hand in delivering the messages more easily and directly. It can be remarked that throughout her interviews, Angelou always pinpoints the topics of inequality, discrimination and suffering experience of the black community. In the meantime, she is able to link their suffering to human suffering of all human beings, so that her messages bear universal issues. Angelou illustrates in those interviews the teachings she has acquired in her life and manifests the ways to oppose afflictions. That is the torch to light the way toward achieving aspirations.

Maya Angelou seeks to have power dynamics understood. Then, she endeavors to remove power imbalances by empowering black American women to be partners instead of only subjects of the research. The same is followed through the methodology of feminist participatory action research. The researcher sees that Maya Angelou, through her continuous high calls whether directly or indirectly, involves her audience and readers in her struggle for empowerment.

Chapter Three will highlight the topic of identity on a personal and common scale in her interviews with the purpose of examining how she tackles (re)constructing her identity in light of the common (black) identity. Her identity is not completely constructed since

she has had to suffer from color and gender segregation since her teens. When she matured and became part and parcel of the strife for equality, she initiates evolving self-esteem in her ethnic group. It is pleaded that Angelou highlights the identity of black women when she adopts on a prestigious position. She compensates the prevalent account on black women via storytelling and extends a substitute statement for black women. Maya Angelou highlights her propensity for building an identity based on her descent. In one of her interviews with H.L. Gates (2008), Angelou contemplates on her predecessors during her voluntary exile in Africa:

> "I heard the ocean from where we were and I couldn't stop weeping. I thought: 'When I left here, I had a cuff around my throat and my hands were tied and my feet were tied. And I got into a slave ship and I slept on the bottom in the filthy hedges and now I'm being brought back." (Angelou, M. 2008-interviews with H.L. Gates)

In this passage, Angelou pinpoints her predecessors that were eradicated and subjugated. Angelou pleads about how the identity of African-Americans is profound in their African descent. Angelou expresses self-esteem in her ethnic group and the African origin, which is customarily regarded as disgraceful. By opposing those perspectives, Maya evolves into a leader in the manifestation of black self-esteem that she delineates by getting dressed in conventional African clothes in the limelight. In that way, she stimulates black people to regain their legacy, to harmonize with the severe past, and to feel proud of their descent.

Thus, conflict and struggle always show in an unbalanced relation of supremacy and subjugation. Writing becomes a venue in which black women prove themselves co-present through their words and stories and consequently when they construct their identities from their perspectives; they remove the stereotypes created and rooted in society by whites to (re)construct a new identity, one in which they can see themselves reflected. In sum, throughout the process of identity construction, the subjects represent themselves by means of texts that are responses to external tensions and which are constituted as a strategy of silenced minorities. It is frequently pleaded that African-American male

writers abide by the very design of contest which is prevailing in conventional Western literature. Conversely, African-American female writers adopt a more well-adjusted connection when they search for other female models in an endeavor to make a symbolic blend with their ancestors.

The concepts highlight how to claim objectivity and neutrality in research as in many cases availed for a very specific viewpoint. By understanding and openly acknowledging one's own experience, context and one's place within the world, one's situated knowledge weakens individually and collectively at a very greater objectivity than people could, if one were to simply ignore one's situatedness. As feminist researchers, one can also identify and acknowledge the power one holds. Situated knowledge refers to all knowledge produced by individuals who are situated in a particular place, their context, viewpoint and their biases influence the knowledge that they create.

That is why it can be pointed out that an analysis about the self -representation of African-American women focusing on gender and class will not exclude the force of racism and sexism that structure the experiences of these women; conversely, such an action would restate the legends that those authors tried to disperse. Consequently, it should be highlighted that African-American women's autobiography necessitates an explanation for its presence and this need is due to the concept of categorization, particularly in the condition of black women writers, which must weigh the extra text-based conditions. The basic concept that leads this categorization is history, beginning with the consciousness of black women with respect to their situation both as black and as women.

It is generally thought that this consciousness is the outcome of insight and scrutiny that women have made of their ancestors: their grandmothers, their aunts, their mothers and themselves. Their grandmothers may have been slaves, their mothers, aunts and their own sisters had also lived in the enslavement of discrimination, and consequently they

carried the symbols of suppression obviously on their backs, which shows, they carried the signs of the lashes, if only psychologically. So, the daughters of the discriminated south notice that during all this time, their voices were not heard and the infringement and deterioration they endured were still disregarded.

In other words, the occurrence of African-American women in the autobiographical domain was being established and they realized that the female African-American appearance could not simply be included in the spaces left by men. It would be necessary to (re)define the terms *woman* and *black* for society. African- American women's search for rights, extended to those whom the rights to humanity had been denied. Their activity of remembering would be indispensable. This means that the re-establishment of the past is essential so that the stories told by grandmothers, aunts and sisters of the discriminated south may come into prominence, bringing into the present the autobiographical past of these women. For this process to take place, nevertheless, it is indispensable to delve into the past, retrieve and re-establish it, viz, in order that the stories of black women writers may be retrieved, it would be essential to revive the words of their ancestors and then institute a succession.

As a result, female African-American autobiography pictures the expertise of the individual as a symbol of the common situation; it is a common scheme in reaction to the outward constraint that while directed to a white audience also speaks especially to black people because, in their long history of subjugation, they have in common the understanding of the double use of terminology as an approach of existence and resistance. That is why, as has been pleaded, the autobiographical subject thus emerges as an almost capricious member of the group, selected to tell his or her story and to explain the condition of the group rather than to assuage his or her egoistical concerns.… the autobiographical statement emerges as a *public* rather than private gesture, *me-ism* gives way to *our-ism* and the shallow anxieties with the individual subject (individualism) give way to the common submission of the group.

In the setting of this collectivity, we may assert that the female African-American autobiography becomes a “contact zone” (Pratt, 1992, pp .7,8,9,11), namely, a site where different cultures meet. Now, comes the point of language that can only be possessed by the individual when he/she populates it with his/her intentions. Such a proposition is very close to the meaning of the power of the word for Africans. In African culture to dominate the word is the same as to make things exist in the world because the relation between the subjects and the words is intrinsically related to the interpretation of the self as a possessor of a story.

The act of speaking is linked to the transmission of myths, legends, recipes and convictions of African knowledge. In the adjustment of these beliefs to the New World by oppressed Africans, women were given the task of keeping this knowledge. For African-American writers their cultural traditions and the tales that constitute autobiographical narratives are resources in the struggle for social justice at the same time that they transmit histories to their own communities. The symbolic process of recovering the past is simultaneously an effort to reclaim history and to leave the past behind.

FIRST CHAPTER

Theory of Feminism

The literary theory is simply a microscope to look through in order to examine the text(s) one is studying. It has to be taken into consideration also that it is not the only way to view a text. This is why highly structured approaches are used to make sense of a text. The questions that arise are: what does the text do to the readers? Does it pull emotional or spontaneous reactions to the text? It is important to avoid emotions in order to obtain well -defined logical and highly articulated literary theory and enable readers to develop their own methods of interpretations and then justify their interpretations in a way that is very logical and consistent that readers do not result in a smattering of different ideas with no cohesive whole, using one or more series in order to interpret, which gives the readers a very logical way in which to prove one's interpretation as an approach that is acceptable.

The term feminism may not look complicated when it is used in sociological context or in social circumstances regarding women's position in society. When many people think of feminism, they think of women's rights and equality for women. Indeed, feminism is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. However, it should be noted that when the term is applied to analyzing concrete circumstances in the form of feminist criticism, the phenomenon becomes more complicated because it recalls methodology. In other words, feminist criticism has its own unique methodology which requires substantial interdisciplinary knowledge which naturally involves an in depth social, cultural and historical analysis of patriarchy.

It is very important to understand that feminism does not just refer to the experience of women. Although historically feminism has been related to organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests, it also refers to the experience of men within this larger system of the patriarchy. Hence, feminism is bringing both of the sexes to an equal level

in terms of political power, economic power and social equality, social freedom, and social liberation.

Certain critics coined three important definitions for feminism. First, it is the theory of the political economic and social equality of the sexes. Second, it is the organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Third, it is against gender stereotypes and gender-based expectations. These important definitions lend a helping hand in understanding feminist criticism. Thus, feminist criticism involves looking at literature through the lens of a feminist perspective, looking at the relationships between men and women, power dynamics, money dynamics, social and cultural freedom and gender- based expectations.

> "Although there is no such thing as a feminist method, and there is debate over the usefulness and even the existence of a feminist methodology and a feminist epistemology, there is a recognition that 'feminist research practice' is distinguishable from other forms of research. Feminist research practice can be distinguished by the questions feminists ask, the location of the researcher within the process of research and within theorizing, and the intended purpose of the work produced." (Letherby, G.2003, P.5).

Actually, the above quote summarizes the concept that there is not a single definition for feminist research. Feminist research practice is informed by a number of concepts from feminist ethics and theory, and these can be applied in any combination to produce that research. The most important of these concepts is that one has to look beyond the privileged male viewpoints to specifically seek out women's knowledges and experiences. Feminist researchers know and value that their research participants have expert knowledge about their own experiences.

It is important to understand that there is a clear distinction between feminism and feminist criticism. Thus, when feminist literary criticism is performed, there is a thorough look on literature and how it is informed by feminist theory or more broadly by the politics of feminism. It is related to the interaction between genders and to oppression of women in the system of patriarchy. Feminist literary criticism uses feminist principles and

ideology to critique the language of literature. Using the word critique does not mean mentioning the negatives necessarily. But instead, to look closer or to perform a close reading.

Another way to perform this is to read between the lines of literature to see how some analysis and some breaking down of understanding can be drawn. This means looking at the authors' messages, what sort of messages and ideologies can be found in a text that is related to or informed by the dynamics between the genders, the political, economic and social inequality or equality of the sexes. In addition, Feminist criticism seeks to analyze and describe the ways in which literature portrays the narrative of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political and psychological forces embedded within literature. These four ideas, is what should be achieved by investigating and reading literature through feminist criticism.

Dynamics between men and women or women in their own lives, women with other women, economic, social, political and psychological forces is what should be considered when one is looking at some of the earlier pieces of literature that represent a period of time in American culture when women were more constrained, when there was more sort of oppression and domination by the male half of society which is an undeniable fact.

Feminist criticism cannot be done without investigating how the American society system and culture have been informed by male domination. That has naturally affected literature whether it was written by a man or a woman. Truly, feminist criticism does involve a deep understanding of these ideas found in literature. That is how Black feminism emerged to emphasize emancipating black women's suffrage against racism, classism and sexism.

> "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. Placing African-American's experiences in a transnational context simultaneously provides a new angle of vision on US Black feminism as a social justice project and decenters the Black/White binary that has long plagued U.S." (Collins,2000, 98,233)

As mentioned earlier, there are lenses which are referred to when tackling different perspectives or rather when literary criticism is performed. The literary theory is the kind of ideas, the foundation, the concept of looking at literature, analyzing it and breaking it down. Looking at individual words, phrases, looking at individual themes and occasionally including the context in the history of what was happening at the time literature was written.

Also, there is the relationship of men and women and the power dynamics including political power, moral authority, social privilege which refers to social freedom and the control of property even the ownership of homes and businesses.

1.1. Patriarch ideology

In every domain where patriarchy reigns woman is Other. She is marginalized, oppressed defined only by her difference from male norms and values. Thus, feminine qualities were made to be different from normal values. Feminist literary criticism suggests that women in literature were historically presented as objects seen from a male perspective. This can be clearly seen in the *Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman where the woman character or the narrator is objectified and never given a name.

Feminist literary criticism is concerned with the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions such as films and TV shows) re-enforce or undermine the economic political social and psychological oppression of women. These are kinds of the Four Horsemen of feminist criticism looking at the economic dynamics between men and women The political dynamics between men and women in the patriarchy social oppression of women, their freedoms and their power and the psychological corporation of women.

“The significance of the feminist movement is that it offers a new ideological meeting ground for the sexes, a space for criticism, struggle, and transformation”- (Hooks, B.2000 p.35) This quote is important because it recalls to memory that the Feminist Movement is not concerned about women's rights only. Feminism is about making sure that women's rights and interests are promoted in a political sphere. However, it is more about the ideological meeting ground for the sexes and as Bell Hooks refers to it, it can become a space for criticism for struggle and for transformation of the relationship between the sexes.

It is important to take into account the context, the history and what was happening at the time in order to understand why someone one- such as Mary Wollstonecraft would have been inspired to write. In 1776, the colonies declared independence from England. Thus, in the Declaration of Independence, it says that all men are created equal. Women were not included because at the time women were not considered equal to men in society. Women were not allowed to own property and most importantly, they were not allowed to vote.

This is the period of time right after colonies were settled, women were established as being in the domestic sphere, that the expectation was that women would take care of the home, the children and merely many other domestic responsibilities. That is why Mary Wollstonecraft was writing about the rights of women who are not equal in humanity to men. While all those ideas about the American Revolution were swirling around, some women were enquiring why they do not have a say. In fact, women were left out of any revolutionary documents.

Susan B. Anthony and Victoria Woodhull contributed to the women's suffrage movement which led to the passing of the 19th Amendment in 1920 that gave women the right to vote. So, it is less than 100 years ago in terms of all of civilization in all of society. It was only in 1920 that women were given the legal right to vote, to make

decisions about how they would be governed, to have any kind of say in their own experience in the United States.

1.2. Phases of Feminism

The first one was the feminine phase and this was pretty early, the 1800s. Most women who were writing would write with males' Pseudonym. The Bronte Sisters: Currer Belle (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily) and Acton (Anne) Bell. George Sand (originally: Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin), George Eliot (originally: Mary Ann Evans). Curer Belle was fortunate enough to have positive reviews particularly after she revealed her real identity. Additionally, women during this time period tried to reach that male-dominated audience because that was who was reading their material. It was not equal audience. They wanted to feel safe and successful as writers. They did not want to be condemned for writing things that would not be accepted by the culture.

Next came the second wave of feminism which took place in the early 1960s to the late 1970s and this involved another revolutionary or cultural shift in the United States. This is the feminist phase or polemics. It is the period of people fed up with their lives and where they lived and criticize the role of women in a male- dominated society and the oppression they faced. In fact, this is the angry part of Feminist Criticism development.

During WWII, many men were shipped overseas to fight in Europe or in the Pacific and as a result, many women took their place in their jobs and women experienced more equal working conditions during that period of time. It was not as if all the factories and shops could shut down because the men were off fighting a war. Instead, they needed to be maintained and so women went to work.

For many women, this was a liberating moment they recognized. Women probably enjoyed earning money and feeling more productive members of society rather than

the many women who had been expected to stay at home, take care of the children take care of the household chores and were not able to make any of their own decisions about any part of their lives. After the war men returned and asked for their jobs back. Sometimes that was not very politely, and as a result that led to a huge cultural revolution which women seized its moment to start organizing and inspiring political activism.

