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**DEFINING THE BLACK MOTHER IN MAYA
ANGELOU'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS *I KNOW
WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS* AND *THE HEART OF A
WOMAN***

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ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Maya Angelou'nun *Kuşların Neden Şarkı Söylediğini Biliyorum* ve *Kadın Kalbi* Otobiografilerinde Siyahi Anne Tanımlaması

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Siyahi kadın otobiyografileri 1960'ların başında siyahi otobiyografinin alt dalı olarak yaygınlaşmıştır. 1960'larda ortaya çıkan Sivil Haklar Hareketi ve Kadın Hareketleri siyahi kadın'ın aktifleşmesine hız kazandırmıştır. Siyahi kadın, otobiyografi sayesinde önyargılı imajından kurtulma olanağı bularak kendini ifade edebilmiştir.

Maya Angelou siyahi Amerikalı kadın otobiyografisi alanında eserler vermiş önemli bir yazardır. Angelou, kendi hayatını göz önüne alarak siyahi kadın hayatına ayna tutar. Bir seri halinde yayınladığı otobiyografilerinde "siyahi anne" bütünleştirici bir nitelik taşır. Bu tezin amacı Angeolu'nun *Kafesteki Kuşun Neden Şarkı Söylediğini Biliyorum* ve *Kadın Kalbi* adlı otobiyografilerinde yer alan siyahi anne tanımlamalarını açıklamak ve anne figürlerini irdelemektir. Angelou'nun anneliğe bakış açısını anlayabilmek için siyahi annenin kölelikten özgürlüğe uzanan tarihsel gelişimi ve Afrikalı Amerikalı yazarların siyahi annelik tanımlamaları da açıklanacaktır. Otobiyografilerinde önce etrafındaki baskın anne figürlerini gösteren Angelou, oğlunun doğumuyla kendi annelik deneyimlerini anlatır.

Bu tezde siyahi anneyi tanımlamada yardımcı olacak; kadın-erkek ilişkileri, evlilikte değişen dengeler, alternatif anne figürleri, ve anne-çocuk ilişkileri irdelenecektir. Otobiyografilerinde kullandığı sesler, köle şarkıları ve hikayeler de Angelou'nun Afrikalı Amerikalı bakış açısının etkilerini yansıtır. Eserlerinde tarihten bazı politik olaylara ve gerçek hayattan ünlü isimlere yer vermesi onun otobiyografilerinin ne denli gerçeğe yakın olduğunu göstermesine katkı bulunur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Siyahi anne, Siyahi Kadın, Otobiyografi, Anne-Çocuk, Irkçılık.

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

Defining the Black Mother in Maya Angelou's Autobiographical Works *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman*

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Black Women Autobiographies were expanded in the early 1960's as a subgenre of Black Autobiography. The Civil Rights Movement and Woman's Movement emerged in 1960's also accelerated the black woman's activism. The black women having the opportunity to dispose of their prejudiced image could express themselves by the help of autobiography.

Maya Angelou is a significant writer who has given works in Black American Women Autobiography. Angelou mirrors the lives of black women taking into consideration of her own life. Black mother plays an integrating role in her serious of autobiography. This study attempts to examine the black motherhood concept and explicate the black mother figures in her autobiographies *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman*. The historical evolution of black mothers from slavery to freedom, and the definitions of black motherhood by African American writers will be also examined in order to understand Angelou's attitude toward motherhood. Angelou presents the dominant mother figures around and then she shares her personal experiences of motherhood after the birth of her son.

In this study, women-men relationships, the changing balances in marriage, alternative mother figures, and mother-child relationship will be covered to help to define the black motherhood. The voices, the slave songs and stories Angelou used in her autobiographies also reflect her African American point of view. The fact that she includes some political events from history and famous people from real life contribute her autobiographies to be very much like real life.

Key Words: Black Mother, Black Woman, Autobiography, Mother-Child, Racism.

**DEFINING THE BLACK MOTHER IN MAYA ANGELOU'S
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS *I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD
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INTRODUCTION

The word autobiography is consisted of three words: “autos”, the self; “bios”, the life, and “graphics”, writing. Autobiography means to be the life writing by a self. The autobiographer tends to emphasize the aspects of life concerning with self-examination and focussing on the inner self. Autobiography becomes a process of inquiry of one’s consciousness, desires, fears shaped by the past experiences. In *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, Leigh Gilmore suggests “An autobiography is a monument to the idea of personhood, to the notion that one could leave behind the memorial to oneself (just in case no one else ever gets around to it) and that the memorial would perform the work permanence that the person never can” (2001: 12- 13).

Maya Angelou is one of the well known black female writers of twentieth century. Inspired by the writer James Baldwin, she put her anecdotes into together and created her first book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* which became a classic of black women autobiographies. Although she was best known for her first autobiography, she wrote a series of autobiographies. Her most famous works can be listed as *Gather Together in My Name* (1974), *Singin’ and Swingin’ and Getting’ Merry Like Christmas* (1976), *The Heart of a Woman* (1981), *All God’s Need Traveling Shoes* (1996). Some of her most famous poems are put in a collection called *The Collected Works of Maya Angelou* (1994), and *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘Fore I Diie* (1971). Her latter poem book was also nominated for Pulitzer Prize. *And I Stil Rise* (1978) is another striking work of her. Moreover she wrote children’s books and *Life Doesn’t Frighten Me* (1993) became the most recognized one. Most of her works focus on the struggles of a black girl raising in a white dominated society. Her works also cover black girl’s initiation period by facing the motherhood, the marriage, the love, the death and the protest.

I chose Maya Angelou’s autobiographies *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman* in order to show the differences of maternal concerns in the different periods of her life. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* took place in

1960's whereas *The Heart of a Woman* took place in 1970's. Maya was a child in the beginning of the previous autobiography while she was a matured woman in the beginning of her latter work. It helped me to differentiate the initiation period of Maya Angelou in changing her role of from being a daughter to a mother. Moreover, I chose these two autobiographies of Angelou in order to differ these two periods of changing conditions and to define the similar positions shared by both mother and child. In the previous autobiography Maya was mostly circled by mother figures, while she became a mother herself in her next autobiography. Thus, Maya Angelou's autobiographical works celebrate the role of mothers and grandmothers.

Maya Angelou's place in the the tradition of black women autobiography will be established by characterising it in political awareness, communal responsibility, knowledge of oppression, and empathy for displacement. Angelou recaptures her sense of life as a child when she comes to Stamps, Arkansas. Beginning with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou gives an expression of black oppression of racism, and her journey toward self-affirmation. She achieves this by remembering her past childhood memories where Grandmother Henderson, Bailey, and Uncle Willie have the significant place. Angelou's first autobiography is collaborated with the traditions and patterns of the past and the society she lives. Her autobiography achieves an effect of celebration of the rituals of the culture and the black oral tradition.

Angelou's literary significance rests upon her ability to narrate story both as a Black American and a woman in the twentieth century. She illuminates the black past in an American context that provides her readers to realize the Black American experiences. As a woman, Maya Angelou finds out that a woman has a lot of masks which are difficult to take out. Her masks are shaped by her political view, her race and her family. Her story becomes a combination of these responsibilities of a black woman as a mother, as a woman and as an "activist". In *Order Out of Chaos: The Autobiographical Works of Maya Angelou* Dolly Aimee Mcpherson explains her concern;

In the *Heart of a Woman*, and in the other volumes of the autobiography as well, Angelou utilizes biographical and historical data to lead the reader away from the time-honored myths and toward a fuller understanding of the historically-bound present. While in incorporating social and political issues in her work, she does not allow protest to dominate her writing to the exclusion of other concerns. Instead, she consciously broaches the subjects of survival and social change from a variety of vantage points: artist, activist, woman (1986: 138).

Therefore, from Mcpherson's point of view Maya Angelou points out the historical and social developments of her term while writing autobiography. Maya Angelou uses different forms of her points to explain the social and political changes. She not only tells her story from a black woman perspective, she also uses her political identity and her social role as a mother. This enables her to capture and to present the events from various perspectives.

In this dissertation I will try to define the black motherhood in Maya Angelou's autobiographical works by focusing on black women autobiographical tradition. In my study I will emphasize how black mothers were defined in the historical context and in some works of African American Literature. The importance of the slave mothering in the contemporary black American society will be explained in the very beginning of my thesis. The black motherhood takes its roots from the slave mothering and it is also shaped by racism. It is involved with not only racial but also sexist and classist politics in itself. "What is a black mother" is the question that underlie every page of this study without ever being answered directly. This study attempts to demonstrate, in some detail, the definitions of black mother in African American woman autobiography particularly in the selected works of Maya Angelou. Additionally, it aspires two dominant mother figures her mother Vivian and her grandmother Momma. Angelou's portrayal of these two mother figures results from her dilemma on her identity: being African and American.

In her "Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods" Tess Couslett says

Motherhood was the keystone of the female slave narrative: the slave mother fought to keep her children and often lost. Here Maya's mother has to send her children away to her mother. But Angelou herself becomes a mother (by mistake at sixteen) and her fight to raise her fatherless son is one of the key themes across five volumes, as she seeks both to protect the fatherless child and encourage in him a masculinity that will neither oppress women, nor be destroyed by the white world (2000: 178).