In addition, that period witnessed Black History Month and speakers like Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X and at the same moment there was the cultural revolution happening where there were high calls for equal rights for African-Americans. During the time, the story of Rosa Parks was heard. She refused to leave her seat and go to the back of the bus for a white man.

Feminists decided to tie those ideas together with these cultural and social movements. Writers such as Simone de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex* in 1972 which established the feminist theories alongside with American Civil Rights Movement. So many people were looking at the systems in place and looking at who held the power and looking at discrimination and were asking themselves how they would make society more equal. As a result, there was a myriad of political fervor, activism and protests and people marching in the streets.

Eventually, this led to the Third Wave of feminism which began in the early 1990s and is continuing to the present day. Some people tend to argue that we are in the fourth wave of feminism, but for our purposes, it is more important to consider those two things which collapsed into the third wave of feminism. Third-wave feminism moved to expand the ideas resisting the white heterosexual middle class focus of second wave feminism.

In effect, this last one is called the female phase where they really started considering the authenticity of women's points of view. So, they no longer need to prove that a female point of view is legitimate: They were trying to figure out what it means to

be a woman in a modern society. They tried to reason logically with men. In this phase, there is acknowledgement that woman can be authoritative and logical but also compassionate and thoughtful.

Looking all the way back to the first and second waves of humanism, the feminists were really often white heterosexual middle-class women who were asking for more rights such as the right to access to birth control so that they could have as many children as they wanted, the right to safe and legal abortions and the right to other political social and economic power. During the third-wave, this expanded to include many different groups. It borrows from contemporary gender and theories to expand on marginalized populations' experiences.

So, America realized population might be a group of people that are often systematically discriminated against so that might refer to people of color, other minorities of people who do not fall under traditional understanding of gender, such as transgender individuals. This also includes gay, bisexual lesbian individuals who the third-wave of feminism seeks to incorporate under a larger umbrella asking for the equal protection from the law for those individuals as well.

At the same time, writers such as Alice Walker work to reconcile feminism within the concerns of the Black community. One of the issues that plagues feminism is that it tends to focus on the equality for white women, white individuals and many people who fight for breaking down the systems of discrimination and racism in the United States. Do not feel that feminism represents them as well. Therefore, the third wave of feminism is also referred to as intersectional feminism.

What gender means to feminist criticism has to be understood. Gender is a construct. In other words, it is constructed or basically another way of saying it is that gender is something that has been made by society. Famous writers and philosophers such as Judith

Butler have really revolutionized public understanding of gender. It is very important to understand that these kind of philosophers and thinkers flock to areas such as the Bay area where all of the new ideas tend to be kind of churning in the atmosphere and progressive politics are more acceptable. People open themselves up to these ideas since it makes a lot of sense that San Francisco and the Bay area would make a fertile land to foster this kind of idea of questioning gender and questioning constructs of society and questioning patriarchy.

Judith Butler is renowned for her work known as *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity, (2006),* that introduces the idea of gender performativity which is an important term when considering feminist criticism. Gender performativity refers to the idea that within our society males and females, men and women particularly in American society are expected to comply with certain gender roles. In other words, there are gender roles or gender-based expectations that men and women are supposed to perform in the American society according to Judith.

She also writes that gender is something created by doing repetitive acts of gender performance. So, these expectations and roles that men and women are expected to play, are created or constructed solely by doing repetitive acts of compliance with that specific gender. A good example for that would be that young boys are often told: Boys do not cry and when kids are little, we know regardless of whether they are little boys or little girls that they can cry but boys are told this message: Boys don't cry, and that is a gender-based expectation.

So, over time, men often become less comfortable with expressing their emotions or crying especially in front of others and this is an example of gender performativity. There are other ideas too such as that men do not wear dresses, only women wear dresses and skirts and it is important to recognize that gender performativity is based on individual cultures. So, there are other cultures where those gender-based expectations do not exist.

However, there are many that are quite cross-cultural such as Men being bread-winners men working and bringing home the food, so to speak making the money for the family.

The gender-based expectation is that women take care of the children, take care of the house chores and the domestic responsibilities. Gender performativity has to do with us individuals and the Gender roles that we are expected to comply with in society as well as the gender roles that we are expected to comply with in terms of relationships. Gender roles are a huge theme and the expectation or gender performativity that is expected is one of the main themes of feminist criticism when literature is considered through the lens of feminist criticism.

But the most significant thing to take into consideration is that literary criticism is informed by feminist theory or more broadly by the politics of feminism. Second, it uses some principles and ideology to critique the language of literature. Third, this school of thought seeks to analyze and describe the ways in which literature portrays the narrative of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political and psychological forces embedded in that literature. Therefore, there should be an understanding of the history of feminism.

Feminist literary criticism involves asking new questions of old texts. Lisa Tuttle is an American born science fiction, fantasy, and horror author. In1986, she literally wrote the book on feminism: *Encyclopedia of Feminism*. She gives a succinct description of the goals of feminist criticism as: First to develop and uncover a female tradition of writing. Second, to interpret symbolism of women's writing so that it will not be lost or ignored by the male point of view. So, this attempt to recover from women being placed as other marginalized as a kind of differing from male norms and values. Third, to re-discover old texts of over hundred years ago via asking new questions about lost texts, what were these women conveying in their works of literature and how those works can be seen through new eyes as there is new understanding. Fourth, feminist criticism seeks to analyze

women writers and their writing from a female perspective, giving value to the female perspective which in the system of the patriarchy is historically ignored, marginalized, quieted or even outright dismissed, and naturally to resist sexism in literature.

A quick glance at the history of feminism can shed light on feminist criticism which became one of the main schools of literary criticism. The feminist movement has often been described as coming in waves. The first one began in the late 1700s and early1900s and went all the way to the early 1900s. Feminism has been around since the beginning days of the United States. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote a vindication of the rights of women which highlighted the inequalities between the sexes.

First, although “Feminist values in research may be understood in a variety of ways” (Jenkins et al., 2019, P.1) feminist research is identified by its two-fold dimension. “Feminism is both ‘theory’ and ‘practice’" (Letherby, G.2003, P.4) In other words, it targets to encompass both creating new knowledge and producing social change contrary to traditional research. Those are the very things Maya Angelou sought to achieve in her literary career. Traditionally, feminist research has been enlightened by women's battles against the diverse kinds of their subjugation. Second, "it is essential that feminist values infuse and underpin every aspect of research.” (Jenkins et al., 2019, P.1) It is based on feminist beliefs and values and endeavors to comprise feminism within the process, to highlight the significance women give to their world targeting to transform patriarchal institutions.

1.3.Principles of Feminist Research

Feminist principles instruct all phases of the research, from choice of topic to presentation of data, acting as the scheme managing the decisions made by the people included in the research. Feminist research is both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, in the sense that it is premised on multiple methodologies. Diversity is what characterizes feminist research. It uses multiple approaches, and it is incessantly being redefined by the

apprehensions of women coming from very various outlooks. Feminist research thus necessitates that such topics as antiracism and heterogeneity, democratic decision making, and the empowerment of women--including traditionally marginalized women--are addressed.

Seeking out and valuing the knowledge and experiences of other women can help guide the selection of one's research questions. Feminist research challenges in the Western notion of objective knowledge, or the idea that research and science can be truly objective, or that it is possible for a researcher to approach their work from a truly neutral and objective viewpoint. Feminist researchers can engage in the practice of Reflexivity to help understand the subjectivity of one's own viewpoints**.** " researcher reflexivity involves thinking about how our thinking came to be, how pre-existing understanding is constantly revised in the light of new understandings, and how this in turn affects our research." In other words, Reflexivity is a term used to describe a process where one increases his self- awareness by identifying one's cultural assumptions and biases. Then, one engages in an ongoing reflective process to understand how this affects the research. (Haynes, 2012, P.1).

Related to this is the concept of situated knowledge according to which, individuals situated in a particular place, their context, viewpoint and their biases influence the knowledge that they produce. The concepts highlight how to claim objectivity and neutrality in research as in many cases availed for a very specific viewpoint. By identifying one's own experience which generates.

By understanding and openly acknowledging one's own experience, context and one's place within the world, one's situated knowledge weakens individually and collectively. In this way, one can also identify and acknowledge the power one holds. Feminist researchers question the power dynamics in a given research context and in

particular the power imbalance that is inherent in the traditional concept of the researcher vs the research subject.

As researchers, one can hold the power over research subjects. Power can be used in negative ways even unwillingly and unknowingly. So, it is critical to be aware of one's own power. One way for people to begin to understand power dynamics is to explore their positionality. "It is essential for new researchers to acknowledge that their positionality is unique to them and that it can impact all aspects and stages of the research process" Positionality describes a researcher's position in relation to the research context or those who are the subjects of the research. (Gary et al. 2020, P.2).

Once power dynamics are grasped, Feminist researchers seek to remove power imbalances by empowering research participants to be partners instead of only subjects of the research. This can be done through the methodology of feminist participatory action research. The researcher sees that Maya Angelou, through her continuous high calls whether directly or indirectly, involves her audience and readers in her struggle for empowerment.

In recognition of the many dimensions that make up each individual person, feminist research is also intersectional. Intersectionality refers to the researcher's world perspective or ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions and his assumptions about human nature and how humans interact. Thus,

> "Intersectionality is a term used to describe how different factors of discrimination can meet at an intersection and can affect someone's life. Adding intersectionality to feminism is important to the movement because it allows the fight for gender equality to become inclusive. Using intersectionality allows us all to understand each other a little bit better." (Sharkey, G. et al.,2016, Para.8)

As cited earlier, Feminism investigates how gender intersects with all other forms of oppression even that premised on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, class, or age.

Feminist research is motivated by a desire to initiate positive change in the world. The goal of feminist research is to achieve social justice. Feminist researchers do not confine themselves to theory. They often practice Feminist praxis, since it is the way the feminist theory is fulfilled in action. One more time, this is what can be seen in Maya Angelou's poetry and interviews.

There is more than one way to do feminist research, and it is not (All or Nothing). So, any of the concerts mentioned earlier can guide the design and the implementation of one's research. Feminism can also be incorporated at any stage of one's research process from developing one's research question to designing until discussing the results. Hence, feminism can be incorporated into any kind of research method. It is also important to remember that it is all right to question the traditional research approaches.

As a feminist researcher, one should consider what methods are best for the context of the research one is doing, and also be open to combining multiple methods when appropriate, rather than just sticking to the method that is traditionally considered the correct one**.**

> "Broadly defined, Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (artifacts, other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. However, just as the practitioners of all critical theories do, feminist critics hold many different opinions on all of the issues their discipline examines." (Tyson, 2006, P.83).

Feminists try to reconstitute ways literature is evaluated, to include women's multiple points of views, women's concerns and their values. Some critical or historical point of view of feminism is that there is a tendency to under represent abuse of women writers. Therefore, more female writers need to be included in the literary canon. Feminism is an evolving philosophy starting to rise in the 1960s.

1.4. Maya Angelou the Feminist

Maya Angelou's writing, as Pierre Walker asserts, attracts the readers back to the original debate triggered by the book of Vicki Cox and Miles Shapiro that in reality, both the questions race and color pertained to Maya Angelou. Feminism was storming in the United States during the early 1960's. The Civil Rights Movement was also raging. These two improvements, Pierre Walker contends, influence African- American literature of the time and specifically influence Maya Angelou's life as well as writings. He also commends to a great extent the theme-based coherence of her writings specifically those dealing with her autobiography. Walker states that *I Know Why Caged Bird Sings* is much like a collection of short stories, but its political impact is very much obvious everywhere. The movements and political events leave a great impact on Angelou's writings as well as her worldview.

Pierre Walker comments on various events in which Maya Angelou has acquired ways of handling situations of racial and gender segregation that Angelou learned to respond to different situations such as her liaison with "pow white trash" girls, her response to her sexual abuse, and "subsequent muteness, and her life with her grandmother. Angelou also acquired language competence from Mrs. Bertha Flower, her childhood teacher, who taught her how people apply vocabulary and use language, and that was how she mastered poetic language later in her life.

Pierre Walker does not deal abundantly with Angelou's characteristics of handling conditions and reacting to situations. Her biographies are dissected from this perspective: "Maya Angelou, a dancer, singer, writer and poet, is a woman who has realized her own power" and that Angelou is "A Black 'hero' of our times". Pollard also praises Angelou's earlier memoirs in which she tackles "cruelty and racism" as ordinary characteristics of her life that later become powerful incentives of her life. (Pollard, I.1984, pp.115-117).

It is further commented that Angelou, in effect, essays to upgrade unity and assiduity among black women so that they would be able to survive in white dominance widespread in America. Angelou was a womanist, a strong woman of her time in her community, and Angelou did not politically support any feministic movement of that time. However, Angelou's poetry is full of poems of feminist concepts such as, *Phenomenal Woman*, *Still I Rise and The Caged Bird*, which could be explained as examples of her inclinations toward feminism.

Her poems expose sex discrimination and gender emancipation—symbols of her poetry. Angelou's memoirs and surveys of the different studies concerning her autobiographies and biographical profiles uncover that she gained a lot from being a black girl living in Stamps, Arkansas, in addition to other different places, and from various family, friends and other characters in her life. With the passage of time, she came to realize that she could achieve her dream of reaching the top and become an icon.

The black woman, Pauline Hopkins, editor of *Colored American Magazine* published in Boston between 1902 and 1904, and the author of the novel *Contending Forces* adopts a varying attitude. She penned in her preface to *Contending Forces* that the black writers have to manipulate the novel to safeguard their ethnic recollections: It is a documentation of expansion and advancement from one generation to another.

> "Fiction is a record of growth and development from generation to generation. No one will do this for us. We must ourselves develop the men and women who will faithfully portray the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro with all the fire and romance which lie dormant in our history and, as yet, unrecognized by writers of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Hopkins, P.1900, p.14).

Ann Du Cille in her essay *The Occult of True Black womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist* stated that a great number of reviews on Black feminist texts appeared that could herald the beginning of a new tradition in American literature. They bear the following titles *The Black Woman; The Black Woman: an Anthology: The Black Woman*

in America; The Black Woman Cross-Culturally; The Black Woman in White America. Black Woman Writers at Work; Black Woman Writing Autobiography; Black Women Novelists; Black Women Novelists in the Wake of the Civil Rights Movement; Black Women, Fiction and Literary Tradition; The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers; Ain't I a Woman? (Cille, A. 1994, p.233).

Thus, black women's centuries and centuries of common subjugation is expressed in their works. In Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), the destiny of black women stopped in the peak of the sharecropping system, the South's alternative to slavery, was purified in its bleak historical profiles. In *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison tracked the impairment emerging from color awareness. Walker's *In Love and Trouble* (1973), and Gayl Jon's *Jubilee* abundantly accomplished the commission established by Angella Davis: Black feminism myth and the emasculated Black female have to be willfully rejected as legends, it is mandatory to redirect black woman in her real historical profiles.