In the first chapter, my study traces the significance of black autobiography in its historical and literal context. It tries to establish how the black writing tradition emerged. Rooted from the slave narratives, the black autobiographical writing will be examined regarding its aims and characteristics. The difference of female autobiography from male autobiography will also be taken into consideration in terms of form and content.

The second chapter aims at analyzing the black motherhood starting from slavery to freedom. The black motherhood and its historical background will be revealed. The historical formation of black mothers will be analysed under two groups, slave mothers and free single mothers. In the next part of this chapter the black motherhood images and concepts in African-American Literature will be revealed. The striking points of the black motherhood will be pointed out by declaring the matriarchal myths and covering them with the European myths of matriarchy they share.

In chapter three, the representations of black motherhood and maternal concerns in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* will be explored. The black mother figures in her autobiography will be specified as: "real, failed and other mother figures". The black motherhood in her first autobiography will be examined from two specific perspectives, Angelou's relationship with her grandmother Momma Henderson and her biological mother Vivian. Maya's relations with her mother figures help her to build maternal motifs. Her victimization as a daughter will be put forth regarding her rape by her mother's boy friend. Her relations with her maternal and paternal figures will be distinguished in order to understand her lack of displacement. Her displacement will be studied under the

effect of motherlessness and the lack of a familial love. The subject of motherhood combines with Maya's search of her identity that she finally finds it in motherhood.

The chapter four focuses on the maternity in Angelou's *The Heart of a Woman*. The maternity of Maya and her relation with her son Guy will be the main points of argument. The mood of displacement shared by both Maya and Guy will be demonstrated in a psychological sense. In the second part of the chapter, the social affect of motherhood will be captured by defining the family relations and the institution of marriage. The roles of mothers and fathers in child development will be explored by role modeling. Moreover, the representation of Mother Africa figure as an alternative mother will be discussed by exploring the roots of Africans and Africa as a "womb" where they emerge from.

In "Singing the Black Mother", Mary Jane Lupton suggests, "The perfectly formed thought at the end of *The Heart of a Woman* is Angelou's realization of a new "myself", of a woman no longer primarily defined as granddaughter or daughter or mother—a woman free to choose herself" (1990: 17). In the end of both autobiographies Angelou holds up a mirror that reveals her own perceptions of self. She finds out her personality, her mind, and her relation with others by perceiving her own self and discovering the depths of her personality regardless of her role of mother. She redefines the motherhood by her realization of her "new" self "which is free to choose".

In sum, throughout this study I will demonstrate how Maya Angelou uses her autobiographies to create the relationship between writing an autobiography and giving birth to a child. By concentrating on autobiography and motherhood, I want to show black women's autobiographical writings' contribution to the struggle of racial and gender equalities. Autobiography helps her to express her political and personal vision by achieving a self-fulfillment. She is totally interested in not only hers but also in the other's life. By the help of autobiography, Angelou gives lectures and warns black women about possible future problems. She wants them to take lessons from her own personal life so she can be sometimes didactic. I try to understand the

connection between autobiography and life in Maya's writing and tries to find out how Maya Angelou captures it in her text as if drawing a colorful picture on a canvas. Ultimately, my study aims to illustrate how the motherhood as a resistance is critical to understand how African American women reflect the positions of black women in literature and society.

I. AN OVERVIEW: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

William L. Howarth defines “autobiography” as a “self-portrait” in *New Literary History* and adds,

An autobiography is equally a work of art and life, for no one writes such a book until he has lived out the requisite years. During his life he remains uncertain of cause of effect, rarely sensing the full shape or continuity of experiences. But in writing his story he artfully defines, restricts or shapes that life in a self-portrait -one for different from his original model, resembling life but actually composed and framed as an artful invention (1974: 34- 35).

Howarth states that the autobiography is a genre between life and art. According to Howarth, autobiography contains three elements; “character, technique and theme”. The character performs as “ a double persona”, telling the story as a narrator, enacting it as a protagonist. Howarth suggests that the character and the narrator share the same name but they do not live in the same time and space. He thinks the narrator knows more than the protagonist. The second element is technique which embraces the devices- “style, imagery, structure”. The final element of autobiography is “theme”. An autobiography has a thematic effect to illustrate the personal thought and the historical reviews of the writer. Howarth suggests that these three elements complete the autobiography. Marc Eli Blanchard defines autobiography as “Autobiography is the domain of the intransitive. The autobiographer seeks to capture something other than a mere chronological sequence” (104). In his “The Critique of Autobiography”, he observes that,

The autobiographer incapable of coinciding with the subject in the past can only articulate a vision which allows him to see himself in the past as in a painting. Without the power to alter the past he is restricted to seeing himself qua subject and deriving his feelings not from the performance of the act but from the representation of that performance (Blanchard, 1982: 106).

Karl J. Weintraub notes down “The usage of the term autobiography itself is suggestive, although this mode of historical explanation is always defective in the sense that such older terms as “hypomnemata”, “commentarii”, “vita”, “confessions” or “memoirs” may well have covered the functions subsequently encapsulated in a

newly fashionable term” (1975: 821). Weintraub makes a division between history and autobiography, diary and autobiography as:

History and autobiography derive their value from rendering significant portions of the past as interpreted past; for both the incoherent relia of life have been sorted out and those sellected have been assigned their fitting place in a fuller pattern of meaning. The diary, the letter, the chronicle, the anal have their value because they are but “momentary interpretations of life”; they’re aids for bringing the past into the present, when taken under a retrospective view, while history and autobiography subsume the past in the stance of the present (1975:827).

According to Weintraub, autobiography collaborates life with art since it interprets the past by giving a reasonable meaning in it. Although the diary and other “momentary” representations of the life connects the past with present, autobiography reveals the position of past in the present. Karl Weintraub has observed that autobiography enables the writer to ask two questions: who am I and what am I.

As the autobiography as a genre appeared toward the end of eighteenth-century, it became very common in America. The life narratives of the landmarks of self exploration, confession and self-discovery can be listed as St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, Cellini’s *Life*, Rousseau’s *Confessions*, Fox’s *Journal*, Franklin’s *Autobiography*, Goethe’s *Truth and Poetry*, Mill’s *Autobiography*, Cardinal Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, and Thoreau’s *Walden*. Louis’s Kaplan’s *A Bibliography of American Autobiography*, Richard Lilliard’s *American Life in Autobiography* are the important examples of some works in autobiographical form of American Literature. James Craig Holte suggests that autobiography might be the major theme in American literature and the writers wrote it for various reasons. According to Holte, some wrote it for economical reason to earn money, some wrote for the sake of religion, some wrote to record the historical events. He thinks that autobiography lead the American to create a self definiton and self representation. “Autobiography provides a structure and coherence; it creates plot and casualty out of what might first appear to be random events, and, perhaps equally important in a

country where individuality is professed to be the height of virtue, autobiography makes the individual the source of authority” (Holte, 1982: 30). However, he suggests that the diaries, descriptions, letters from the colonies to Europe can be the first personal narratives from America so the first autobiographical writings can be found in the spiritual narratives of Puritans and Pilgrims. John Winthrop’s *The Christian Experience* written in 1636- 1637 can be the earliest work of this narrative tradition. Jonathan Edwards’s *Personal Narrative* also another important work in the development of autobiographical tradition in America. Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* is another pivotal work in this tradition which emphasizes the worldly success and gives lessons to rise from poverty to wealth.

An autobiographical novel is a novel based on the life of the author. In autobiographies while author narrates his/her own life story, he/she also points out the events and historical realities. However, there can be some untruthful information in his/her narrative since he/she writes the way he/she wants. He/She can change the realities and can exaggerate his/her successes. James Olney in his *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* suggests that there is not a limited or designed form of an autobiography since there are no boundaries or limits to it as a genre. He adds “This is one of the paradoxes of the subject: everyone knows what autobiography is, but no two observers, no matter how assured they may be, are in agreement” (Olney, 1980: 3).

Linda Anderson in her work named *Autobiography* affirms “What the author of an autobiography does is to endow his inscriptions within the text with all the attributes of a face in order to mask or conceal his own fictionalization of displacement by writing”(2000: 13). Sidoni Smith in her *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* explains the formation of autobiography as “While the Enlightenment or liberal-humanist notion of selfhood understood the “I” as the universal, transcendent marker of “man”, radical challenges to the notion of a unified selfhood in the early decades of twentieth century eroded certainty in both a coherent “self” and “the truth” of self-narrating” (2001:123).

When the authors produce autobiographies is explained by James Craig Holte in his essay “The Representative Voice: Autobiography and the Ethnic Experience”, explains the exact time of producing autobiographies as;

Historians of autobiography have found times of crisis and change especially fruitful for the production of autobiographies. In a stable social structure an individual has access to a position within an established social structure and a definition of self based on that position. In an aristocratic structure, for example who one is often more important than what one has, and in a small communal society one can define one’s self by kinship relations. It is not all surprising that the kind of formal self-examination which often produces autobiographies occurs in times of personal and social turmoil and confusion. The writing of an autobiography often functions as a method of establishing personal order within social class (1982, 29).

According to James Craig Holte, people write autobiographies in various forms of communal structures but the main aim of writing the autobiography is “establishing personal order within social class”. The autobiography is mostly written in times of “personal and social disorders”.

1.1 THEORISING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

As a critical theory, autobiography paired theories such as structuralism since it divide the fact and fiction. Written language is a system of signs and signifiers, and always, by its form, exists in the absence of the thing to which it refers. And yet in the asserted relation between signifiers and signifieds, it holds out the promise of referentiality. It implies that it might paint an accurate and transparent picture of that to which it refers. A text that calls itself autobiographical, in turn, suggests that it might present a "true" representation of the author's life. And yet language--also by its very structure--also always contains the possibility of lying. Because it exists in the absence of its referent--or, in the case of autobiographical writing, exists in the absence of its referent and emerges from the experience of its author, if ever, any way to conclusively determine language's accurate fit to its referent.

Autobiography has thus been caught in the tension between language's referential promise and of the compromises that language and readers. This creates a tension: negotiating among the contradictions. Autobiography travels between truth and accuracy, memory and history, objective and subjective truth, and so on. Autobiography requires readers--consciously or not--constantly to engage in these mediations in their practices of reading. The readers must decide whether what they are reading refers to what had once existed in the world, in the life and/or the mind of the author; whether it is an entirely self-contained textual universe; or whether it exists between the two. Thus, although the name of the author influences the practice of all kinds of reading, in autobiography, the figure of the author, as a ghostly presence animating and providing the life for the text, has pressured reading practices in sometimes difficult and troubling ways. The figure of the author is the rotate around which questions of autobiography's relation to or difference from fiction finally turn.

The field of autobiography studies in the United States emerged in literature departments in the 1970s largely as a response to such literary schools of thought as New Criticism and Deconstruction, which believed the notion of authorial intention as a primary factor in the interpretation of a text's meaning as Roland Barthes did in 1968, "The Death of the Author." Thus, since its establishment as a formalized field of study, autobiography studies has been preoccupied with whether an autobiographical text can communicate to its readers the reality of its author's experiences. Theorists such as Paul de Man has held that it is impossible for language ever to represent reality "accurately," even asserting that autobiography is theoretically impossible. Another important figure of autobiography theorists is James Olney who believes that the truth of the individuals can be known through autobiographies and "truth" is not the same as the "fact". For Olney, "Autobiographical writing is the creation of the individual's own subjectivity" (1980:8).

Olney's *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, is generally considered an important text of autobiography studies in the United States. It was edited in 1980's and the collection of essays includes varied positions on

autobiography. Olney clearly understands autobiography to be the text of a "unique psychic configuration" who writes or recalls a life "that is this life and no other." (1980:7).

Furthermore, Olney believes that for students of literature, autobiography serve as a reflection of consciousness and function as an articulation of the importance of the self. According to Olney, autobiographical criticism can exist only as long as the subject beyond the text exists. Olney finds the production of autobiography as a machine to make the self alive. The fascination, and the mysterious of the self is discovered and covered by the help of autobiography so the autobiography makes concrete that which can not be sensed by physically.

Paul DeMan, in his pivotal essay "Autobiography as De-Facement," critiques such claims. He rejects the attempts to link autobiography to an external referent altogether, and suggests that it is possible that "the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life. [D]oes the referent determine the figure, or is it the other way round: is the illusion of reference not a correlation of the structure of the figure, that is to say no longer clearly and simply a referent at all but something more akin to a fiction which then, however, in its own turn, acquires a degree of referential productivity?" (1979: 9).

DeMan here complicates the order of referent and figure, suggesting that one can not make a final determination regarding this chicken-and-egg relation; it is undecidable. The name on the title page is not a guarantee of the author as an extratextual self but simply the pivot around which this whirling of indecision, this tourniquet, turns, cutting one off from any contract of certainty. He goes on to assert that "The interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge--it does not--but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is, the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions." (DeMan, 1979: 10) For DeMan, autobiography is the necessarily failed attempt to find or locate the self and, in turn, the referent of language.

Although DeMan does raise the question of the investment placed in autobiography to produce a face, figure, and voice for both the author and the reader, what he is most interested in is its failure. Thus, DeMan is often read as being thoroughly dismissive of this investment and skeptical--if not disdainful--of the pleasures that Olney and many other readers find in autobiography.

Paul DeMan in his "Autobiography as Defacement" gives some general information about autobiography. DeMan suggests that

We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?" (1979: 920).

In *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography*, Paul J. Eakin figures out the criticism of autobiography and finds out that the nature of autobiography is paradoxical since it combines the imagination of fiction and the limitation of "artistic freedom". Eakin contends in his essay "Criticism of autobiography compounds the pre-occupation with identity that is endemic to the writing of lives, for it, too, necessarily involves a response to the reigning general model".(1992: 33). He adds "Autobiography as a genre works against itself, constantly sliding toward the death of the ready-made"(1992: 33). Moreover, Eakin finds the pure chronology of autobiography as inevitable but he thinks that the chronology is one of the most successful structures of autobiography since it helps to build the meaning and life. (1992: 193).

Another critic of autobiographical theory, Kenneth Surin also illustrates the race and autobiography politics in some selected works of African American writers such as W.E.Dubois and Angela Davis. In *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics: Racialization in Twentieth-Century America*, Kenneth Surin questions whether autobiography is "referential" or "nonrepresentational". The primary aim of

Kenneth's work is to show the blackness created by the autobiographical works of African Americans (Mostern, 1999).

Percival M. Symonds in his "The Autobiography and Life History" tries to distinguish the autobiography and life history. He believes that little research was done in the field of self-analysis. He finds out that life history is a research technique rather than the autobiography and he believes that the life history is more freely and "less controlled" than case history. "The life history enables a subject interview, indicates casual sequence in mental life and development" (Symonds, 1939: 207). One distinction he emphasizes is that life history does not maintain status but autobiography maintain as it is written as a record of feelings and thoughts.

1.1.1 THE AIMS OF BLACK WRITING TRADITION

Black American Literature is the literature emerged in United States that takes its origins from the slave narratives. Enslaved blacks brought with them oral tradition that reflected African culture and languages. They transmitted their traditions, customs by oral communication. The oral tradition contains the fear, the anxiety and the pain of slaves. In *African American Experience: An Historiographical and Bibliographical Guide*, Arvarh E. Strickland writes "The earliest types of the African oral tradition were the work songs and field hollers, which blacks used to communicate to each other while working in the fields. There was also folktale, with stories expressing African American values, explaining the unexplainable, and identifying acceptable and unacceptable behaviour" (Strickland, 2000: 116).

After oral tradition, slave narrative became vital in early eighteenth century. Phillips Whitley and Olaudah Equiano created the first cornerstones of African American writing tradition that primarily focused on the issue of slavery. Olaudah Equiano's narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) stories the African freedom and slavery in America. Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) speculates the

racial and sexual oppression whereas Frederick Douglass' *An American Slave: Written by Himself* (1845) is an articulation of male narrative in black American writing tradition. Most of the slaves express themselves through writing since it is the best way to reveal the truths and the pains they live.

The most significant slave narrative sources was the nineteenth century slave narratives. Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave; Narrative of Solomon Nortup, A Citizen of NewYork, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841 and Rescued 1853 from a Cotton Plantation near the Red River in Louisiana* (1853) and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) are the most important slave narratives of nineteenth century. The slave narratives reveal the daily life of slaves in addition to their fears, ideas and hopes. By the help of slave narratives the reader could understand the history of the life of slaves. However many critics do not believe the slave narratives as the real sources of slave expressions since they believe that they can not be the representatives of all slaves. They think that the slave narratives were written by the talented ones.

In *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* Tess Couslett edits that "The aim was to expose the facts of slavery: first-person narration was chosen because it formed a personal testimony and introduced by white abolitionists, these narratives were importantly an account by black voices" (2000:175). Slave narratives aim at abolition. After abolition they continued to write in order to show the courage of slaves. Slave narrative shape the narrative of African American experience. In *his Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Antabellum Slave Narratives*, Francis Smith Foster states that

The earliest slave narratives very only slightly different from other personal narratives of their time. Like the others, they tell of geographical explorations, oceanic adventures, and encounters with Indians. They, too, place a great emphasis upon the religious implications of the narrator's experiences. Like other personal narratives, the slave narratives chronicle incidents in an individual's mind as well as into the structure and working of that individual's society (1994: 4).

Thus, the slave narratives show the master-slave relations, the brutality of slavery, forms of slave resistance, the slave nature and the cultural information about blacks. The slave narratives mostly indicate what it meant to be a property owned by a man. The slave narratives also show that a human being can be sold and bought under the name of slavery which is a system of brutality and inhumanity.

The slave narratives also lead the way of black autobiographies to remind them their past. The black autobiographical tradition and the slave narratives share similar themes such as the theme of “journey”. Dolly Aimee Mcpherson in her “Order Out of Chaos” notes that “The journey to distant goal, the return home and the quest which involves the voyage out, achievement, and return are typical patterns in Black autobiography” (1986:153). The journey becomes a symbol of an escape from the burdens that a black body provides. Therefore the blacks move throughout the century and they try to find a new life to have and a free way to survive. The blacks search for better opportunities in every city they move. Thus, “the journey” in black autobiographies starts from the way to “escape” in slave narratives. The tradition of journey and travel also can be observed in black women’s autobiography. In “Travel as Metaphor and Reality in Afro-American Women’s Autobiography, 1850- 1952 ” Mary G. Mason points out that most of black women’s autobiographies contain the journey and travel motifs. “The slave narrative also told about a real journey, an escape from South to the North. Both genres establish a radical and political tradition for Afro-American women’s autobiography. Travel or journey become synonymous with action and commitment to social change (Mason,1990: 339). Accordingly, the motifs of “the travel” or “journey” in black autobiography are rooted from the slave narratives depicting the “escape” so these motifs manage to build a sense of African identity.