> "We, the Black women of today, must accept the full burden of a heritage shaped in blood by our mothers in chains… as heirs to a tradition of ultimate persistence and heroic resistance, we must hurry to take our place wherever our people are forging towards freedom. Precisely through performing the drudgery which has long been a central expression of the socially conditioned inferiority of women, the black woman in chains could help to lay the foundation for some degree of autonomy, both for herself and her men.". (Davis, A. 1981, p.14).

Upon commending her "mothers in chain", retrieving history of the prevalent image of black woman was on despondency, abasement and subjugation. Black women authors advanced to a disparate condition. The novels of the second half of the seventies portrayed a strong feminist outlook as black women writers undertook the responsibility of counterfeiting vigorous and constructive pictures of Black womanhood. As engagement with history supported black authors gain an outlook on the kinds of subjugation black women were to undergo- social, biological, economic and cultural - political mobilization that supplied them with the incentive to configure their identities. For instance, novelists of the mid-seventies, such as Alice Walker has sketched a distinctive, historical outlook about Black women: she views them switching from a condition of entire persecution on

the part of society and men to a condition of increase and advancement in which they have further command of their lives. Walker mentions her term “the emergent women” In her perception of the ultimate round in the evolving procedure.

> “Walker speaks of what she calls (the emergent women). Washington points out that (emergent women) are women who are women who -are greatly influenced by the political events of the sixties and the changes resulting from the freedom movement: they are women coming just to the edge of a new awareness and making the first tentative steps to an uncharted region (Padhi, P.,2014,*PP 38-42)*

Alice Walker, with *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down (1981)* and *The Color Purple* (1982), had not only specified their cultural background as noticeably African-American one, yet they had investigated quite a number of society aspects related to the inter relationship of gender bias and racial discrimination. Also, Toni Cade Bambara with *The Salt Eaters* (1980), *Song of Solomon* (1978) and *Tar Baby* (1980) for Toni Morrison. They not just manifested the fact that gender prejudice survived in black societies, but they had as well disputed the dominant description of American society woman, specifically as regards motherhood and gender orientation.

Also among other writers of the period are Audre Lorde who wrote *Zami* (1982) And, they had stressed not only on the paramount significance of Black women to Afro-American history, but also on their relevance to the present day political and social developments in America. Narratives of the late seventies and the eighties resume exploring those topics - that sexism and racism are two sides of one coin that has to be warred in black societies.

The problem is that African-American literature has on more than one occasion relied on confirming its status as literature to accomplish its political aims. Since slavery relied on a belief that those enslaved were not really human beings, slave narrators responded by writing books that emphasize the fact that they themselves were humans who deserve to be treated as such. "the Negro…was definitely an inferior breed and situated at the very base of the evolutionary tree." (Baltzell, D. 1967, xxi) In fact, Black

writers have shown in their biographies that they, too, are human beings, as Claude McKay (1889-1948) and Countee Culllen (1903-1946) are mentioned in this respect. It is also noted that this was the strategy of Maya Angelou to write about human beings who fought against racial discrimination.

Sembiring (2011) wrote a thesis, *An Analysis of Feminism in Maya Angelou's Selected Poems.* Those poems are *Equality*, *Caged Bird, Men*, *Remembrance*, *Phenomenal Woman,* and *Still I Rise.* In this thesis, she used descriptive analysis method. She found that feminism thoughts were found in the seven poems of Maya Angelou and the events during which women often get the unpleasant treatment of men. The result of her research can be concluded that the women depicted by Maya Angelou in her poems have struggled to fight to earn their right to challenge the beliefs and the patriarchal society. (Sembiring, D.2011,p.67).

Another research using feminist theory is conducted by Ilham (2015) in her thesis *Racism Reflected in Maya Angelou's Poems*. The poems that she analyzed are *My Guilt, The Calling of Names, Riot: 60s, Harlem Hopscotch, On Working White Liberal, One More Round, Sephia Fashion Show, The Thirteen (Black)* and *The Thirteen (White), Our Grandmother, America, Afrika* and *Ain't That Bad*. She found that Maya Angelou's poems reflected racism based on the poem textual content and the expression in the poem. The result of this research shows there are types of slavery and racism in Maya Angelou's poem containing slavery, discrimination, isolation, domination, partiality and stereotypes and class struggle. (Ilham, R. 2015, p.26).

The last study is by Janouskova (2005). The paper emphasizes *Theme of survival in Maya Angelou's poetry*. Janouskova does not specify the poems of Maya Angelou which he analyzes, though it is shown that he investigates all poems in Maya Angelou's collection poems book because the examination of his paper consists of numerous titles of Angelou's poems. The result is that the survival theme in Maya Angelou's poems could be

seen from the struggle, pride, and bravery of black woman. The survival feature also is recognized through comedy, melody, and faith in Angelou's poetry since Angelou create some odes as a poem, as well as give comedy and religious sense in several of her poems. (Janoušková et al., 2005, P.38).

Black women are differences, so does the researcher employ the black feminist theory to this research since the poem of Maya Angelou talks about Black women. It has been seen that the study which concerns on the black power in Maya Angelou's selected poems is still limited, so the researcher attempts to analyze racial problems Black women face in Maya Angelou's poems *Still I Rise*, *Phenomenal Woman,* and *Weekend Glory.*

SECOND CHAPTER

2. Angelou's Poetry

In this chapter Maya Angelou's poems are analyzed with regard to their struggle against racial segregation and gender prejudice. Maya Angelou's poems lay bare various kinds of racism and sexism and provoke the reader to discover the reasons behind the reaction of Maya Angelou against the injustices. The poems are analyzed by sociological approach and structural perspective. The poems to be examined are *Still I Rise, Phenomenal Woman*, *Equality* and *The Caged Bird* whereas. The other two poems, *Ain't That Bad* and *Human Family* are mentioned for comparison.

It is believed that the context should be grasped in order to apply sociological approach to analyze the poems and in order to contextualize the connection between racism and sexism in Angelou's poems. Angelou's environment should also be taken into consşderation. Wellek premises three classifications of sociological methodology. First, sociology of the writer. This implies the author's social environment, the writer's philosophy or theory reflected in his procedures and writings in addition to the fact that the author symbolizes a society by himself. The second factor is that the subject matter of their literary writings, it is linked to the objective of a scholarly work and further factors mirror from the scholarly work linked to the social problem. This latter one refers to the social impact and the reader problem of the scholarly work. It is about the range scholarly works determine or rely on the social environment, social alteration and social progress. (Arisky, n.d.P.20).

2.1. Opposition and Resistance in Angelou's Poetry

Both racial and gender segregation are exposed and opposed by Angelou's poetry. To her, the only condition to attain gender inequity is the evasion of racial inequality. By resistance, Angelou means a procedure of liberation in culture. She highlights the fact that

racist supremacy exists and the way it influences the peripheral people both via savage bigotry and sexual exploitation. In short, the role of black women is to strife against not only white bigotry but against male prejudice as well.

Angelou opposes bigotry to attain her ancestors' dreams; they strived and battled long for freedom. The researcher deduces that women's behavior is no less than men's. However impotent they are as a social community, they own the very merits and tactics of men. All through their writing, African American authors goad black people to combat domination and vindicate themselves from oppression. Therefore, African American works abound in the essays of identity establishment in general and in Maya Angelou in particular. In her poetry, Angelou tackles the themes African-American those who are martyrs of bigotry, gender bias and class subjugation, those she conceived of as a consequence of colonialization. She also uncovers the malignant situations of black women undergoing subjugation by black and white men equally. (Drešerova, J.2007,p.37).

Through her poems, Angelou deals with such topics as stereotyping, segregation marginalization and subjugation in addition to the other oppressors of hegemony, double subjugation (the first as a black and the second as a woman, not to mention rape when she was young. All those oppressors detonated resistance, fighting domination and search for identity. Some promulgate that the humiliation and inferiority Angelou suffered from since her teens are the outcome of sheer bigotry. Still as she grew up, she suffered from two things: her black color and her female being. The past is something she always remembers. She also realizes her current condition quite well, and what she prioritizes is her responsibility toward her individual rights, and her community's rights in general and her sex in particular. (Wongpinit, J.2006, p.11-13).

Angelou has been sharpened pens against her person because of the plainness of her style. To that, her response in one of her interviews is "If that cannon, that body of

literature, written largely by white men, acknowledges my work, then well and good, I accept this honor." (Angelou, 1969,P.7).

2.2. Angelou's oppression Initiators

All aspects of society and culture functioned according to a sexual politics that encouraged women to internalize their inferiority until it became psychologically rooted in them. Kate Millett is also noted for her distinction between the concepts of sex which is rooted in biology and gender which is culturally acquired. She introduces eight divisions concerning her thesis, sociological, ideological, biological, economic and educational, anthropological, class and force.

The first point is Sociological: As a patriarchal unit, the family is both a mirror and mediation with society. The second is Ideological: temperament or the Stereotypical formation of human personality according to lines of sex category, role of Masculinity and femininity and status which is assigned by the other two items, are three items of this concept. The third is Biological: According to patriarchal concepts, man is superior because of physical strength.

The fourth one is Economic/Educational: is concerned with depravation of women the right to learn or earn her living. The fifth one is Anthropological: Women's biological differences placed her in an inferior position basing the assumption on religious and literary myth. As to the sixth one it is-Psychological: Patriarchy and its influences leave scars on the psyche of both sexes. The seventh one is: Class: In Patriarchy; It is a matter of how early displayed or how loudly enunciated the general ethic of masculine supremacy allows itself to become. The eighth and last one is-Force: Historically, institutionalized patriarchies possess legal force to assist their domination.

2.3. Angelou's Gender Aspirations in Her Selected Works

Here we endeavor to analyze the texts of Maya Angelou's poetry to clarify that she demonstrates racism through some indicators like imagery, language choice and signals or gestures. Language choice is considered one of the significant indicators that Angelou's poetry mirrored bigotry. Diction or language choice is divided into four sections which are borrowing, meaning the use of various language vocabularies in order to convey a certain meaning and the impacts of the scholarly work. The second section is intended to render a scholarly work feasible to assess according to dialect. Special expressions are part and parcel of the significant sections in Angelou's poetry since it can present specific details about specific conditions. The last one is the special term, that is the selection of words in order to have a specific meaning appear as an image and a symbol of the scholarly work meaning. In her poem, Angelou mirrores bigotry premised on the dialect and specific terminology she use. Besides, imagery lends the researcher a helping hand to delineate the bigotry her poem mirror. It is fully acknowledged that the poet is drawing, delineating or picturing intellectual image of imagination as a response to his surrounding atmosphere. One of the most influence parts in Angelou's poem is visual imagery.

Symbol becomes the last language style the researcher uses to decide that Angelo's poem reflected racism. It has also become one of the most important indicators since symbol defines the other meaning then the literal meaning of words. One of them is the use of black and white words. These words do not use their literally meaning such as colors but the different trees which later become the long history of racism from Slavery, discrimination, hegemony, stereotype, Prejudice and struggles. No other example is more evident than the metaphor/simile of the caged bird that symbolizes Afro Americans.

Still I Rise is a poem that gives voice to Angelo's feelings of gender empowerment about black women strongly and powerfully. Comprising 43 lines, this poem has 7 quatrains and the two end stanzas which make a total of nine stanzas. Some stanzas have the refrain "I rise" repeated almost 10 times in the entire poem, which shows the first signs

of gender empowerment. Concisely reviewing, the whole poem entails Angelou's challenge through black women's racial and physical attributes and questioning her oppressor or opponent's surprise or bewilderment at her vigorous attitude of showing him that she can rise up again in spite of the oppression.

The very first line of the poem announces the audience with second person "You" with assertion that the oppressor or the addressee may do what he wants, but she will rise up; whereas stanzas one, three, six, eight and nine talk about her specific qualities that bewilder the oppressor; the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh stanzas highlight her questioning defiance. She questions her oppressor what surprises him, how it surprises him and that even if he wants her down, or subjugate her, she has the courage to stand up again "I rise". This strain of "I rise" continues until it becomes a regular repetition in the end of the poem and is repeated almost five times in the last stanza. Therefore, it becomes a refrain by the end.

A micro analysis of the poem may elicit more about Angelo's gender empowerment interlinked with racial discrimination. Although the first stanza addresses her oppressors and she resolves by the end that she can rise up, the second stanza questions her oppressor. Pride and pleasure fill her soul at how the oppressor is feeling the pangs of jealousy: "Why are you beset with gloom?" Maya Angelou asks the oppressor (Line 06). When she aligns natural elements with her, it seems as if she is deriding her oppressor that even nature is with her. It also shows that she is a daughter of nature who can rise up like the moon, the sun and the tides as stated in the third stanza. Therefore, there is no question of her hopelessness; she seems to say adding more questions in the fourth stanza to make the oppressor realize that what he wants to see she cannot do. The picture presented in these questions is of a very oppressed figure.

> "*Just like moons and like suns, With the certainty of tides, Just like hopes springing high, Still I'll rise. Did you want to see me broken? Bowed head and lowered eyes? Shoulders falling down like teardrops, Weakened by my soulful cries? Does my haughtiness offend you? Don't you take it awful hard 'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines Diggin' in my own backyard." (Still I Rise, Lines 10-19)*

The words “broken,” “bowed,” “lowered,” “falling,” and “weakened” show the historical image of a slave. African Americans were treated worse than animals. The picture made with these images is that of the very lowly human being who is at the mercy of the oppressor. However, the very next stanza shows the defiance, as if she has risen from the ashes like a sphinx. She questions the oppressor to ask if her pride is offended as she pretends to have gold mines. The sixth stanza reflects a challenge after this because it again questions the oppressor with the second person “you” which refers to her courage after this show of defiance. Almost similar rhetorical questions are reiterated in the seventh stanza but there is a stress upon “sexiness” (Line 25) and gender traits that are presumed to have emancipated Maya Angelou. Then the eighth and ninth stanzas repeat the past and point to the future of “I rise” defiance. There is a hope in the end. This proves that Maya Angelou has been full of hope about her bright future.

This concise analysis shows that Maya Angelou not only shows defiance but also ridicules her opposers and applies her feminine side that she believes is powerful and strong. A further analysis by Andrew Spacey and Gary Hess also pointed out the same meanings of the poem. Spacey’s perspective of the poem is premised on the words, the images and the loudness that demonstrate in the face of circumstantial oppression through which the poet must have encountered in the past. The elements of nature enumerated in the poem also intended to raise hopes of the poet, Andrew Spacey said, adding that this leads to “defiance” in the poem about the poetic expression. This challenge of the poet starts from the very first stanza, a quatrain, which emphasizes the second person “You” as Spacey also illustrated in his analysis.