The black autobiographies written in history, aimed at to be called as “human beings”. They write books and they believe that those works will raise them to a higher position. As Pierre A.Walker says in “Racial Protest, Identity, Words and Form in Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*”,

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 emphasized the fact that they themselves were humans who deserved to be treated as such. Since emancipation, African-American authors have used the same strategy to fight the belief in racial hierarchies that relegated them to second class citizen status. One way to do this was to produce “high art”, which was supposed to be one of the achievements of the highest orders of human civilisation (1995: 92).

Thus, the slaves in order to raise their status in a higher position and to be called as human beings, they create art. As the actual aim of the writing autobiography was political, the effect of this tradition can not be underestimated. The Blacks have been humiliated for years. The writings of Blacks have become an expression to utter their humiliation and to create their self-confidence. Black American Autobiography tries to reconstruct the sense of their race and redefine the meaning of being black. Moreover, the autobiographies of blacks serve as an articulation of their experiences and serve as self-revelations. While they give the information from subjective levels, they mirror some historical and social realities of their times.

However as the situation of blacks change during the years their concern in writing also changed. After the slavery era and the end of Civil War, African American writers mostly concentrate on the themes of racism and inequality. W.E Dubois (1868–1963) who is one of the founders of NAACP published his collection of *The Souls of Black Folk*. He focused on the racial inequalities and the segregation of blacks. Another prominent figure of African American Literature Booker T. Washington (1856- 1915) established the Tuskegee Institution in Alabama. Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery* (1901), and *The Future of the American Negro* are the published works which influenced millions of blacks.

Harlem Renaissance started in 1920 and continued till 1940. It was not only a celebration of black literature, it was a celebration of black music and performance.

During Harlem Renaissance period numerous black artists, musicians and jazz singers emerged. Langston Hughes with his collection of poems called *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), Zora Neale Hurston with her *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937), put their names in the era. In 1920's, the Harlem Renaissance period become a movement of "protest literature". Morris in his "A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement: Political and Intellectual Landmarks" defines Harlem Renaissance as "This movement produced what has come to be characterized as protest literature. It aimed at creating a "New Negro" who was proud of her Black heritage and prepared to fight for Black liberation (1999:520).

The African American Civil Rights Movement in 1955 till 1968 aimed at abolition of racial discrimination and provide suffrage for blacks. The civil right movement able to overthrow Jim Crow regime. Jim Crow era was a time of chaos that the oppression of blacks sustained although the slavery was abolished. Jim Crow states that the blacks were inferior. During this period Blacks were separated so they go to separate schools, separate toilets and they sit back at the back of the buses and trains. Thus, during 1950's the lynching was still very common since there were some anti-black organizations such as Ku Klux Klan.

The Blacks also started to loud their voice against inequalities. Between 1900 and 1906 Southern Blacks organized boycotts against Jim Crow. The Black women's organization were also established such as The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909- 1910. NAACP become one of the most important organization against Jim Crow. They fight against segregation in the first half of the twentieth century.

The historical events also affect the writing tradition of blacks. In 1940's non-violent action movement named March on Washington Movement, thousands of blacks walk to White House. In 1950's Brown vs. Board of Education case and the lynching of Emmet Till occurred. Brown vs. Board of Education provide blacks to have their education not to integrate the schools. The Lynching of a black man called Emmet Till for whistling a white woman placed in court and discussed. These

political activism lead to Civil Rights Movement. The United States and Soviet Union was in cold war to win and to become the superpower of the world. However, the America was in danger since the issue of racism was a threat for inner policy and serenity of the country. Morris summarizes the reasons of Civil Rights Movement as “In short, by the 1950’s the Northern Black vote, the politics of the Cold War, the rise of modern communication Technologies, and Black mass migration constituted favorable social conditions conducive to the rise of a massive Black movement” (1999: 523).

In 1955, Montgomery Bus Boycott and sit-in protests were common. During this time, Martin Luther King become the leader of blacks. The Birmingham Alabama confrontation in 1963 and the Selma, Alabama confrontation in 1965 lead to the Civil Rights Act. Thus, on June 2, 1964 President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Movement of 1964. Johnson signed the Voting Rights in 1965 so by these acts Jim Crow Era was closed.

Civil Rights act plays an important role in America and abroad. It proved that a mass is capable of a social change. The struggle of black Americans has given a lesson to the rest of the world. As well as they affected America, it had an impact beyond America. It introduced the world some black heroes such as Martin Luther King Jr. And Malcolm X. Civil Rights Movement developed a model of action for the global oppression that proved some dreams can also be real if the dreamer passionately desires.

James Baldwin and Richard Wright were the most important writers of civil rights era since they include psychological aspects and some personal stories in their books. James Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on to the Mountain* and Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) and *The Black Boy* (1945) were the most impressive works. Another novelist Ralph Allison wrote *The Invisible Man* in 1952 that became another successful novels of the period. The 1960’s was a time of social movements and a period of political consciousness. This also lead to publication of some black autobiographies such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), James Baldwin’s

Nobody Knows My Name (1961), Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965), Gordon Park's *A Choise of Weapons* (1966) and James Meredith's *Three Years in Mississippi* (1966). They were are the basic examples of autobiographies in 1960's to create a black consciousness and interest in black autobiography.

The Black Art Movement (1970) influenced by Black movement and the Civil Rights Movement also helped to define the African American Writing as a genre. Beginning with her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Toni Morrison won Pulitzer Prize with *Beloved* (1987), and won Nobel Prize with *Song of Solomon*. Thus, she became the first African American women to win the Nobel Prize. Another succesful black women Alice Walker wrote *The Color Purple* in 1970. Both of the writers dealt with the oppression and the sexual abusion of black women.

As listed above, the black writing traditon changed its shape according to the conditions of the period. Although black writers express themselves in fiction, poetry and other literary works, autobiography has played a pivotal role in their creating art. Autobiography provides them to create a new world devoid of white oppression and white domination. Besides being as an instruement of therapy, autobiography also becomes an instrument of protest. Black writer uses autobiography as a form of protest against white power. Shirley H. Hardin explains this black habit of writing autobiography as below,

Because blacks have been misrepresented and, in many cases, dismissed as unitelligent, nonhuman entities, the need to create an acceptable identity or to resolve an identity crisis becomes imperative. The writer tries to understand his past so that he can bring some meaning to the present. Consequently, he is confronted with the age-old question "Who am I?". At the same time the writer has to face a unique fact of his dual existence- he is black man and an American. To which does he owe allegiance? Are the two conditions reconcilable? (1988: 32- 33).

According to Shirley H. Hardin, black writers try to answer the question "Who am I?" in their work of art. They desire to get rid of the image given by the others and try to create a self-confident identity while rewriting his past. The black

man has a dual of identity both as an African and American which collides each other. Hardin also suggests that the autobiography is “a therapeutic instrument”, since “they express their true feelings and experiences for primarily black audiences without having them distorted by whites” (1988:31). The black writer finds herself/himself in a therapy to cure her/his pains because of the racism.

In “Introductory Remarks about Black Literary Tradition in the United States of America”, Darwin Turner confirms that these black American writers have a purpose “to entertain, to create art, or to earn money” but most of them use it for “educational purpose”. Desiring to be part of the American Dream and believing that educated Blacks must prepare the way for their fellow Blacks, one group has sought to educate white America to understand the condition and psychology of Black Americans (Turner, 1978: 144).

According to Turner second aim of black literature is to share the similar themes of “liberation, alienation, reaction against oppression, satiric portrayals of foolish Blacks, and pride in Black people” and the theme of “Black is beautiful”. Thirdly, to provacate the blacks to be proud of themselfe is another important point in autobiographies. Finally she believes that the black autobiographies has a “distintive archetypal image of grandmother”. This image is also created in order to have an idealization of black motherhood in the works of black writers. Therefore according to Turner these four aims are shared by black autobiographies. Moreover, In *The Curriculum as Social Psychoanalysis: The Significance of Place* Joe L. Kincheloe and William F. Pinar edit about black literature, “More broadly, such literature and writing can function to lay bare suppression or closure; as such, they serve as means to explain, illustrate, and underline abstract concepts that illuminate wider social, cultural and historical dynamics” (1991: 80).

1.1.2. BLACK WOMEN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Black Women Autobiography is a sub-genre written by black women in order to free herself from the stereotypical, humiliating and false images that are given by the white power. The description of black women were prejudiced so the women started to write autobiography to change this image and to create a self-determined identity.