This “You” is directly addressing the oppressor, or the white patriarchy, or white authority to make it realize that the woman in question can still rise up even if she is oppressed more. Her defiance continues in the second stanza with the rhetorical question of “Does my sassiness upset you?” which points to another question about the “gloom” that has beset the oppressor on account of her gait of pride. By including the elements of

nature in the third stanza, she clarifies to the oppressor who happens to be her target audience that even the nature is with her, as it is a natural thing that she should be treated equal to the oppressor. Angelou then goes on to question in the fourth stanza to inquire of the oppressor what he wants from her by keeping her subjugated and bowed down. The same strain of rhetorical question continues in the sixth stanza with the same reference to wealth but then suddenly Maya Angelou turns to her oppressor with the same second person "You" to state that he can do whatever he wants. He can shoot her with words or cut with eyes or subject her to hatred, but she is destined to rise again. Until the present, it has been her audaciousness that she has mentioned in the first line of the second stanza, but now in this seventh stanza it turns out "sexiness" (Line 25).

> *"You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes,You may kill me with your hatefulness, But still, like air, I'll rise. Does my sexiness upset you?, Does it come as a surprise, That I dance like I've got diamonds, At the meeting of my thighs? Out of the huts of history's shame,I rise.Up from a past that's rooted in pain,I rise.I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,Welling and swelling I bear in the tide."(Still I Rise, Lines 22-32)*

In this stanza, the four lines hint to Angelou's gender. Sexiness is a specific feminine attribute of attracting the opposite sex. The first reference may point to bodily attraction, but the second is of her sexual quality. Both of these natural attributes combine to give her power and strength; or in other words, this becomes a gender empowerment in Maya Angelou. Spacey rightly pointed out in his analysis, referring to the earlier sassiness and interlinking with this sexiness to argue that "The word sassiness suggests an arrogant self-confidence, backed up by the use of haughtiness, and sexiness. The poet's use of hyperbole with these three nouns adds a kind of absurd beauty" (Zaghdoudi, 2020,p.12). It continues in the next two stanzas.

In the eighth stanza, she describes the history of slavery and racial discrimination where the poem comes back to her race. The constant strain of refrain "I rise" continues in this stanza and repeated twice after every assertion that she has suffered historical shame of racial discrimination and subsequent pain of this discrimination. Commenting on the sixth stanza, Spacey said that she has come to the climax to speak about the oppression.

On the other hand, an anonymous critic pleaded that these two last stanzas refer to "the history of the African-Americans through slavery and how horrible it was." The last stanza points out how she has started afresh after leaving everything behind. Four commentary lines interspersed with the refrain of "I rise" repeated five times add to the sense of empowerment among the readers of the poem. Although the first line of the stanza refers to the past, the third line refers to the hopeful and bright future leading to the 39th and 40th lines that show her pride over her heritage and the dream of the future that she is going to have. The three times repeated "I rise" affirms to her defiance that she has started in the beginning of the poem.

Phenomenal Woman: The heading of the poem is a signal of Angelou's love of oneself in addition to the achievement of her emancipation. as a woman. She is by no means a commonplace woman but a "phenomenal" one:

> "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." (*Phenomenal Woman,* Lines 1-13)

Concerning the point of structure, the poem consists of four extensive couplets with no ordinary count of lines, since the whole four couplets own a various count of lines. All the same, they occasionally rime outside any normal rime scheme. The reason for the poem's clear-cut nature is that its colloquial manner Angelou uses to answer women's queries, and also the way she replies to their questions.

Phenomenal Woman was included in Angelou's volume *And Still I Rise* that was published in 1978. Angelou embraces her voice, the voice of a black woman to recount about her beauty and mighty character, that entreats men although she by no means possesses certain qualities associated with traditional notions of beauty. All along the

poem, Angelo encompasses repetition at the end of each stanza that assumes the validation of her female say.

The poem consists of four stanzas. It starts with a designation of the Phenomenal Woman. She delineates her physical features, her lips, her walk and her arms. Then , the poetess images her physical beauty as neither quite alluring nor that of a "fashion model" that never lies to men about her beauty. The poetess explains:

> "Pretty women wonder where my secret lies, I'm not cute or built to suit on fashion model's size. But when I start to them, They think I'm telling lies. I say, It's in the reach of my arms,The span of my lips, The stride of my step, The curl of my lips, I'm a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That's me." (*Phenomenal Woman Lines 1:12)*

She uses the word "secret" in the afore-mentioned lines in order to express her feelings of self-assurance the speaker feels. Furthermore, she enumerates her components of power as she designates her lips, hips, arms and steps. (Bloom, H. 2001, p.44)

Next stanza, the poetess maintains to depict her femininity beauty that invoked men and emancipated her and filled her with aspiration with certain characteristics of beauty she by no means possesses in actuality. Hence, the poetess advises the other women to add self-assurance in their characters. At any rate, in this part, she describes the "fire in my eyes" that declares the distinctiveness of her character. Nevertheless, the poetess mentions her teeth flash that conveys her cleanliness of soul. She adds:

> *"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. 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." (Phenomenal woman, Lines 1-20).*

These lines show the happiness and joy of the Phenomenal Woman Who admitted her female identity through her position as a queen and two other men who "fall down on their knees" because of her relation and attractiveness. Continually Angelou here uses the

personal pronoun “I” that assured her identity as a black woman and her femininity she is like her predecessors Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar who used this personal pronoun to emphasize their black identity as poets. The speaker says,

> *“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.I say, It's the fire in my eyes, 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.” (Phenomenal woman, Lines 15-29)*

As a female, the poetess sustains the attraction of her eyes, the flash of her teeth and her “jaunty sway” as she "saunters through the room" (Constantakis, S.& Kelly, D. 2012,p.161). She states in the third stanza that her internal enigma invoked men and led them to inquire about the secret underlying the character of that woman. The poetess declares:

> *“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 womanThat’s me.* ” (*Phenomenal woman,* Lines 22-23)

A female's innermost beauty must always be apparent on the surface, rectitude, truthfulness, ethics and values are characteristics that constitute her personality. Whatever the conditions or circumstances are, a woman that is beautiful in the inside will steer herself in a way that is noticed by other people. (Hill, C.2010, p.4).

Equality Although the poem reverberates with ethnic prejudice, persecution and its influences on her, it also manifests a sign that she hopes to be acknowledged as a female. Nevertheless, this may prove an accomplishment of her sexuality but through “Equality” it appears that she needs acknowledgment of her identity as it says: “You announce my ways are wanton, that I fly from man to man, but if I'm just a shadow to you, could you ever understand.” (Lines 11-14) These verses from the poem “Equality” obviously show that Angelou realized that she was a black woman, yet that is never what she mentioned in

other poems such as *Still I Rise* and *Phenomenal Woman*. Angelou mentions her achievement of the authority she possesses as a female, yet this couplet characterizes an entire disparity. This sexuality achievement is obvious in the second line of this couplet that distinguishes itself from other lines and recounts Maya Angelou's past, but in the third and fourth lines she repeats that she is merely a "shadow to you" that refers to the white man as well as the white cultural design. This constitutes a sharp opposition to her prose *In All Ways a Woman* that provides a complete sight of her entity as a woman which means to "become and remain woman." (*In All Ways a Woman*, Line 12).

Ain't That Bad?: Nonetheless, comparing this poem with the other two poems, it will be obvious the way Angelou has tackled men being their indispensable peers in their anti-slavery struggle. The poem consists of ten stanzas: Four lines constitute the first four stanzas; seven lines constitute the fifth and tenth stanzas. with a specific questioning refrain, whereas the rest are four-lined stanzas(quatrains) such as given below which has seven lines and has two refrains.

> *"Get down, Jesse Jackson, Dance on, Alvin Ailey, Talk, Miss Barbara Jordan Groove, Miss Pearlie Bailey. Now ain't they bad? An ain't they Black? An ain't they Black? An' ain't they Bad? An ain't they bad? An' ain't they Black? An' ain't they fine? Black like the hour of the night, When your love turns and wriggles close to your side ,Black as the earth which has given birth ,To nations, and when all else is gone will abide."(Ain't That Bad? Lines 10-29)*

The next two stanzas tell about her ethnic legacy but by no means about feminism or sexism. Nevertheless, right after those extremely long lines, there are two quatrains with citations of African-American symbols e.g.: Mohammed Ali in the boxing ring and Arthur Ashe on the tennis court.

Similarly, the two significant poems *Human Family and Equality* are more involved in racial prejudice and the afflictions of African American men not women. In the same tone, Angelou states "but I've not seen any two / who really were the same" (Lines 20-21). In *Equality*, the focus is not directed to women or men but "we," meaning race rather than

men or women specifically. It means that she has given equal significance to both men as well as women of her race but have thought it better to be in collectivity with the men as her use of first person plural shows. In short, contrasting *Still I Rise and Phenomenal Woman,* with other poems, they both appear to abound in the achievement of the authority that is associated with being a female and the way to handle and utilize of this authority for her good. The other poems greatly emphasize this achievement of authorization of being from the other sex. This occurred because she belongs to the marginalized African Americans society of enslaved women together with their men, and they both strived painfully to gain equal rights. According to Maya Angelou and a representative of her culture, D. U. Juan concluded in his article, *Interpretation of Black Culture by Maya Angelou Through Music Poetry* that

> *"Her artistic legacy to present her voice in such a musical context produces the cross generational effect that Maya Angelou is speaking and singing the collective experiences of African* Americans. With the right choice of imaginative words and phrases and musical styles, she interprets black culture and promotes the thinking of a race's past, present and future." (Juan,.2016, pp. 81-84).

The Caged Bird uses an extended metaphor of the caged bird portraying the experience of an oppressed group to capture. Not only does the suppression of the cage hold the bird captive; but that captivity itself does *change* the bird, and in this way robs the bird of its genuine self as in:

> "*The free bird thinks of another breeze, and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees, and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn, and he names the sky his own. But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams, his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream, his wings are clipped and his feet are tied, so he opens his throat to sing. The caged bird sings, with a fearful trill of things unknown, but longed for still, and his tune is heard, on the distant hill, for the caged bird, sings of freedom." (The Caged Bird, Lines 4:14).*

Lines 10-11 of the poem shows that the caged bird "can seldom see through his bars" which seemingly gives the impression that the poem would explain how being in the cage restricts the bird's line of sight. Those bars are portrayed in the poem as "bars of rage". Thus, the bird suffers from imprisonment and positively the line of sight is restricted by the cage physical bar, yet the bird "can seldom see" because these conditions

render the bird blind with rage. In combining the restrictions the cage imposes with the emotional influence those limits inspire, that consequently triggers the spark of aspiration. The poem illustrates that anger and the environment cannot be alienated from one another.

In fact, the caged bird's song can be seen as an allusion to African American spirituals as abolitionist Frederick Douglass once said "slaves sing most when they are most unhappy". The song may be full of hope, but it is born from a place of deep pain and the hope can be seen as primarily an attempt to cope with an intolerable situation.

The Caged Bird actively and explicitly refutes the notion that the musical expression of an oppressed group is a sign of contentment as claimed by those who benefited from that oppression. It is instead an emphasis that the opposite is true. By such an emphasis, the poem by no means yields to the convenient but racist interpretation of African-American song of white oppressors, it rather emphasizes that the agony inflicted on black communities by white oppressors must be acknowledged. (Lines 27- 38) In effect, since the caged bird lacks freedom, it spends all of its time singing out of aspiring for freedom.

In the *Caged Bird* the experience of a free bird with that of a bird held in captivity is compared and contrasted this in turn Doodles the spark of aspiration to strengthen the imagery it also uses symbolism by including various objects or characters that have a meaning. Hawaii part of this contract is meant to convey the operation imposed upon the captive bird coma the comparison also allows the poem to scan how every being thinks and acts and to argue that freedom is a natural state for living beings.

The basic key perceptions of freedom in the poem pertains to what a free being is allowed to think about. coining that more concretely: because the free bird is already free, his freedom never occupies any space of his thinking. Instead, the free bird spends its time enjoying life doing whatever it wants. All the free bird thinks of is "fat worms" or

“another breeze”. Therefore, freedom for the free bird is subconscious or rather natural. On the other hand, never does the free bird have to think about freedom. It simply is free. Yet, the most important point to consider is that the free bird experiences a sense of entitlement: The speaker remarks in line 7 that the free bird “dares to claim the sky” as its own and reiterates this statement in line 26. Despite all the freedom the bird already possesses, it continues to seek more from the world- it regards its freedom as obviously employing that it must “own” the world.

On the other hand, freedom much like breathing, is experienced as something that is only thought of when it is no longer there. When one can breathe freely, there is no need to think about it. However, I win one cannot breathe of course it becomes the sole thing one can think of. That was how the poem portrays the intellectual exhaustion and emotional torture that results from the lack of freedom the way it creates a prison not just for a physical body but also for the mind and soul.

2.4. Angelou’s Racial Aspirations in her Selected Works

Despite the fact that many poems of Maya Angelou’s obviously account for her racial emancipation, she has not merely tackled problems that her ethnic group encounters but has also handled significant characteristics to the extent that she would become an emancipated person as an outcome of empowerment. The ethnic characteristics, particularly her bodily features, endowed her with a superior position over others, especially over those of her age and race. The poems such as *Still I Rise*, *Phenomenal Woman*, *Equality*, and others discussed in this section first provide a notion of the way she controls historical indications to determine her ethnic identity. The poems also discuss Angelou’s bodily features that determine her character and provide a notion of the way she controls these features and the way these features gave her a helping hand to win a distinguished place in society. She discussed those ethnic identity features in her memoir novels, yet, her poems concisely introduce those same features and repeat them. Before discussing the poems, it is important to discuss her identity construction and its awareness

before referring to her poems. It could also be stated as the “double consciousness” which he meant was “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others”. *(Du Bois,2019, p. 2).*

However, it cannot be claimed that it was always the case with her, for she has liberated herself from this sense but it stays deeply ingrained in the psyche. As far as racial identity those poems discuss, it is obvious in Angelou’s first poem, *Still I Rise* which starts with the heading of a determination that she owns the valor to resolution to encounter the predicaments and constraints she has to encounter as an African- American woman, summoning “history” (Line 1) and approaching her audience. In the ninth stanza, she does not obviously mention her entity as an African-American woman but makes an indirect hint to the harsh treatment imposed on her as a black woman consisting mainly of insults. They are referred to in the first line, "shoot me with your words” (Line 21) or another thing of looking at her with preposterous or sardonic eyes. Nevertheless, the refrain "I rise" at the end of each stanza and reiterated in the last one obviously uncovers the way she is supposed to confront these restraints and surmount those social limitations.

Phenomenal Woman pictures Angelou as an African American woman with a perception of identity. It defines Angelou’s identity as a black woman enjoying unparalleled enigmatic characteristics that place her independent from the other women. She feels self-esteem over them. The first line shows she is alienated from “Pretty women” and she is far from being beautiful by society standards which is a roundabout mention of her ethnic legacy as an African American. The other oblique mention exists in (Line 22) as she says “and the flash of my teeth shows that her white teeth flash in her black face and that makes her seem beautiful”. Despite the fact that no straightforward response exists, it is quite clear that she is fully aware that she is part and parcel of that the African-American heritage.

As far as the first four stanzas of *Ain't That Bad* reflect, they are highly inspiring with regards to the African American society. The two stanzas in the beginning exhibit he nutritional customs of the black society, whereas the other stanza shows the makeup and adorning customs of African American women such as shown below in the first three stanzas.

> "Dancin' the funky chicken Eatin' ribs and tips Diggin' all the latest sounds And drinkin' gin in sips. Puttin' down that do-rag Tighten' up my 'fro Wrappin' up in Blackness Don't I shine and glow? Hearin' Stevie Wonder Cookin' beans and rice Goin' to the opera Checkin' out Leontyne Price." (*Ain't That Bad*, Lines 1-12) .

The third stanza deals again with food whereas the fourth one handles the optimum African American women. Since those things are part and parcel of the black culture, Angelou captures the attention of her viewers and followers with queries like: "Get down, Jesse Jackson, Dance on, Alvin Ailey, Talk, Miss Barbara Jordan Groove, Miss Pearlie Bailey.

> *"Now ain't they bad? An ain't they Black? An ain't they Black? An' ain't they Bad? An ain't they bad? An' ain't they Black? An' ain't they fine? Black like the hour of the night, When your love turns and wriggles close to your side, Black as the earth which has given birth, To nations, and when all else is gone will abide."(Ain't That Bad, Lines 13-26).*

The first question interrogates how beautiful black women are, the second is reassuring if they are black, the third repeats the same question again for reassuring. The fourth is enquiring if they are bad, after which the fifth returns for reassuring procedure. The sixth, the last one describes them as "fine" (Line 23). The self-esteem concealed in those questions receives a response in the first four stanzas which uncover the favorable characteristics of the African-American society.

This illustrates that Angelou is quite aware of the wealthy legacy her race left her. Extremely sarcastic in diction, the sixth stanza with its four lines, reveals that Angelou has self-esteem. She is also aware of the way people deal with them. She is quite conscious

that she is black and sounds like the darkness of the night. In the poem, she resorts to the distinguished characters such as Mohammad Ali, Arthur Ashe, Andrew Young and Andre Watts in order to maintain her doctrine mentioned with interrogative expressions of affirmation that kindness is linked with the black people. She ends the poem with the customary sentence as in this stanza:

> *"Bad as the storm that leaps raging from the heavens, Bringing the welcome rain Bad as the sun burning orange hot at midday, Lifting the waters again. Arthur Ashe on the tennis court, Mohammed Ali in the ring, Andre Watts and Andrew Young, Black men doing their thing Dressing in purples and pinks and greens, Exotic as rum and Cokes, Living our lives with flash and style, Ain't we colorful folks?". (Lines 30-39).*

Interrogative sentences end the next stanza thus leading to the seven collective queries which state that "Ain't we colorful folks?," (Line 40) instead of black ones as given below:

> "*Arthur Ashe on the tennis court, Mohammed Ali in the ring, Andre Watts and Andrew Young, Black men doing their thing, Dressing in purples and pinks and greens, Exotic as rum and Cokes, Living our lives with flash and style, Ain't we colorful folks? "Now ain't they bad? An ain't they Black? An ain't they Black? An' ain't they Bad? An ain't they bad? An' ain't they Black? An' ain't they fine?"* (Lines 34-43)

Related to racial emancipation, this poem starts the first line commending the tasks African-American community have been recognized for and gained them a renown in American society. Then ends the poem a question about the honesty, completeness and kindness of African-Americans. As a whole, this poem addresses the white audiences to make them realize that African-American community also has its own achievements.

The poem *Equality* includes the refrain, "Equality and I will be free" at the end of the long stanzas of eight lines, followed by two stanzas of four lines, a refrain and after that, the same design is repeated. Angelou starts the poem talking to the public straight away "You declare you see me dimly" (Line 1). Here, the sarcasm of black people can be noticed in the word "dimly". The poem starts with the image of a slave standing in front of his master who is deaf and blind because of his innate prejudice which makes him produce

faulty judgments. The refrain that ensues this theme-based chain draws a clear image of the needs and wants of African Americans.

The second stanza pictures the image the white society and the media have stereotypically produced to the African-American society. Yet, the subsequent stanza promptly corrects that mistake clarifying the entire tragic history African Americans have undergone. as she says,

> *"You announce my ways are wanton, that I fly from man to man, but if I'm just a shadow to you, could you ever understand?, We have lived a painful history, we know the shameful past, but I keep on marching forward, and you keep on coming last. Equality, and I will be free. Equality, and I will be free. Take the blinders from your vision, take the padding from your ears, and confess you've heard me crying, and admit you've seen my tears." (Equality, Lines 12-20)*

Angelou has to some extent engulfed all the black community on her side in order to pen the tragic register of slavery and the pluralistic tone by no means signifies that that empowering is of Angelou's alone. This is emancipating the entire community instead of the individual only. The desire of the whole community and not only of the individual follows again the same refrain of equality.

She is fully aware that she would have to understand the masters and the tormentors and remind them that they have to shed their prejudice and "Take the blinders from your vision" (Line 21) She intends to emphasize the idea that since black people are human beings they must have a say, a life, and a tempo like other human beings. The poem ends with the very couple of lines (refrain) that have been used twice before.

Du Bois's "double consciousness" seems to be at work here in these lines as they show her identity with respect to community and her own sense of self. Concerning ethnic emancipation it reflects the concept that Angelou is ready and willing to be free: "I will be free." However, she involves the white community addressing them in second person, but to represent her community, she used first person plural. Possibly, this is a deliberate

attempt to illustrate that the emancipation of the community as a whole is by implication, the emancipation of the females, and therefore it is her emancipation as well.

Angelou's emancipation has also been tackled in ***On the Pulse of Morning,*** which was recited at the inauguration of President Clinton in 1993.Angelou's apostrophic calls to the elements of nature such as the river, tree and the rock, Maya Angelou has recounted the entire black people's history. The poem of the long blank verse resounds with sounds of the rock echoes,

> "I will give you no hiding place down here" (Lines 13). "The river sings the song of the equality; the tree she has mentioned is a symbol of hope and peace as it says that all mankind is the same. The singing river and the wise rock. So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew, The African and Native American, the Sioux, The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek, The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh, The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher." (*On the Pulse of Morning*, Lines 41-46)

Those are what the tree said in order to call the whole nations to place themselves beside the tree overlooking the river and the rock. This poem commends all the natural objects since nature is lifting up the spirits of the African-American community by urging them to "Lift up your hearts" (Line 65) They also inspire expectation and freedom via the conjuration of Midas and mendicant that can alleviate the sufferings of African-American society from afflictions and agonies of disparity. More or less, the very manifestation is in a poem "Million Man March," that has the very happy note in the end. It is an extremely uncommon and unorthodox poem that deplores slavery times and claims civil rights to the black people. The poem starts one more time with the very plea to ethnic segregation using the word "night" (Line 1), that refers not just to the disgusting situations but to the black color as well. In her criticism of this poem, Issa Radhi,2016, of Basra University pleaded that Angelou "has a gift of observing her environment and portraying vividly the life that she and the Afro-Americans have endured. (Radhi, I.2016, pp.66-79).

She is as a critical judge of the Afro-Americans and she reflects their misery and misfortune in an intimate way in her poetry" (Line 28). This means that her poem "Million

March Man" has awakened the audiences across the world. The poem consists of eight stanzas. The lines are not equal. The first stanza consists of four lines, the second of seven. Reading the poem makes one recall the past days when slavery existed, and when racial discrimination engulfed the African-American community. The of the African-American females were subject to sexual assault and maltreatment. She states "I was dragged by my braids…" (Line 65). Those times, men as well as women received the same share of oppression as she says:

> *"The night has been long, The wound has been deep, The pit has been dark, And the walls have been steep. Under a dead blue sky on a distant beach, I was dragged by my braids just beyond your reach. Your hands were tied, your mouth was bound, you couldn't even call out my name. You were helpless and so was I, But unfortunately, throughout history, You've worn a badge of shame."* (*Million Man March*, Lines 7-11)

Here, Angelou mentions how the entire community suffered during those times, and touches on the point of the "badge of shame" which refers to the times when black men would conceal their disgrace of seeing their wives raped ahead of their eyes (Line 11). This segregation is reiterated one more time in the next stanza and equated to the present condition that is by no means very bad because the ancestors have already paid for the new generation's freedom.

Nevertheless, Angelou states that the condition is not quite right either. She summons her people to unite in order to gain their freedom. She adds that although history abounds in painful memories, she keeps reiterating the very diction of the poem *Still I Rise* using the first person plural "And still we rise" which manifests that she would rather have her community rise and not only the individual. One more time, that is a perception of emancipation all over the whole poem that resounds in diction and provides her with power to pen vigorously. The astonishing thing is that she starts the poem, *The Black Family Pledge*, with that very tendency, adding that the black people have overlooked and left behind the old generation "Because we have forgotten our ancestors/our children no longer give us honor" (Lines 1-2).

The poem reiterates the very concept that African-Americans have overlooked their past, their ancestors, their holocausts, their valuable customs, their mourning, their sagacity and their excellent old methods. Nevertheless, what Angelou deplores for the most part is that African Americans have also forgotten how to love:

> *"BECAUSE the old wails of our ancestors have faded beyond our hearing our children cannot hear us crying. BECAUSE we have abandoned our wisdom of mothering and fathering, our befuddled children give birth to children, they neither want nor understand. BECAUSE we have forgotten how to love, the adversary is within our gates, and holds us up to the mirror of the world shouting, 'Regard the loveless'" (The Black Family Pledge, Lines 12-15).*

This manifests that Maya Angelou regards courage as a very important virtue as has been given here. She states that it is high time that the current generations gave an oath to unite for the improvement of the community as a whole, for parity, for removal of poverty, for education, and for fraternity since "We are our brothers and sisters" (Line 20) In some means or another, that is the self-esteem she senses, and it is the self-esteem which has emancipated Angelou so greatly that she has repeated her last poem. In brief, almost all of her poems reveal Maya Angelou's faith in black people and her belief in humanity. Her poems, despite the fact that they rotated around black peoples' experiences, are applicable to people around the world.

The Caged Bird: Unlike the free bird and as a juxtaposition, the poem is entirely immobilized, not only is the bird held captive in a cage, but its wings are clipped and its feet tied. Consequently, even if the bird manages to escape its cage, he would still be restricted from flying or moving. The caged bird total immobilization is probably a representative of the layers of discrimination a marginalized person encounters from blatant and official policies of discrimination and slavery, racially inspired violence to being written out of culture or history. The clipped and tired caged bird embodies the operation that not only imprisoned individuals and communities but also the way it craves to bound feet and restrict them. The lines portraying the free bird have a peaceful and joyful mood, whereas the Caged Bird emits a melancholic and gloomy one. The poem then serves as a damning and nuanced portrait of all forms of discrimination and racism,

particularly of the oppression and racism perpetrated by the United States against African-Americans (lines 1: 38).

The Caged Bird explores the behavior of the captive and the free and also delineates that the aspiration for freedom is a universal organic impulse that cannot be destroyed or bound. The poem pictures that the caged bird sings of things unknown but aspired for still. The speaker then makes it clear that "the caged bird/sings of freedom". Since freedom is something "unknown" to the caged bird, the inference is that the caged bird was not moved from his natural environment but rather was probably born in his cage and has scarcely known anything else. The caged bird has never known freedom but still grasps the meaning of freedom and aspires for it. That the understanding of freedom seems to be a universal topic suggests that freedom is the natural biological state of living things. (Lines 15 – 22).

Given that the caged bird within the poem is an extended metaphor for the historic struggle of the African American community under historical and ongoing racist operation, the thought that freedom may be a biological impulse is a juxtaposition of the inhumane cruelty of oppression. The metaphor also demonstrates the resilience of the black community due to the omnipresence of racism throughout the history of African Americans. Like the caged bird, they have never experienced true freedom not in the same way those that are not forced to endure systematic oppression do. That African-Americans, nonetheless, continued longing for this "thing unknown" illustrates that despite the hopelessness that the metaphor of the caged bird conveys, the black community's desire for freedom and the determination to achieve it remains.

The repetition of the entire third stanza which also appears word for word as the poem's sixth stanza, further demonstrates the resilience of the black community. It also generates emphasis, musicality and rhythm.

"The free bird thinks of another breeze, and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees, and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn ,and he names the sky his own. But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams, his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream, his wings are clipped and his feet are tied, so he opens his throat to sing. The caged bird sings, with fearful trill, Of the things unknown, But longed for still, And his tune is heard, On the distant hill, For the caged bird, Sings of freedom." (The caged bird, Lines15-25).

In conclusion, Angelo's scholarly work in general and her poetry in particular, might be considered an attempt to guide black women seeking to survive against white masculine prejudice at social or psychological levels. References to black woman's endeavors to revise and form their real identities are what the poems abound in. As a whole, Angelou promotes the urgent necessity for establishing a genuinely humane society with stronger respect for old members. Generally, contemporary black female authors in America, both in poetry and fiction, have commenced establishing their own voice through recreating and rewriting their identity. Hence, the dominant monolithic discourse has been subverted by the discourse created by African-Americans.

THIRD CHAPTER

3. Angelou's Interviews

Three main dominant themes or rather techniques: resistance, identity and storytelling render Maya Angelou's interviews a landmark since they highlight Angelou's public speaking. Storytelling is a principal topic in the majority of Maya Angelou's talks and interviews. In effect, questions are incrusted in a narrative form. Throughout almost all her talks, she uses the story-telling technique in order to ensure that her perspective is understood, whether it is in a poem, memory or hymn. The overwhelming majority of her stories enclose themes of resistance and identity. First and foremost, that Angelou strongly believes in the strong impact of resistance and that "if you really have something to protest, you should be on the streets." is a fact. Then, she opines that it is everyone's right to uncover that "wondrous and uniqueness thing in ourselves to remind us that everyone is worthy." (Angelou, M. & Cole, B 2014, You Tube).