In her *Decolonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Woman Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith says “Nineteenth-century African American women’s autobiography can teach their readers much about the effects of intellectual colonization on oppressed people in the United States and about the role of autobiography in the efforts of oppressed people to decolonize their thinking and writing (1992: 225). Smith adds “In no tradition of nineteenth-century African-American autobiography was there a more as a standard by which to judge individuals or institutions than in the first-person narratives of black women” (1992: 225).

The significant black women autobiographies can be declared as Harriot Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince, Written by Herself* (1850), and Elizabeth Keckley’s *Behind the Scenes: or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* (1902). Zora Neale Hurston’s *Dust Tracks on a Road* in 1942 and Era Bell Thompson’s *American Daughter* in 1946 were the pivotal works of black women autobiography. Daisy Bates’s *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* and Septima Clark’s *Echo in My Soul*, Martha Moore’s *Unmasked: The Story of My Life on Both Sides of the Color Barrier*, Lena Rithland’s *The Trouble with Being Mama* and Ann Moody’s *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1968) were the important black women autobiographies of 1960’s.

In *Gender and Genre: Black Women’s Autobiography and the Ideology of Literacy* by Katherine Clay Bassard, “It was much easier for a male slave narrator

like Frederick Douglass to “cash in” on the investment of literacy than it was for Harriet Jacobs or Harriet E. Wilson, both of whom were circumscribed in the culture on the basis of both race and gender” (119). Therefore the oppression on gender was also dominant among slaves that makes a women slave’s autobiography more difficult than the male slave writing. Thus, in order to define the Black Women Autobiography, it should be differed the autobiographies of black women and black men. In *Feminism in the Academy*, Nelly Mckay states that

The identity construction of black women in autobiography thus comes out of a seperate tradition from black men’s. For twentieth century black women identity is grounded in models of nineteenth-century black women who passed on to their experiences: black womanhood was not static or a single ideal. The selves in the stories of the early foremothers reveal black female identity as a process of ongoing reinvention of self under the pressures of race, class and gender oppressions (1995: 79).

Being different from black female autobiographies, black male autobiography mostly concentrates on pressures of black male in white dominated society by referring to race and class. However Black women’s autobiography suffers from “a tripple oppression” of race, class and gender. In *Feminist Theory*, Bell Hooks in her article called “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory” says,

As a group, black women are in an unusual position in this society, for not only are we collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but our overall social status is lower than that of any other group. Occupying such a positon, we bear the brunt of sexist, racist and classist oppression. At the same time we’re the group that has not been socialized to assume the role of exploiter/oppressor in that we are allowed no institutionalized “other” that we can exploit or oppress. (Children do not represent an institutionalized other even though they may be oppressed by parents). White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people (2005: 67).

Hooks thinks that being a black woman is the worst of all oppressed ones. Since black women experience tripple oppression, black women write their stories referring to oppression by whites, and men. Therefore, black women autobiographies

express this triple oppression. Richard T. Schaefer in his *Racial and Ethnic Groups* also shares the same thoughts of Bell Hooks by declaring “triple jeopardy” on black women,

We have seen the historical oppression of women that limits them by tradition and law to specific roles. Many women experience differential treatment not only because of their gender but also because of race and ethnicity. These citizens face a double jeopardy: that of subordinate status twice defined. A disproportionate share of this law-status group also is poor, so the double jeopardy becomes a triple jeopardy. The litany of social ills continues for many as we add old age, ill health, disabilities, and the like (2004: 418).

Richard T. Schaefer believes that women suffer from oppression because of their gender. However he points out that the black woman face double oppression since they are blacks and women. But worst of all the poor black woman suffers from “a triple jeopardy” that results from her race, gender and class. Maya Angelou in her *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* also defines the black women reality as “The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power” (1971:272). Black women write autobiographies in order to express their inner thoughts of the harsh conditions they live. Black women were also thought to be stereotypical and they were described as false and negative images. In *Black Women Writing Autobiography*, Meta Y. Harris suggests that,

It has become necessary, for many reasons, for Black women to dispose of these exaggerated, negative, and false images of themselves and to create their own self-images. One major reason is that the previous sources of these images were unreliable and based their constructions and stereotypical, prejudiced, and distorted representations and ideologies. This is particularly troublesome because, generally, society in America bases its interactions with, and opinions of Black women and men on those false stereotypical images. The need to challenge and reinvent the images of Black people and other people of color, and particularly women of color, has lead to the establishment of autobiography as an important primary way of creating new images and encountering old images in multicultural classrooms. The redefinition of the self through the

writing of the autobiography places power into the hands of the writer to define who she is and to share her self-identity with the readers. This is the initiation of the changing of the global societal views of Black women (2005: 38).

In her dissertation Shirley H. Hardin distinguishes male and female autobiographies. She points out that male autobiography rarely touches domestic relations whereas female autobiography concentrates on their personal lives, domestic relations and family problems. Moreover, Shirley H. Hardin stresses that the form of the autobiographies also change depending on the gender. According to Shirley Hardin, autobiographies written by men are chronological and linear whereas female autobiographies are “orderliness” and not chronological. Hardin says,

Contrarily, autobiographies written by women in most cases, are almost always devoid of the usual sense or convention of harmony and orderliness. Their narratives are not chronological and progressive, but disorderly, fragmented, or organized into self-sustained units rather than connected chapters involving linearity. Autobiographies written by women are often interrupted by long apostrophies, meditations, quotes, anecdotes (1998: 23).

Black women focuses on their autobiographical writing more personal since they deal with family problems, personal issues and relationships. Meta Y.Harris including her own autobiographies notes down, “Many black women including myself, give more details of surroundings when describing events than they give of self-descriptions”(2005: 42). She points out that the physical descriptions of weight, height are not used in black women autobiographies.

Thus, the black women autobiographies show how they perceive themselves. The need to define themselves is caused from their humiliated self. They write autobiographies as much for correcting their past and to create a self-identity. The autobiographical writing permits the black writer to think about her life and develop a new identity without prejudices. Her personal feelings, her social environment and her literal ability affect the black autobiographical quality. The other significant effects on black women autobiographies are social movements and civil right movements. In *The Influence of Social Movements on Articulations of Race and*

Gender in Black Women's Autobiographies, Paula Steward Brush articulates that “civil rights movement and women’s movements influence the articulations of race and gender” and she illustrates that the black women autobiographies are also affected by these social movements:

One of the most profound ways the available discourse influenced them was in their development of a collective identity. In terms of race inequality, the autobiographers experienced a shift in consciousness: from understanding their experiences as their personal troubles to understanding them as social issues. They developed race consciousness. Moreover, they were fully aware that their understanding of their world shifted as they confronted the discourse of orators and writers of the civil rights movement (1999: 14).

Black female autobiography as mentioned above allow black women to express their feelings and their experiences in both a white dominated society and male dominated society. Black women utilizes their experiences and stories through autobiographies. These black women autobiographies share some topics. They show the importance of education as a sign of personal growth. The work ethic is another common theme of black women writers. Another common theme the religion and the concept of God ” in black women autobiographies. “Personal flight” is also another common topic in these works that the autobiography serve an opportunity to analyse the self.

1.2 MAYA ANGELOU: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

Maya Angelou was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1928. Her mother Vivian Baxter was a performer in a night club and her father Bailey Johnson was a porter in a hotel. She grew up in Stamps, Arkansas with her brother Bailey in the house of her paternal mother after her parents divorced in 1930's. Her grandmother run a store, and Maya attended school in Arkansas. Angelou was graduated from Lafayette County Training School in 1940 and was sent to the San Francisco Bay Area. She went to George Washington High School and she also took the evening classes at the California Labor School. She lived a rural life in Stamps whereas she found out urban life in St. Louis when she moved to her maternal family's house.

When we look to her professional career, we saw that she had worked in different fields. Maya Angelou worked as a waitress, a cook, a prostitute and furthermore she became the first woman as a streetcar conductor. She participated in “Porgy and Bess” in 1955 and she acted in “Blacks” in 1960. She became the northern coordinator of SCLC organization which was led by Martin Luther King, Jr. She married a Southern Freedom fighter and decided to move to Africa and she went to Ghana. While she was in Africa, she worked in Arab Observer as an editor, and she became assistant administrator of University of Ghana School of Music and Drama. She also became a writer of Times in Ghana. She participated in *Mother Courage* at the University of Ghana in 1964 and she appeared in Broadway in *Look Away* in 1973. She wrote and directed her play called “*And Still I Rise*” in 1976. She had a role in Alex Haley’s *Roots* on TV adaptation and she got an Emmy Award nomination for best supporting artist in 1977. Now, she is the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

After giving a brief information about Angelou’s life, I will mostly focus on her works and her literary career. Maya Angelou is one of the most important Black American writers with her serial autobiographies. Her autobiographies capture the joy, the pain, the love, the hatred, the life and the death. The themes of Maya Angelou can be specified as the search of identity, the influence of education on personal growth, the impact of religion and the struggle of black women.

The first book of her serial autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), has become the best known novel. Her first autobiography depicts Angelou’s early years in Stamps and gives a portrayal of Black life in segregated South. This autobiography captures her childhood memories and her familial relationships.

Angelou’s next autobiography *Gather Together in My Name*, tells the story of a young mother Maya Angelou with her newly born son Guy after leaving her mother’s house. Maya Angelou gets various jobs in order to survive in the harsh atmosphere of urban life. Maya both as a mother and a prostitute can not cope with

the difficulties of the city life. Her brother Bailey comes to rescue her and the book ends with gaining her innocence back.