Angelou's presentations and answers in interviews are greatly adjusted to the convention of storytelling, one of the characteristic features of in the African-American culture. As she begins to tell a story, she acts, dances, sings, laughs and cries to convey the real expressions of that story. Angelou uses her personal trauma stories in order to manifest the likelihood to surmount adversity and hardship. Angelou's traumatic injury is essential to her resistance concepts and changes a detrimental action into the contrary. This moldes the foundation of her narratives on struggling against disparity and misfortune. In this manner, Angelou's personal trauma stories are combined with her comprehensive target to use her part in mass media to resume her struggle for parity.

It was through resistance, according to Angelou, that black people have "done better than survived." All across history. "We thrived, and we've done better than that. We thrived with some passion, some compassion, some humor and some style." (Angelou, M.

& Cole, B. 2014, YouTube) Her resistance stories incessantly target to maintain this argument.

Then comes the topic of identity on an individual and common degree in her interviews and speeches, and dissect how she speaks about (re)designing her character and the common identity of the black community. In her teens, racism and discrimination paralyzed Angelou's ability to completely design her character or identity in accordance with society. Moreover, Angelou recounts about her strife and suffering because of her black color since childhood. Once she matured and grew an inseparable element of strife for equal rights, there emerged and developed a sense of self-esteem in her ethnic group. As cited earlier in this thesis, Angelou manages to highlight the role of female black identity since she undertook a prestigious position.

Recent work in literature on the importance of the economics of identity reveals that making identity prominent leads people to achieve better or worse on academic tests, or drives them to show different risk and time preferences (in compliance to social standards). (Benjamin, D., 2006, p.28).

It is also maintained that identity is a psychological shield against the attacks of racism in career aspirations as concluded by a study on African-American college students who have high career aspirations. It also may be that African-American college students who are more hypersensitive to racism are also more hypersensitive to their own ethnic and racial identity, particularly if they have high career aspirations. These concepts are coherent with the Theory of Identity Development. (Neblett, E., et al,.2004, pp..156-176).

Current findings indicate that racism-related stress plays a significant predictor role in African American college students' career aspirations. The findings are consistent with past studies that suggest that African-American college students suffer career deficit as a function of experiencing racism (Neblett, E.et al, pp.77-90).

The results of this study are compatible with past studies that have documented that African American college students who have a strong racial reported higher levels of vocational identity, career decidedness and career hopes (Duffy, R. et al 1998, p.17,286-297).

3.1.1. Angelou's Techniques, Storytelling

Storytelling is used by Maya Angelou in order to confront her personal trauma together with the common trauma of slavery. The root of her theories on resistance highlights Maya Angelou's personal trauma in interviews and speeches. Storytelling lends Angelou a helping hand to handle her personal trauma. Mieke Bal indicates that trauma should be transmitted from a "traumatic memory" to a "narrative memory" by having a "sympathetic listener**"** to listen to the story**.**

Premising her work on Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory, that investigates the influence of segregation from all possible perspectives rather than one identity side at the time, Angelou participates in the portrayal of black women who suffer from discrimination because of their gender as well as race. Angelou opposes the prevalent kind of novel discussing black women by means of storytelling and extends a substitute writing dealing with "female blackness." Angelou manifests self-esteem in her ethnic group and her African descent, that is socially and linguistically denoted as disgraceful. As she confronts those concepts, she pioneers in the manifestation of black self-esteem that she delineates by wearing her hair natural as well as conventional African attire in her interviews. That is how, she urges the black community to regain their legacy, to harmonize with their past, and to hold self-esteem in their descent. (Angelou, M. & Gates, H.2008, You Tube)

3.1.2.Black History and Storytelling

Storytelling is "intricately interwoven with the study of black history" and greatly embedded in the African culture. (Smith, A. 1970, p.265), Angelou considers that the strength of words can have substantial characteristics. Again, she pleads that the strength of words indicated to her the way to endure life after being severely traumatized. Angelou has discovered how to survive during her voluntary mutism years through poems and books, because they reveal to her how people had encountered hardships before and how they survived them.

When all the guests are sitting around at Jules Feiffer's party, James Baldwin and his friends are involved in telling stories to each other, Angelou has the courage enough to tell her own stories that all the guests are enchanted by her stories. Angelou remembers that James Baldwin wants her to tell the present about life in the prejudiced Stamps, Arkansas. She starts her talk saying, "In Arkansas, racism was so prevalent that black people couldn't even eat vanilla ice cream." That sentence completely paves the way for an interview that abounds in storytelling. Angelou would always repeat that this line "…made everybody laugh". She adds that the present keeps asking her to tell them another story, then another one and so on. Ultimately, that story is what leads to her autobiographies. To Angelou, storytelling is as natural as nature itself. The whole of her life rotates around telling stories. Angelou frequently sings a religious song or uses some part of her poetry or is used to telling a story in order to emphasize that her message is understood. Her stories engulf the answers to the questions she is asked. She always recalls those from her poems, songs or her memory. Her public speaking is described by Wagner-Martin, as,

> "Her talks were filled with pleading, cajoling, reaching out to other people to goad them to live morally, push themselves to achieve, as well as to find inner satisfactions and [perhaps], narratives creating peace that aimed to manifest substantial principles for straight living." (Wagner-Martin, L. 2016, p.152)

Maya Angelou integrates the characteristic of acting in the manner she recounts a story. Mary-Jane Lupton writes in *Maya Angelou: the Iconic Self* (2016) that Angelou's

public speaking manifests “a return to African American oral tradition” (Lupton, M. 2016, p.18) the thing that is quite obvious in Fredrick Douglass’ works and speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. She is conscious of this yield to the storytelling convention. She illustrates:

> *“There’s a statement by [the Roman dramatist] Terence: “I am a human being. Nothing human can be alien to me.” If you know that, accept that, then you can tell a story. You can make people believe characters are just like they are. Jack and Jill went up the hill, one fell down and the other came tumbling after. The listener thinks, “Oh, I’ve fallen down, so I can understand,” even if it happened in Holland or Kowloon. Human beings should understand how other humans feel no matter where they are, no matter what their language or culture is, no matter their age, and no matter the age in which they live. If you develop the art of seeing us as more alike than we are unalike, then all stories are understandable.”* Beard, A.2013, *Life’s Work: An Interview with Maya Angelou* From the Magazine, 2013.

Using the first person singular in order to talk about the third person plural exceeds the aforementioned significance because she not only presses on addressing the black society but she also means to address all ethnic groups, and consequently human race in general, from her perspective. In her interview with Mavis Nicholson, on *Mavis on Four* in which they discuss her first autobiography, Angelou explains to Mavis “I write through the black experience, that’s what I know” and adds that she is all the time talking about the human status and how it looks like being a human being. See Behind the Scenes of Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise(2017),You Tube. In some other talk with Armstrong Louis, she expands on that also. She opines that

> *“ Maya Angelou was a person who stood for bringing people together, bridging divides, getting past our prejudices and our bigotry, and she was always interested in forgiveness and reconciliation. And these are kind of themes I think that are very important. I think that's why people really relate to the film as a contemporary film, but also as a historical document. We start the film with these words: "We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated. That in fact it may be necessary to encounter defeat, so we can know who the hell we are." That's how life is: we have one defeat after another, in a sense, but still we rise, still we go beyond those defeats, and we must not be defeated.” (See Behind the Scenes of Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise,2017, You Tube)*

Consequently, Angelou has in mind the black adventure and occurrence when she always wants to recount constraints that she encounters in a manner that would relate to all

human beings. In Walter Blum's interview, she illustrates that she constantly targets to communicate the reality: "I hope to look through my life at life. I want to use what happened to me" (Angelou, M.1975, You Tube).

Angelou wonders "what is happening" to her – She wants to grasp "what human beings are like", to recount real to life episodes, to examine the facts behind that motivate those episodes, to dive deep under the facts of the story and discover what inspires this episode in order that those who do not know black Americans may learn the truth about matters. **(**Angelou, M. & Blum, W. 1975, You Tube).

Angelou is by all means comprehensive so that every race may join other races that would make her stories cure and mend. In African-American convention, Storytelling is a significant procedure for cure and attachment. (Banks-Wallace, J.2002, p.412) Telling stories institutes a liaison to one another, known as touchstones.

In her essay *Talk that Talk Storytelling and Analysis Rooted in African American Oral Tradition*, Joanne Banks-Wallace illustrates that "touchstones are things that remind people of a shared heritage and/or past. When touchstones are established, healing through storytelling can take place." (Banks-Wallace, J.2002, p.411) Continuously is Angelou attempting to institute touchstones with the people yet exceeded that also. Angelou strives to uncover what can be called 'soul stones', which surpasses touchstones. It not only connects people through a common past or heritage, yet it links people on the grounds of an experience or resemblance in their spirits. That is precisely what Angelou targets to attain via storytelling. Her objective in instituting soul stones is to get her audience to grasp that people are all equal. Thus, she resumes her strife for equal rights via storytelling basing it on the black culture**.**

Storytelling is not only sustained in the culture of enslaved Africans through the power of words, but it is a fundamental means of communication as well and the necessity

of their oratory to be actual and genuine is fairly more important since they are not allowed according to the law to read, write or learn. Moreover, the tiny mistake would cost the slave his life or cause him to be transported to another plantation thus separating him from his family. The spoken word is the only and fundamental means for those slaves to supply comfort to themselves and to others, to bargain in "myriad subtleties" with their masters for more preferable terms and to oppose brutalization by abiding to reality. (Dunbar, J.1922, p.28).

Storytelling gives each slave the opportunity to emancipate the others. It also empowers them to oppose marginalization. In addition, it enables them to elaborate strong public speaking competence that can possibly be crucial to their survival. The stories she tells correspond with the convention to emancipate one another through public speaking. They are also frequently targeted to stimulate people to resume to struggle to better the lives they lead and to maintain their hopes that their lives will become more preferable. She all the time attempts to prove to people that adversities can produce good results, and she promotes others to hand over and communicate the good they obtain.

Historically, resistance, survival, and confronting adversities are the main themes of stories recounted within the slavery period. For instance, *The People Could Fly* is a renowned tale of black American tradition. The theme is about slaves opposing American subjugation by escaping with the help of African magic that survives inside them. Moreover, black American slaves are used to handing over "B'rer Rabbit" stories about various methods to combat and evade oppression.

Angelou's stories present comparable topics. For instance, she frequently stresses how blacks have survived slavery by means of resilience in her stories. As a matter of fact, it is Maya Angelou who has directed Alfred Woodard in making the movie *Down in the Delta.* This movie rotates in the period of the Great Migration about a family that settled in Chicago but is compelled to go back to the South to evade marginalization and

alienation and to reattach to their origins so that they may establish an identity. The movie scenes were filmed at significant American historical places and Angelou frequently had meetings with the cast to instruct them about the historical relevance in order to highlight the casts' connection to the scenes in addition to enabling them to connect further to the theme they were introducing in the movie. Alfred Woodard illustrates Angelou's procedures as a storyteller and director:

> "The whole crew would sit and [Maya Angelou] would talk about the historical significance of a particular scene and what would be happening in that space a hundred years ago. It was like we were on an archaeological dig on sacred ground. This way, Angelou's methods correlate with the African-American tradition of storytelling in which she connected the past to the present. In addition, Angelou gave her black listeners the opportunity to possibly reattach to their common roots and pasts. In the African-American tradition of storytelling, allegories and metaphors can be used to establish a secure place that safeguards the listener psychologically from the emotionally threatening content." (Lussana, S.2018p.124)

The story Angelou uses, reveals the ability and authority of the spoken word. Once, a cast member instructed Angelou a song. He himself had no idea about the meaning of that song. Yet, it came to him as it was passed from ancestor to ancestor in the family. Angelou sings that song to a friend while she is living In Ghana. Angelou is eager to know if that friend understands the meaning of the song. She is surprised to see her friend's face overwhelmed by tears. Angelou mentions what the friend says,

> *"Sister, it's old Yoruba. It's a slave song and it says, 'Father, father, they have taken me from you over water so wide and they treat me worse than a dog in your compound. Father, can your magic find me and bring me home? But buffalo communion lab or a lady fun but you want some Haiti for everybody Wow and over here Wow hey Laurel.. Centuries of voices have rumbled down the years voices stacked upon voices closes accordion Pete's voice is telling and relating and retelling informing the powers of the stories of their lives they say father they have taken me across waters wider than the world wetter than my tears I receive treatments worse than the lowest dog in your backyard" (Angelou, M.2010, YouTube.).*

Angelou reveals that the mission is accomplished when she takes the singing back to West Africa and stated that,

"Centuries of voices have rumbled down the years. Voices stacked upon voices. Close as accordion's pleats. Voices telling and relating and retelling, informing the horrors of the stories of their lives. They say father they have taken me across waters wider than the world wetter than my tears I receive treatments worse than the lowest dog in your backyard father can you hear me voice is pleading calling begging hear me someone speak to me speak of me speak for me the voices shout in languages as barriers" (Angelou, M.2010, YouTube.).

She deduces that the voices portrayed would never be left behind. Therefore, she extends help to the portrayal of the black community to public attention, and lends a helping hand to in representing her enslaved forefathers as well. She terminates her story with a pledge to the forefathers who scream to their motherland praying to be rescued**.**

"We have stretched our hands across ten scores of years to pull your name from the forgotten roster. We will wipe your tears with the palms of our hands. We listen and we will continue to listen. We shall continue to speak for you. You will not be abandoned. You will not be forgotten." (Angelou, M.2010, YouTube.)

Maya Angelou continues to strive for equal rights during and even after the Civil Rights Movement. Absence of equality was (and is) a major strife in the daily lives of a great number of black Americans, which makes it an extremely appropriate subject to emphasize in her stories.

3.2 Resistance

Angelou frequently mentions enduring, while overcoming is a stronger word to delineate what she has accomplished. She cannot only survive but she also handles her personal trauma in order to greatly enhance her life as well as the lives of her community. This theme or technique is appropriate to manifest in mass media since it is associated with the themes that are significant in many black people's lives, because of discrimination, the Civil Rights Movement and racism.

Maya Angelou pictures the theme of African-American individual and common trauma –through both her public speaking and storytelling. Angelou's personal trauma and how she was able to adjust to it, is basic to her subsequent procedure to establish a podium

in order to adapt with the cultural common trauma of slavery retrospectively and disparity in general. Moreover, in order to empower and encourage black people to safeguard themselves and resist disparity, she employs her experience with resisting trauma and disparity via storytelling. Thus, she could impart her teachings on overcoming adversities and resisting.

3.2.1.Personal Trauma

If the narrative *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (1970) gives Angelou the power to build a novel surrounding her sexual injury, the later speeches and interviews give her the opportunity to re-approve her continued existence over and over again, in front of testimony., She plainly strives in her first interviews to speak about her rape theme. In an interview on the *Buck Mathews Show, (*1976*),* in which she deals with her second book, *Gather Together in My Name*, (1976), she tells her interviewer Buck Matthews that as a seven-and-half year-old-girl "an awful thing" occurred to her. By that, she is referring very abruptly to her rape. But in 1982, she could speak a little bit more openly with Bill Matthews about herself as a victim of rape. (Angelou, M. &Matthews, B. 1976.You Tube)

Moyers describes the trauma experience in further details being a "difficulty" she was afflicted by the time she lived in St Louis. Asked by Moyers to explain, the flow of speech that was going so naturally before became slower. She gazes down, staggers over speech, gabbles a little and speaks again,

> "At the age of seven i was raped the rapist was a person very well known to my family i was hospitalized he had told me if i ever told he would kill my brother who was the only person i loved my brother came to me who was only it was just about nine and he asked me who did it and i told him if I tell the man will kill you-he said he can't kill me i will not let him kill me so i believed him so i told him and of course he told mom my mommy the man was put in jail for one day and night and released and two huge white policemen came into my mother's house and they said the man has been found dead and it seems he was kicked to death - i thought my voice had killed him that was my uh seven-year-old logic so i stopped talking." (*The Revelation That Changed Dr. Maya Angelou's Life,1976, You tube)*

With Bill Moyers *Going Home* interview (1982), Angelou illustrates that having been raped, she became an optional mute. Leigh Gilmore's trauma theory illustrates language to be at the core of injury which leads that optional mutism to be a rational reaction, particularly since her age was only seven. First and foremost, Gilmore pleads that language is not enough to tackle trauma to the maximum, but again, "language is asserted as that which can and must heal the survivor and the community." (Gilmore, L.2001p.132). As far as Gilmore is concerned, this results in a "constitutive ambivalence" that causes "an impossible injunction to tell what cannot, in this view, be spoken." (Gilmore, L.2001, p.133).

The truth is that Angelou evades and strives to say anything whenever her trauma is mentioned, reveals that she, by no means still completely accommodated her "traumatic memory" to her "narrative memory" and also shows that her "traumatic memory" still greatly has the upper hand over her. In another interview between Angelou and Bill Moyers, she illustrates the way she established a novel that mirrors the "tale of survival and triumph." In another interview "Facing Evil" again with Bill Moyers she justifies the way she survived:

> "Now, to show you how out of evil there can come good, in those five years, I read every book in the black school library. I read all the books I could get from the white school library… In my case, I was saved in that muteness…and I was able to draw from human thought, human disappointment and triumphs, in order to triumph myself." (Moyers, B. &Angelou, M. 1988, You Tube).

Angelou pays tribute to literature because it has rescued her life. She learns the way to survive through literature. Moreover, she indicates, "I was silent, but I wasn't in silence. All sounds became heightened." (Nicholson, M.& Angelou, M.1984, You Tube) she explains that "the challenge for a black child not to speak" is a huge matter, since "black people believe [you should] speak when you're spoken to." Maya Angelou owes Mrs. Flowers, her grandmother, a lot because she made her speak one more. Moreover, Maya Angelou frequently mentions her grandmother as the one "who was a traditional Southern black lady" Angelou imitates her as she would call her "Sister, Momma don't care what

these people are saying about 'You must be a moron,' or 'You must be an idiot'." (Louis, A. &Angelou, M. 2008, You Tube)

3.2.2.Impact of Spirituals

Maya Angelou seldom wastes the opportunity of a speech or an interview without singing a religious hymn. She, as well, realizes the importance and power of those spirituals. She refers those spirituals throughout the world in order to share as a black culture emblem. *And Still I Rise, the Netflix documentary* is where Angelou recounts a narrative about the Opera *Porgy and Bess's* director who invites her to chant a spiritual in Morocco. The 1982 documentary introduces a unique fragment of Angelou's speech. Angelou recounts a story explaining the importance of spirituals. The audience is a principally black school in Arkansas where she says, "I see myself in you as a young person in Stamps [Arkansas]. I hope you see yourselves in me." **(**Netflix documentary: *And Still I Rise)* This reveals that Angelou realizes her prestigious role and also realizes that she can be a paragon for students. Moreover, she seizes the chance to illustrate to them the mighty impact of spirituals:

> "Songs not written by easy or free people, not by a leisure class, songs written from the depth of the heart, written with the whips and their blood and lashes on their backs. When I sung these songs, the [audience] couldn't stop screaming. Then I began to think, 'Oh, I see. Now, I see. When the people were passing out the big packets of land and money, my people had none of that to give. But what they gave me. Look at what they gave me. My Lord!" Look at what they gave me. It's a great blessing. It opens doors for me all over the world**." (**Netflix documentary: *And Still I Rise*)

Angelou derives from her stories' spirituals in order to delineate the way hope can be found against adversities and how that experience can be used to help people combating calamities. Maya Angelou would, in quite a number of interviews, use some line from the spiritual *Rainbow in the Cloud*.

In 2014, Angelou sang this line "When it looked like the sun wasn't going to shine anymore, God put a rainbow in the cloud." In an interview with G. Stroumboulopoulos.

She illustrates on that “So many times, I’ve had rainbows in my clouds: people who’ve been kind to me” She adds that she could realize that that has been offered to her and all she has as a reaction is to develop herself so that she may pass that to “somebody else who is yet to come. (Angelou, M. & Stroumboulopoulos, G.2014, You Tube).

3.2.3.Impact of Black Culture

Deriving from black cultural legacy, Angelou would use religious songs in order to bring encouragement and hope to her audience, in accordance with the African-American legacy of storytelling. That is how she is able to illustrate the way black history is not a history of subjugation and disgrace but of opposition, durability and aspiration. In addition, the upsurge of radio and television makes it simpler for the black newspapers to approach a broader audience and to “[articulate] the meaning and bounds of the collective.” (Eyerman, R. 2009, p.194).

Maya Angelou has assisted in representing the cultural injury of bondage by playing a role in Alex Haley’s television series *Roots* (1977), which traces the family string of Kunta Kinte, an African freeman, his deracination, subjugation, and compulsory immigration to America until his successors’ freeing from slavery in America. Maya Angelou plays Kunta Kinte’s grandmother.

As she continues to express her opinion in public, Angelou lends a helping hand to the procedure of overcoming slavery cultural trauma and planting it in the common memory via storytelling. Angelou not only embodies black culture via public media, yet she also emancipates and motivates the black community to have self-confidence in their potentialities. Angelou recounts a myriad of tales in order to defend herself and her community.

A significant story that uncovers Angelou's origins in the African-American storytelling legacy is that of her uncle Willie, who in spite of his disability, has left a great impact on those around him among whom is a young boy who later occupies the position of Arkansas' first black mayor. Angelou is greatly astounded by Uncle Willie because, although he is black, poor and crippled, she recalls that he leaves to the present generation and the generations to come a rich heritage. Therefore, she writes him this song: -

> "Willie was a man without fame, hardly anybody knew his name, crippled and limp and always walking lame, he said, but I keep on moving and moving just the same, solitude was the climate in his head, emptiness was the partner in his bed, pain echoed in the steps of his tread, he said, but I keep on following, where the others lead. people called him uncle, boy and hey, said you can't live through this another day, and then they waited to hear what he would say, He said but I'm living in the games that children play." (Angelou, M. & Moyers, B.1988, You Tube)

In1988, Maya Angelou had an interview with Bill Moyers, *Moyers & Company*, YouTube. She by no means refrains from telling the story from the first person singular to the third person plural. This helps the messages behind her stories to rise above race, religion or culture and renders them to be approachable to anybody irrespective of their environment.

3.3. identity.

This section highlights Angelou's stories on identity at both an individual and a public level. First and foremost, it will pinpoint Angelou's own procedure of establishing an identity before it focuses on her stories about common identity. Since Maya Angelou is one of the pioneers to speak in public media about her individual and the common black identity, that is greatly influenced by a tyrannical system, it is interesting to dissect the way she shares in establishing and bargaining an identity. She makes full use of her position as a celebrity to resist the prevalent controlling, and stereotypical fiction about black identity.

Angelou's tales about her own identity are substantial since through them, she hopes to emancipate the women of her community. She principally plants the lessons she receives from her grandmother and her mother. Those lessons those women have imparted from their origin, the South, to Angelou, supply perception into the means they believe she requires to sail the ship of life amidst a tyrannical system.

Angelou interprets her grandmother's lessons into stories and uses them so as to inspire and emancipate women of her community and to oppose the concepts prevalent related to them, with a unique concentration on her tales of self-determination, self-love and eventually self- amelioration. handling the injuries of the past supplies the means to establish a superior future by re-bargaining and reestablishing a common identity. Moreover, Angelou's tales concerning the common black identity are similarly significant since they give perception into how the common black identity was reestablished through mass media.

3.3.1.Personal identity

One of the major problems Angelou discusses is maturing black in the prejudiced South. On one of "Bill Moyers"' interviews, she remembers a story about one of her infancy fictional stories where she managed to turn white using magic. To her, that fantasy would stop her from walking across the white's section of the city to be viewed with "such loathing." The influence of bigotry on a young girl, who has consistently been excluded and instructed to hate herself, then become the person speaking about the kind of courage people need:

> *"We need the courage to create ourselves daily, to be bodacious enough to create ourselves daily-- as Christians, as Jews, as Muslims, as thinking, caring, laughing, loving human beings. I think that the courage to confront evil and turn it by dint of will into something applicable to the development of our evolution, individually and collectively, is exciting, honorable."* (Facing Evil With Maya Angelou, Angelou, M. & Moyers, B. 1982, You Tube).

3.3.2.Common Identity

The common history of racism, slavery, and its consequences influences Angelou's identity in her early childhood. It is alleged that "individual identity is said to be negotiated within this collectively shared past." **(**Eyerman, R.2009, p2) Intrinsically related to Angelou's identity is the fact that she is both a black and a female human being. That means one thing only in that society: To be considered as inferior and to be treated on that basis. Thus, Angelou is "doubly threatened" and this opposes her since early childhood. Yet, Angelou struggles against the defamation of her identity via vigorously establishing it up to her own norms, not up to the norms of the prevailing system at the time. Registering her memoirs and contributing to the manifestation of black women via storytelling, by highlighting this in her speeches and interviews, she participates in the constitution of black women and stimulates them to advocate for themselves and have control of their value.

3.4. Angelou's Beauty Standards

Because black women are frequently evaluated to the European beauty standards, a few of them may tidy and brighten their hair to match European norms of beauty. Accordingly, these acts seem to "impede the development of healthy self-esteem for girls and young women." Black women seem to have "issues of colorism, skin tone, and hair. One way to confront these restricting European norms is to establish a various fiction that presents a more extensive beauty norm that embraces more bodily characteristics. Nevertheless, prevailing white society discards non-European beauty norms and ". Black women feel like they are under constant assault (blatant and latent) for their perceived (ugliness) by media, peers, and even family". **(**Awad, G., et al. 2015, p.560).

First and foremost, Angelou does not adjust to European beauty norms. She frequently wears her hair natural and is traditionally clothed in conventional West-African outfit. Moreover, she alters the story about beauty norms, frequently expressing the beauty

existing in the black ethnic group. Her son, Guy Johnson contemplates on the way Angelou's appeared in *And Still I Rise Documentary*:-

> "What I remember most, when I think of a childhood memory, is the fact that she would come to school wearing her African clothes and her hair natural…I would come home and I would ask my mother, Don't you have a sweater/skirt outfit? One of those Penney's things? And she would say to me, 'This is your history. You come from kings and queens." (Documentary- *And Still I Rise*)

This quote manifests how Angelou makes good use of her status to accomplish her self-esteem in her ethnic group and its origins. She alters the story by drawing near her ancestral origins from a status of self-esteem and self-respect, pointing out that their descent maybe from monarchs.

Moreover, Angelou periodically highlights characteristics of the black female in her poems, which she frequently reads on stage along with her comments of her self-esteem in the black ethnic group. *Live & Unplugged* is her speech where she pleads that it is extremely significant that one love and like himself. Although Angelou asserts that the poem has been written for the sake of all women, she celebrates and highlights the black characteristics all along the verses. She pleads that "[(black) women] have not even begun to test [their] potential, but it's there." (Angelou, M. 1987, You Tube).

Obama also acknowledges Angelou's great skill to address the "essence of black women" and in the meantime instituting soul stones for women in general. Maya Angelou frequently articulates her self-esteem because she is black. In her *Live & Unplugged* lecture, she commemorates her "luck to be black on a Saturday night!" Having obtained "The Essence Award" in 1992, she commends "her people" saying that:

> *"Young women, I don't think we often enough stop to wonder how that Black woman in the 19th century, how she felt every time she said, no, ma'am, Miss Anne. You didn't slap me when you hurt me. I ain't tenderhearted-- so she could make enough money so she could send somebody to Spelman. Or that Black man who said, no sir. No, sir, you ain't wrong. I sure must be stupid--so he can make enough money so he could send somebody to Morehouse or Morris Brown or Shaw or Tuskegee or Hampton Institute, at*

the time, or Fisk. I don't think we often enough stop to wonder. I think they were successful in the employment of those humiliating ploys or you wouldn't be here." (Angelou, M.1992, You tube)

Maya Angelou is able to extend a different outlook on standards of beauty via combining her storytelling with the intersectional approach. This links to Patricia Collins Hill *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2000), that regards intersection of ethnic grouping and sexism as a significant topic. Collins postulates that to survive, black women require an "articulated, self-defined, collective standpoint" that converges within "oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation." (Collins, P. 2000,P.36).

Moreover, Collins highlights how African-American convention of storytelling engulfing music, books, and eloquence counters "hegemonic ideas" by extending "counter-hegemonic knowledge that fosters changed consciousness." (Collins,2000, pp.15, 258) Angelou shared in the enunciation of a contrary story regarding black identity.

The importance of Angelou's substitute narratives in which she countered the prevalent white narrative about the common black identity is illustrated in the article "Becoming Black Women: Intimate Stories and Intersectional Identities." by Amy C. Wilkins whose theory corresponds with Collins' since she pleads that "the stories we tell shape both how we appear to others and how we think about who we are." Stories bring "imposed and chosen meaning" which emanates in an individual's impression of a perception of self. **(**Wilkins, A.,2012, p.174).

That there is a possibility that stories become "a source of change" in societies, is something Wilkins believes in. (Wilkins, A.,2012, p.183) Stories are a way of connecting to a collectivity and a way of creating individual, authentic-feeling selves. That is how, there is "the potential to reconcile tensions between imposed and chosen identities." That

is why, Angelou's substitute outlook on identity via storytelling had the possibility to cause important transformation to society. (Wilkins, A.,2012, p.285.).

In *Maya Angelou: Adventurous Spirit,* (2016) Linda Wagner-Martin pleads that Angelou has achieved a great part as spirit leader when her life was coming to an end. She postulates that that is conventionally part of African communities that older ladies undertook the responsibility to sustain religious health in societies. (Wagner-Martin, L.2016, p.187,191).