Singing and Swinging and Getting Merry Like Christmas, her third autobiography also portrays her transition from childhood to adulthood. Angelou falls in love with a Greek man called Tosh and they get married. But they break up because of Maya's secret religious services. Her artistic quality and her creativity starts to be realized so she takes a role in "Porgy and Bess" which becomes a turning point in her life. She attends the tour so she ignores her child. However at the end she accepts her own guilt and promises not to leave her child again.

In her next autobiography *The Heart of a Woman* also covers her life in 1950's and early 1960's that was an era of racial hostility and black liberation. In this autobiography she becomes the northern coordinator of Martin Luther King's NAACP and supported the endowment of Southern Christian Leadership Conference. *The Heart of a Woman* explores Maya's personality both as a social activist and a mother under racism. Moreover, Maya's marriage with Vusumzi Make and her relationship with her son Guy is depicted in *The Heart of a Woman*.

In her fifth book, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* she searches for her roots in Africa and tries to make a connection between America and Africa. In addition to her autobiographies Angelou also has published three poetry, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Die* (1971), *Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well* (1975), *And Still I Rise* (1980). In her poetry, Maya Angelou mostly concentrates on the oppressions of African-Americans. She reflects the love and her search of physical and emotional satisfaction. In her autobiographies her poetic power is also felt.

The famous speech of Maya Angelou "The Pulse of Morning" was powerful in using the excellent use of words. Angelou gave this speech at the Inauguration of President Clinton in January 1993 so she became the second poet to read at a presidential inauguration. This poem aimed at the importance of human peace and

living together and to create a future. The peace and hope becomes the most important concepts of the poem.

In 1960's when Maya Angelou and Robert Loomis met, he offered her to write an autobiography but she rejected his offer. When Loomis said that "autobiography as literature is the most difficult thing anyone can do" (Tate, 152). Angelou started to write *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in 1969. Maya Angelou in her autobiographies analyzes to be both black and female in a white dominated society. While she looks back to her inner self, she also points out the historical changes of her time. When she explores her life, she also explores the events, the people and the life surrounds her. She portrays Stamps, Arkansas in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* as a child, whereas she portrays Africa and New York in *The Heart of a Woman* as an adult. In her previous autobiography she is surrounded with a female bond; her grandmother, her mother, her maternal grandmother, her boss Mrs. Cullinan, her friend Mrs. Flowers, but in *The Heart of a Woman* even her mother is still in her life, she is mostly in a male-dominated atmosphere; her son Guy, her boy friend Thomas, her husband Vus, and her co-worker David. Maya Angelou writes her autobiography with a female perspective since her life story portrays her as a daughter, as a mother and as a wife. While reading her autobiographies, we never forget that we are reading a piece of a "woman's life". Maya Angelou shows the difficulties experienced by a little girl in a male-dominated society while she describes her rape, and she shows the difficulty of being a "woman" in a male-dominated business world and also in domestic world of family both as "a mother" and "a wife".

"Maya Angelou's autobiography (1970) has testimonial elements" (Carey-Webb, 45). Carey-Webb defines testimonials as "Testimonials are sort of Third World "autobiography" that brings to the center the experience of the unlettered, marginalized, and oppressed" (1991: 44). Maya Angelou as a black women writes about the oppressed but while she is narrating the life of oppressed, she never loses. However she reborns and fights against the oppressions and limitations. Her autobiographies express the power in the oppressed.

In Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Sidonie Smith says, “ While a life narrative can be, and often is, written over a long span of time, as is the case with the multiple narratives of Edward Gibbon and Maya Angelou, it must be written during the writer’s life span- or be published posthumously “ as is ” (Smith, 2001:6). So Maya Angelou’s autobiographies contain a long span of time since she writes them as series.

Maya Angelou’s autobiographies contain her personal thoughts of life and she shares her personal life in a connected atmosphere. She shows herself as a representative of her race, as a black American woman. Maya Angelou’s narratives mostly indicate “Black” experiences as Dolly Aimee Mcphreson notes down,

Angelou’s emphasis on Black social conditions, Black struggle, Black aspirations and Black strength makes her autobiography one of the most widely read narratives about the Black experience. Even though Angelou develops several prevailing themes in Black autobiographical writing (i.e, moving out and coming back, Black heritage as a source of regenerative strength, the role of elders in the Black community as mentors), the serial autobiography also contains other generally acknowledged universal themes (1986:165).

In The African –American Century How Black Americans Have Shaped Our Country, Henry Louis Gates and Cornell West edits “ Indeed, whether one considers Angelou’s works as autobiography or autobiographical fiction, it is tempting to read them as her act of self-fashioning. But for Angelou, writing autobiography is also something of a collective action” (2000: 276). Angelou’s self-narratives can be called as collective works which enable her to define her whole life story. Her ability on creating the autobiographical fashion lead her formation of an “autobiographical fiction”. She sometimes uses stories and fictional techniques such as the folktale of Brer Rabbit, the history of Harriet Tumban and Soujuner Truth in *The Heart of a Woman*.

Moreover, Angelou’s autobiographies build a sense of “escape”. In “Role Playing as Art”, Myra Mc. Murry notes,

The evidence of Angelou's creative accomplishments would indicate that she did escape; but a closer look reveals the human and artistic complexity of her awareness. For the first volume of her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, is not an exorcism of or escape from the past, but a transmutation of that past (1976:2).

She admits that Angelou's narratives are seen to "escape" from the past but in deed they change the past. Angelou rewrites her own story by transmuting past as a representative of her race.

According to Ramita Choudhury, "the voice" is one of the most striking part of Maya Angelou's autobiography. She writes in "Rewritten Afro-American Autobiography",

Each of Angelou's has required more than one voice to convey her situation adequately. And not all of these voices belong to her. While speaking in different voices herself, Angelou also allows the other characters in her autobiographies to speak in their individual voices. As a result, the focus of narration shifts from the subjective presence of the autobiographer to the objective conditions of her consciousness. In this respect, *The Heart* is somewhat different from the other narratives because here the autobiography's voice emerges strongest. Where the peripheral concern is still strong, Angelou seems to have come to terms more fully and securely with her self and seems more interested in giving expression to it through a voice she can call her own (1991: 67).

In Maya Angelou's autobiography, three voices appear: the voice of a daughter, the voice of a mother and the voice of a political and social activist. The reader should also focus on who is telling the story. There are two voices in the novel, one is Maya as a person, as Maya Angelou and the other is the social self of Maya as a black women. As Maya uses three voices, she also transfers from narrator, author and reader. In *Feminist Alternatives* Nancy Walker says that women's identity is not "fixed" and it is "fluid" because of manipulation of identifications between narrator, author and reader and distinctions between fiction and autobiography. She gives Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* as an example of "fluid" writing (1983: 77). According to Walker, the manipulation of narrator, author and reader is one of the most important characteristic of Maya Angelou's writing.

On the other hand, from Valeria Baisnee's point of view, Maya Angelou's narrative is divided into three; "the personal mode", "the political mode" and "the poetic mode". These three modes make all her literal quality. In her "Gendered Resistance" Valeria Baisnee notes,

As an autobiography, *Caged Bird* simultaneously develops three different modes of discourse, situated at three different levels of the narrative. The personal mode tells the story of an individual, Marguerita Johnson (Maya), growing up in Arkansas among her extended family. This mood develops at the level of events. The political mode transforms the heroine into a model of Black southern girlhood, whose development is affected by race and gender. It appears in the conditions of enunciation, especially in relations between narrator and protagonist, and narrator and reader. The poetic mode transmutes the childhood world into a vast cultural interplay. It is situated at the level of imagery and intertextuality. These three modes of discourse do not appear separately in *Caged Bird*. Rather, they interact with each other in the narrative structure, the voices and the imagery. Together they define Angelou's rhetoric as a gesture of defiance to white society and as a valorisation of Black experience and Black writing (1994: 62- 63).

In "Order out of Chaos" "The narrative voice at work in *Caged Bird*, is that of the older autobiographer who is not only aware of the journey but also enlarged by it, an achievement that is emphasized by the affirming nature of the work. In *Caged Bird*, Maya Angelou undergoes the archetypal American journey of initiation and discovery" (Lupton, 1990: 82). Furthermore, Mary Jane Lupton in her "Singing the Black Mother" adds,

What distinguishes, then Angelou's autobiographical method from more conventional autobiographical forms is her very denial of closure. The reader of autobiography expects a beginning, a middle and an end- as occurs in *Caged Bird*. She or he also expects a central experience, as we indeed are given in the extraordinary rape sequence of *Caged Bird*. But Angelou, by continuing her narrative, denies form and its history, creating from each ending a new beginning, relocating the center to some luminous place in a volume yet to be. Stretching the autobiographical canvas, she moves forward: from being a child; to being a mother; to leaving the child; to having the child, in the fifth volume, achieve his independence (1990: 130).

Mary Jane Lupton in her same work finds out that four narratives is used by Maya to contact “mother and child- with herself and her son Guy; with herself and her own mother Vivian Baxter; with herself and her paternal grandmother; and finally, with the child- mother in herself” (1990: 259).

Another distinctive characteristic of Maya Angelou’s writing is her use of setting. Mcpherson points out that the setting plays an important role in Angelou’s narrative. In her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the most dominant setting is Stamps, Arkansas. Stamps is the place where her grandmother lives. Dolly M. Mcpherson points out the significance of setting as,

Because Angelou’s writing is itself as vibrant as a celebration, she is able to involve readers totally in the episodes and experiences of her life, captivating them, drawing them into each setting, and introducing them to the characters who people her life as if they were meeting them personally. This is due largely to Angelou’s ability to blend setting with action and character. Because characters are placed firmly within a context rather than isolated from society, Angelou uses setting as a major indicator of character. Her graphic descriptions of the spatial environments permeates her prose, not as fillers but as substantive to the theme. Often the setting is so vivid and powerful that it assumes an important role in the narrative (1986: 163).

Maya’s change of her geographical location also leads her to assume her theme. Maya steps into a new life when she comes to St. Louis. St. Louis becomes a place where her family live, her grandmother, her uncle and her brother. Although she has a family, she never feels herself at home. After living in St. Louis with their grandmother Momma, Maya and Bailey were taken to California by their father. California even though it was full of opportunity for these children, it becomes a place of despair. When Maya stayed in her mother’s house, she was raped by her mother’s boy friend. Maya and Bailey sent back to Stamps after her rape. Stamps becomes a place where she gains her power and her confidence back. She tries to rebuild her identity in Stamps. However, they encounter another problem lynching. In order to shelter her grandchildren from racist attitudes Momma sends her grandchildren to California. She also goes to San Francisco and sees its cultural mix where she for the first time feels at home. San Francisco becomes a palce of freedom

and self-esteem. Thus, her mobility results from her attempt to survive in a prejudiced and white dominated society. The change of their location sustains till the end of the autobiography in order to keep themselves into peace. The variety of settings emphasizes Maya's ability to adapt every city she goes, from rural South to California.

She uses simile in her writing that makes her writing more artful and understandable. For instance, while she is writing about the World War II, she says, "Then the city acted in wartime like an intelligent woman under siege. She gave what she couldn't with safety withhold, and secured those things which lay in her reach. The city become for me the ideal of what I wanted to be a grown up. Friendly but never gushing, cool but not frigid or distant, distinguished without the awful stiffness" (211). Maya Angelou's words speak, the words are alive so this helps her to be understood easily.

Maya Angelou also uses some oral traditions, African slave songs, sermons and the ghost story in her autobiographies in order to awaken the African soul in her autobiographies. "In Tradition within a Tradition" Joanne M. Braxton notes down,

The text shows the influence of myriad folk forms including the sermon, the ghost story, the preacher tale, the tale of exaggeration, a children's rhyme, and secular and religious songs. The use of these oral forms, together with folk language, contributes to the unique tone, texture, and style of autobiography. Their presence also helps to identify the autobiographer in a relationship with her community and culture (1984: 299).

Her chapter eighteen in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* serves as a religious sermon. It takes place in church. It points out the importance of religion in black life. Maya adds "Go to church in that cloud of weariness? Not go home and lay those tortured bones in a feather bed? The idea come to me that my people may be a race of masochists and that not only was it our fate to live the poorest, roughest life but that we liked it like that" (1971: 121). She was shocked to see her people spend their time in the church rather than going to their houses. She questions the religion. Angelou uses the songs and hymns in her first autobiography:

I came to Jesus, as I was,
Worried, wounded and sad,
I found in Him resting place,
And He has made me glad (1971: 129).

Maya Angelou also adds some stories of others except from the stories about her family. She uses her ability of storytelling as an African tradition. She uses the ghost story of Mrs. Florida Taylor as a representative of black writing tradition. As the slaves start to express themselves through story-telling. A neighbour of Momma, Mr. George Taylor, sees his late wife and he believes that it is not a dream. The mourning of Mr. Taylor is also described and it accelerates the deep atmosphere of ghost story. She notes down the recreation as, “Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. It was certain that Mrs. Taylor was returning to the earth from whence she come. In fact, upon considering, I concluded that she had looked like a mud baby, lying on the white satin of her velvet coffin. A mud baby, molded into form by creative children on a rainy day, soon to run back into the loose earth” (1971: 163).

Susan Huddleston Edgerton in *Particularities of “Otherness”: Autobiography, Maya Angelou and Me* writes, “Maya Angelou’s autobiographical works provide an exciting opportunity to gain the “lived distance necessary for critical, social and self reflection. They are, perhaps, especially appropriate for teachers and students from the deep South” (80).

Maya Angelou allows her readers to witness her metamorphosis through different aspects of motherhood. By weaving the theme of motherhood into her literature, Maya Angelou questions many aspects of herself. Angelou by portraying her inner conflicts of being a black women creates a new self totally free and uncaged.

II. BLACK MOTHERHOOD: FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

I, African woman, responsible for her family

Used to bitterness in life

I, woman alone

Nkgoleleg banake, Nkgoleleg ba Africa

Courage I must not lose

Hopeful I am

That these children of mine

Will grow to be

Brave heroes

To lead their oppressed nation

Nkgoleleg banake

Nkgoleleng baAfrica

Winnie Morola (1991)

In 1597, the first entry of “motherhood” in Oxford Dictionary but it started to be defined as a reality. Motherhood as an ideology started to be institutionalized during 18th and 19th century. Motherhood is one of the most important roles in the world that is given by God, and not taken by any one. It is both a biological and a social role. Elaine Tuttle Hansen in her work called “Mother Without Child: Conemporary Fiction and the crises of motherhood” gives the definition of motherhood in Oxford English Dictionary as,

The first sense of mother grounds the concept in what until recently could hardly be seen as anything but its natural meaning, denoting a gendered, bodily, and relational identity: “Female parent, a woman who has given birth to a child”. The second sense expands the referential field to “things more or less personified”: with reference either to a metaphorical giving birth, to the protecting care exercised by a mother, or to the affectionate reverence due to a mother (1997: 2).

In *Women and Sex Roles from a Part Changes in Women's Role Participation*, Gwendolyn L. Lewis defines the role of mother as,

The role of mother is unique in that it is taken on by most women because of a biological event: giving birth to a child. However, women also become “mothers” through adoption or other means of taking on the care of children. It is the social definition of motherhood which is important. As the role is currently defined, the mother is the one primarily responsible for supplying physical and emotional care for infants and young children. If the mother can not provide that care herself, she must arrange for others to do so. This role, like all roles, is also strongly affected by social conventions regarding who should enter this role and when (139).

2.1 A LITERAL STUDY OF BLACK MOTHERHOOD

In order to understand the role of black mother in African-American history, it is better to give some basic information on the importance of woman in African communities and the position of slave mother in the period of slavery. For many years the African woman has been worshipped both in Africa and the rest of the world. African woman was idolized as queens, icon, and goddess. In ancient Egypt African woman was described as Kmt who has big lips, broad noses, curly hair. Since the woman was worshipped and idolized the woman was equal to man. Nefferati was known as the most beautiful queens of Africa. Nefferati was known as the lover of Ramses II and she was adored as a goddess after her death. Queen Istnofret was another African woman who was the mother of Prince Ramses. Queen Sheba is another African woman thought to live in tenth century who had the qualities to rule some parts of Africa and America. Thus the woman in Africa was dominant and equal to male so she ruled the nations.

The history of black motherhood starts from slave mothering in African-American societies. In *Women, Race and Class*, Angela Y. Davis points out that the slave mothering was an “instrument of labor force” and says,

When the abolition of the international slave trade began to threaten the expansion of the young cotton-growing industry, the slave holding

class was forced to rely on natural reproduction as the surest method of replenishing and increasing the domestic slave population. Thus a Premium was placed on the slave woman's reproductive capacity. During the decades preceding the Civil War, Black women came to be increasingly appraised for their fertility (or for the lack of it): she who was potentially the mother of ten, twelve, fourteen or more became a coveted Black women enjoyed a more respected status than they enjoyed as workers. Ideological exaltation of motherhood- as popular as it was during the nineteenth century- did not extend to slaves. In fact, in the eyes of slaveholders, slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labor force. They were " breeder"- animals, whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers (1983:7).

The motherhood in African-American societies have been influenced by African communities. As Davis states that in these communities it's believed that women become valid when they give birth. Women become mothers in order to gain status. In slave communities, mothers are thought to be as economic powers. Therefore women in Black communities are more as laborers than as women.

The African-American woman is mostly depicted as the mythological figure of "Mammy". Mammies origins are rooted from the antabellum period of American's South. Mammy the asexual, fat and old mother figure who performs domestic duties.

The image of mammy is created during the slavery since she is loyal to her master who cares for his children. Portraying a happy image of mammy can be resulted from white's effort to prove the good side of slavery. Patricia Hill Collins in *Toward a New Psychology of Gender*, in " The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother, Daughter Relationships" part, defines the other image of Black mother as "mammy" figures in history and says,

Eurocentric perspectives on Black motherhood revolve around two interdependent images that together define Black women's roles in white and in African-American families. The first image is that of the Mammy, the faithful, devoted domestic servant. Like one of the family, Mammy conscientiously "mothers" her white children, caring for them and loving them as if they were her own. Mammy is the ideal

Black mother for she recognizes her place, this same Mammy is transformed into the second image, the too-strong matriarch who raises weak sons and unnaturally superior daughters. When she protests, she is labelled aggressive and non-feminine, yet she remains silent, she is rendered invisible (2000: 327).