Moreover, she links this heritage to Angelou's part in society about the end of her life. She frequently used mass media to transmit the lessons of life. Among those lessons is that Angelou frequently highlighted the fact that she was "better today than [she] was the day before yesterday*."* (Cole, J. & Angelou, M.2014, You Tube).

3.5 Impact of Religion

Angelou frequently recalls the religious lessons she has learnt from her grandmother, and tries her best to transmit those lessons to her audience. Angelou is fully convinced that her religion is the origin of her identity. Angelou's religious references are met by laughs and shouts of appreciation by her audience. To "step out on the word of God" is what Angelou's grandmother taught her, Angelou also highlights how faith and religion are connected to protection and self-love. Moreover, Angelou ascribes her perception of modesty and value to her belief. She considers that thing the highly valuable lesson.

> "If I think of my life as a class of what I've really learned, I've learned a few things. First, I'm aware that I'm a child of God. It's such an amazing understanding. To think that the 'It' which made flees and mountains, rivers and stars, made me. What I pray for is humility. To know that there's something greater than I". (*Angelou, M.*2012, You Tube)

Surprisingly, Angelou relates the matter of safeguarding herself to her religion. She by no means safeguards herself merely to care for herself, but in order to maintain her soul

as immaculate as she can owing to her deep conviction that she would stand before God one day. All that, she says in a story. Wearing West-African clothes, Angelou participates in the manifestation of black culture via storytelling, talking to a great number on television. Appearing in The *Merv Griffin Show*, Griffin speculates that Angelou resembles a royal family with her traditional hairdo and dress. To that, she answers: - "Well, there may be that in it." During Angelou's interview with J. B. Cole, she questions if they really.

> "came from Africa or did we bring it with us? I know that the spirit I found in West-Africa when I was living there, and … I have to say that my people have literally brought their spirit with them, and I've been African for about three thousand year for that five thousand years emotion to let you guys down at 86- Dr. Maia I could sit here all afternoon but I want to be respectful thinking of you and your time thank you is there any parting message you would like to give your family and friends yes that's everything I've said is a truth kick" (Angelou, M. & Cole, J.2014, You Tube)

In that very interview, Angelou sings a hymn that her grandmother would in church. Angelou says that her West African husband identifies the melody of the hymn when Angelou sings it for the interviewer. This illustrates that Angelou acknowledges her identity to be embedded in her African heritage and that is what she transforms to the widespread culture. Although Angelou manifests obvious carry-overs from the African legacy of the black society, she strongly holds the opinion that the past of their ancestors' slavery molds and changes their identity that progresses towards a novel black American identity.

For instance, she speaks in Johnetta B. Cole's interview, (2014), *Smithsonian Museum*, Angelou mentions her enslaved forefathers' steadfastness and bravery, which she conceives as essential to the black identity. This remark links to the black thinkers' viewpoint of black American identity embedded in their past of slavery.

> "Look at us [black people] and say, amazing, we've come a long way…Amazing, here we are, still here and still moving on up…Imagine it, laying in each other's urine and feces and menstrual flow. Imagine it, and getting off that slave ship and standing on that auction block being bought again." (Angelou, M. &Cole, J. *Smithsonian Museum,* YouTube, 2014).

There is a reference to the poem, *Still I Rise,* in the aforementioned quote's last line, where Angelou commemorates black resilience and suffering. In the final stanza, she resembles herself to a black wide leaping ocean that stands the sufferings of welling and swelling in addition to the tide. She continues speaking of leaving dark nights of horror and dread behind toward a clear sunrise that recalls the ancestors' gifts to them. She finalizes the stanza with a striking line that she is the hope and dream of slaves. There is repetition of "I rise" after each line to highlight the spirit of opposition and hope.

In her interviews, Angelou frequently mentions the impact of skin-color on the individual's perception of self. She manifests black culture via her stories by pinpointing their durability as well as the suffering and endurance if one is prejudiced on as well as the endeavor it costs to handle it.

> "My great blessing would be, if I had that power, I would make everybody an African American. At least for a week…Know what it's like. Know what it's like to get on a bus or any public conveyance and have everybody look at you as if you have stolen the baby's milk. Like, look at you and turn their face away. And still, say, 'I forgive you" (Angelou, M. 1984, interview).

Angelou frequently reiterates the necessity of forgiving in her talks. She believes in the significance of forgiveness particularly in bigotry issues. To her, forgiveness emanates a perception of freedom, which eventually maintains people in their course towards self-improvement.

In order to transmit Angelou's public speaking to the huge numbers of audience in all parts of the world, Beyoncé uses her platform which manifests how appropriate her errand is until our present day. This strategy targets stimulating people to consider one another's resemblances rather than of divergences so as to establish common understanding based on the principle of equality. Maya Angelou often uses mass media to give speeches and interviews. These are also where her stories of opposition and identity are seen by millions of people. Compliant to storytelling, the African-American

convention, Angelou skillfully manages her ways to capture the attention of her audience via acting out her stories, wearing specific characters, reciting and singing her most loved spirituals and gospel lyrics which induce her audience to react with her through crying, laughter, meditation, and reflecting on her stories. Angelou persistently speaks about self-love and the significance of improving oneself endlessly and continuously. In case Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory is applied to Maya Angelou's narratives and tales, it can be deduced that Angelou focuses on empowering black women. **(**Crenshaw, K.1989, pp.139-167)

That skill has endowed Angelou with the ability to affect millions of people all over the world and, most of all, moved their empathy since they acknowledge the truthfulness of her speech. She possesses an intense gift to convey her message in such a way that makes various people from various ethnic groups, beliefs, religions, civilizations and continents grasp and empathize with it. This eventually lends a helping hand in transforming the prevalent culture and causes a further candid manifestation of black culture in mass media.

Finally, self-realization has provoked and fetched a change not only for herself but also it transmits the whole black history and it was honorary as the National Book Award. However, she realizes that the actual meaning of beauty lies not only in the white-skinned rather in everyone's desire. Angelou has become versed in language and literature as well to express her thoughts independently in the literary genres.

Conclusion

All through their life, African-American women had to face many problems in the society. The Black women always gets oppressed because of their skin color. As Collins says, “Oppression describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society” (Collins, P. 2000, P. 4). The forms of oppression that happen in the United States commonly relate to the issues about race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity.

Maya Angelou is engaged with many struggles throughout her life. Some of the principal themes that are significant within her life are: image, identity, development, family, racial tensions, career, love and abandonment. The analysis of the poems demonstrate that the speaker has self-confidence and strong personality because of her power to overcome the problems she faces as a black woman. For example, in the poem *Still I Rise*, the speaker depicts her black power to survive in white society as a black woman. Through this poem, she displays that she can survive and overcome the problem with her pride as an African-American woman still intact. The problem she faces in this poem is about injustice and hatred. However, she depicts that she will never give up in order to overcome the problem and change it into power. She says that she will struggle to gain a bright life for her and for other African Americans. Even though she has faced so many problems in her life, at the end, she can still rise and survive from those difficult situations.

Maya Angelou does not employ negative dictions to depict her self-esteem and her confidence. She does not mock or blame 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. For example, while *Ain’t That Bad*’s first two stanzas tend to recount the nutritional customs of the black people, the other one is about skincare and makeup customs of African American females such as given below in the first three stanzas. In this poem basically, Maya Angelou encourages

her 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, The Caged Bird and *Still I Rise* 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 show that African-American people have confidence, pride, non- blaming behavior and positive self -evaluation. It is also reflected from the way Angelou encourages other African American women to have positive life through her poems.

Especially in the *Phenomenal Woman,* the black power is expressed through the speaker who tries to tell that black woman should think highly about herself. Old African American women that live in a white society experience the same problems that they are historically humiliated women descended from the African live -like in the different world from those who are not black and female. In this poem, however, the speaker challenges to convey the idea that she is a woman who has self -confidence and power as a phenomenal black woman. She tries to demonstrate that beauty is not only about the physical appearance. She manifests the self-confidence of being herself and that society can accept that she is more important. The speaker insists that the perfection of beauty in society cannot be compared with her self-esteem as an African- American woman.

In the poem, *The Caged Bird, she* uses an extended metaphor of the caged bird portraying the experience of an oppressed group to capture. Not only does the suppression of the cage hold the bird captive; but that captivity itself does change the bird, and in this way robs the bird of its genuine self. Generally, as a result of the selected poems, the speakers uncover that they are mighty enough as a black woman to strive if not wage war upon injustice. They have the common outlook that the speakers can be rescued in society, they can reveal their mindsets, they approve of getting their survival as African-American women who take pride in their identity. Each of the poems is manipulated by Angelou as

the media to convey the true feelings that she is by no means a feeble woman. The speakers state that as African-Americans they represent a novel source of energy to war against the tyranny they undergo in order to live typically such as the others. Generally in her poems the speakers finds the problems they face are about injustice and hatred, however, the speakers self confidently announce that they will never give up to overcome the problem and change it into power.

It is quite true that the former studies on Angelou's writings have supplied significant perceptions regarding her celebrity and literary inventiveness as an author, a minute examination in this study also manifests the way Angelou adjusted the tradition. She is by no means expressing her outlook on behalf of black people only but for all the people at large. Using her stock of experience and through participating in the manifestation of black culture via popular media, Angelou resumes her advocacy for equality through targeting to have people grasp that their similarities outrun their divergencies.

As is well known, the oppressors may attack not only physically but mentally to make the attacked feels down and discriminated only by word and gaze. In real life, the Black women face racism such as bad nicknames like "Nigga" or "Niger". The society designates "Nigga" to call someone who is from African-American descent. Angelou with her unique style makes full use of her function in the spotlight to tell people about the black society. She manages to lend a helping hand in the manifestation of her subjugated forefathers in addition to the post- slavery experience. This is the very reason underlying this thesis's concentration on her broadcasted interviews. Whereas previous research on Maya Angelou's written works has provided remarkable insights about her personage and literary ingenuity as a writer, a thorough investigation in this thesis also demonstrates how Angelou adapts the tradition, not only speaking from her perspective for black people only but also for all people. Drawing from her own experience and by contributing to the representation of black culture through the popular media, Angelou continued her activism

for equality by aiming to make people realize that their commonalities outweigh their differences.

Angelou can use her role in the public spotlight to speak about the black community, contributing to the representation of her (enslaved) ancestors and the black experience after slavery. This is the reason for my focus on broadcasted interviews in this thesis. The African American women who have no power and other historically oppressed groups are looking for ways to escape, survive and compete against the dominant social injustice. They have confidence in themselves that they have the right to show how determined they are to put an end to their oppression and discrimination. Their strong confidence can empower the speaker and other black women to express their feelings and strive for a better condition.

One of the themes in Angelou's works this thesis focuses on is resistance. Through storytelling and her role in the public spotlight, Angelou is able to use her personal stories of becoming to inspire and empower black women to resist oppression. Interestingly, Angelou often draws from stories and lessons her grandmother and mother taught her. In this way, Angelou conveys her grandmother's lessons to a broad public. The content of these lessons is significant to analyze as they provide insight into the messages Angelou considers to be relevant to pass on during the times that she conveys them in.

How she reports her stories and the greatly fundamental topics she pinpoints link to the ancient convention that can be indicated back to pre-colonialization African societies. Despite the fact that Angelou's life stories and her other pamphlets provide significant perceptions into her life and accomplishments, I plead that a principal portion of her incessant strife as a campaigner of civil rights appears in her public appearances where she makes full use of storytelling as an African-American convention in order to participate in the manifestation of black America. Her objective is to emancipate and promote black people worldwide to combat the sustained disparity in America. I argue that Maya Angelou manages to perform her task through merging her own experience with the black

experience. Most of all, she succeeds in connecting her stories to human experiences in general.

What the Black women have faced, gives the speaker a unique viewpoint of idea regarding the Black woman. As members of an oppressed and powerless group, Black women are more likely to have a critical understanding of the condition of oppression than those living outside these structures. The speaker who is from African-American descent can understand the condition when someone is oppressed by different colors and gender. The speaker here is also trying to change the idea that women are a weak creature without the right to speak publicly. She points out in this poem that she is a black and a woman, she can become a 'phenomenal' being in society.

A Black woman usually does not have the courage to speak out her mind. In this poem, however, the speaker challenges to express her idea that she is a woman and she also shows her self-confidence and power as a phenomenal Black woman. In this poem, the speaker uses diction and figurative language to show the black power of the speaker as a Black woman. In the first stanza, the speaker uses visual imagery to show her power through the statement that she is special.

The speaker is still proud of being her as a Black woman even though she does not look like a model. Here, the speaker displays the black power that she can freely express her thoughts about herself and others. Through the visual imagery, she portrays her images as someone who is proud of her identity.

On the whole, this study brings out the fact that the Afro-American women have endured sorrows and through that endurance they are liberated from the state of slavery and transformed independent beings with their own identity. Angelou merges her grandmother’s, and her personal wisdom in her storytelling to inspire, empower and encourage black women, as well as to contribute to their representation in society. In line

of Angelou's storytelling these stories still contain aspects that any human being can identify with Angelou's method to overcome her personal trauma of sexual assault and the way her public interviews allow Angelou to re-enact her trauma in the presence of witnesses which help her to transfer her "traumatic memory" to "the narrative memory."(Bal, M., et al.1997,235).

Angelou is a highly influential and revered individual. Therefore, the information about her may have been biased. It is therefore difficult to engage with the data while questioning the level of objectivity and fact. It is also difficult to organize this information. Her own work provides scattered memories and biographies written by others sometimes leaves out certain events. (Lupton, M. 1998, pp.257-276).

Maya Angelou's poems and interviews can be studied extensively by Arab researchers and educationalists to prescribe the majority of them in schools because she produces a great variety of works particularly poems depicting black women's romance, existence, struggle and history, which can be utilized in the Arab societies as take-off points toward spreading awareness with relation to the Arab Woman in general and The Iraqi woman in particular. It might also be beneficial to use the interviews made with her, as well as her works on fiction for the same goal. In addition to a literary analysis that might be necessary because she is an artist, this can provide some of her unconscious themes. It is also recommended that interviews with some of her family members and friends are considered as this may allow further insight into her works.

The aforementioned points shed light on the importance of African American literature in general and the African civilization before slave trade in particular and highlights that the latter is to be thoroughly exposed to in further researches because of the impacts it has had on African American literature.

Literary works in general and the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in particular though not exposed to in this thesis, are creative works of the writer. As creation, the literary writers try to explore social phenomenon to be known and understood by the readers. They communicate the things that happen in society. Sexual and psychological abuse and racism are supposed to be morally and legally wrong. It tends to break normally social being both morally and religiously. Related to this literature is a kind of instrument to know what life is. Thus, this thesis aims to encourage students of literature to study more deeply about life matters through literary works and interviews.

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