Patricia Collins also states that the Black mothers try to warn their daughters to be ready to the difficulties they will come across and save themselves from the dangers attached to their race, class and gender by writing autobiographies. She thinks that the autobiographies of black mothers can be read as didactic writings since they try to teach their daughters to protect themselves. In her another work *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, Patricia Hill Collins also rewrites this as “African-American mothers place a strong emphasis on protection, either by trying to shield their daughters as long as possible from the penalties attached to their derogated status or by teaching them skills of independence and self-reliance so that they will be able to protect themselves” (2000: 185- 186).

Solinger divides blackmotherhood from white motherhood by describing of being both a mother and a slave. He states that while white women were told to limit the activities during pregnancy, black women were forced to work in the fields after delivering the baby. Solinger points out that while the white women have the right to choose her life partner and raise the children, black women do not have the right to raise their children (2005: 303).

2.1.1 THE MYTH OF BLACK MOTHER

In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* Patricia Hill Collins states that,

Black motherhood as an institution is both dynamic and dialectical. Ongoing tensions characterize efforts to mold the institution of Black motherhood to benefit intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation and efforts by African-American women to define and value our own experiences with motherhood. The controlling images of the mammy, the matriarch, and the welfare

mother and the practices they justify are designed to oppress (2000: 176).

The role of mother is often pivotal in African American literature. In different works of African American writers, the different mother portraits are drawn in order to illustrate what a black mother is and what mothering is. The African American literature mostly presents two ideal mothers, biological mother and grandmother.

The slave narrative writers such as Harriet Jacob and Mary Prince portrayed the positions of enslaved black mothers during nineteenth century. Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* is published in 1987 that is also based on the life of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman who believes that her children would be safe in dead rather than enslaved. Toni Morrison in her novel also constructs the motherhood and mothering so the novel becomes one of the famous contemporary representation of black motherhood. The African American writers Zora Neale Hurston, Gayl Jones and Alice Walker extend the "black motherhood" in their works. Zora Neale Hurston *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Gayl Jones *Corregidora*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* nurture the tradition of Black women writing under the phrases of black motherhood.

Marie Lyndsey Daniel in her work "Exploring the matriarchal myth in the works of Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker", explores the formation of matriarchal myth as the fact that young, healthy black females were valued by slave owners for their ability to produce offspring who could some day become additional sources of labor. Walker says,

They were traded, sold and kept to become mothers biologically, but they were seldom allowed to do so emotionally. Ironically, though they were breeders, many were not given the opportunity to raise the children they were expected to bring into their frightening world. This duality of representing one traditional idea of the very essence of womanhood and the harsh reality of slave labour at the same time perpetuated a culture of woman whose identity was, at best, a paradox (1983:8).

She adds that the matriarchal power of the black females isolated the male slaves and they could not play the roles as “protector” or “provider”. Since they even could not protect themselves from slave owners they could not be the head of their families. Therefore, the black female gain some masculine qualities in this sense and the matriarchal myth emerges. Maya Angelou is one of the black American writers who use the matriarchal myth in her works. In Maya Angelou’s works, mothers are portrayed as the providers and the protectors of the family such as Momma and Vivian in her *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The male characters such as Uncle Willie and Maya’s biological father Big Bailey are characterized as weak and absent. On the other hand she portrays her self as a provider mother in her next autobiography in *the Heart of a Woman*.

In black communities mothers were nurturers, they care for the children of themselves and the others. They were mammies. They provide for the increase of slave population. In “The Culture of African-American Adolescent Mothers”, Barbara Omalade finds out three important types of black mothers; “slave mothers”, “black single mothers”, and “black mammy”. According to Omolade, “slave mothers” had to live after her rape and sexual abuse. Enslaved woman maintained ties with black male however the marriage among slaves were illegal and the children of slaves were thought to be the masters. The second type of mother is “black single mothers” who become a part of working class. They were employed and they provided for themselves. The single black mother type earn their own money and they are economically independent. The third black mother type is “black mammy”. Barbara Omalade thinks that motherhood in African societies is a sign of womanhood and says that “The values and beliefs about mothering among African Americans have been significantly influenced by traditional African societies. Africans believe that motherhood, because of its spiritual and kinship value, is a necessary condition for womanhood” (1997:110). Omalade also divides black motherhood into parts such as “other mothers” and “black adolescent mothers”. She said, “Enslaved Africans in the United States valued mothering both for its assurance of their biological continuity, and for its role in preserving their cultural integrity as a people. Mothering among the enslaved was also in the economic interests of owners

whose profits depended upon the natural increase of the slave population” (1997:111). So the mothering is thought to be the sign of continuity, integrity and economy. Although it’s mostly thought that the mothers remain domestic sphere, it’s not true for the black mothers who are traditionally both workers and mothers. They work in different spheres of business life.

Another popular stereotype which also was developed during slavery is “Jezebel” the black woman whose sexual appetite is rarely met. By designing images of Black women as mammies and Jezebels slave masters were able to provide a rationale for their exploitation of Black women. Whereas mammies were drawn as happy figures to serve their masters, Jezebels were identified as the charming black women for sexual and reproductive aims. These two black women implicate the exploitation of black women. Mammy is depicted as the ideal mother serving in the white family whereas she ignores her own children. Jezebel is the sexual symbol of black mother who is insufficient to bring up children and lacks of mothering qualities. Taylor Sunday in her dissertation presents another mother figure “ the matriarch” that is related to Jezebel but she cares for her children. Matriarch shares the characteristics of both Jezebel and the mammy. Sunday also finds out another mother figure “ welfare mother” who is highly interested in satisfying her sexual needs (2006: 128).

A mythical story of Demeter and Persephone, a story of a mother and daughter in Western thought also foregrounds the relations of black mothers and daughters. In “Mothers and Daughters: Ancient and Modern Myths”, Spitz says “ In relating a mother’s search for her lost daughter, the story of Demeter and Persephone gives priority to one role, namely, that of the mother, over that of the daughter. Yet, its fabric importantly suggests that daughter and mother are one and that their experiences both reciprocate and replicate each other (1990:411).

Demeter, the goddess of fertility adores her beautiful daughter Persephone, one day when Persephone was picking a flower, the god of Hades fell in love. When Persephone picks the flower, he appears. Persephone cries out to her mother but he

takes her to the ground. When Demeter realizes her daughter's disappearance, she is depressed and starts mourning. In the end of the myth she spends half of the year with Hades and the other half of the year with her mother. So during the reunion of mother and daughter, the earth regains its fertility and it becomes spring. When Persephone returns to Hades, the earth becomes dark.

The myth of black mother is also affected by the Western articulation of mother and daughter myth of Demeter and Persephone. Spitz claims that "In marginalizing triadic elements, therefore, both the Demeter-Persephone myth and its modern counterparts force us to recognize the power of gendered sameness and of biology -to see, in other words, that because the girl is a second edition of her mother, their object relations are deeply structured by this sameness (1990: 416).

On the other hand, as well as humans born of women, female bodies were associated with food and food production. Black women, by virtue of their place in the Southern economy as "cooks and breeders". In *Figures of Orality: The Master, The Mistress, The Slave Mother in Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, Holly Blackford says "Ironically, mothers lie at the center of reproducing systems of power; their milk, their food production, their maternal investments nourish its life cycle. Destructive, suffocating bonds are then part of the power of mother figures and, consequently, part of the narrator's compelling maternal quality" (2001: 12).

There are also various articulations of black motherhood in American literature. In *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*, Alice Walker defines the black motherhood as, "Black women are called in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, "the mule of the world", because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else refused to carry. We have been called "Matriarchs", "Superwomen" and "Mean" and "Evil Bitches". Not to mention "Castraters" and "Sapphire's Mama" (1983: 237). According to Alice Walker, black mothers are defined as inferiors by the whites. When black women start to write autobiography they rename themselves.

Barbara Christian also identifies the historical figure of the slave mother represented in black women's writing and she points out that "motherhood is the context of the slave woman's most deeply felt conflicts" (3). Christian(?) also adds, "The culture of Black motherhood initially emerged in order to protect gender construction and counteract the social dislocation caused by racial and economic displacement and exploitation. It established networks of Black mothers who provided mutual material and emotional support and transmitted mothering patterns among single and married women. Most women performed mothering roles within their own families, however, when children and youth were not properly cared for, they were reared by "othermothers" (120).

Joanne M. Braxton in her *Tradition Within a Tradition* illuminates the continuity of black women autobiographical tradition. She starts her writing by analysing slave narratives and conclude with modern autobiography. She analysis Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861) and she uses the word "outraged mother" as the redefinition of hero concept. She also studies on the works of Zora Neale Hurston and Era Bell Thompson in order to represent the black women autobiographical tradition in twentieth century. Joanne M. Braxton ends her work with Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* as an example of contemporary black women autobiography. Joanne M. Braxton celebrates the black women's redefiniton of themselves and their rejections of traditional roles given by the society.

In the "Outraged Mother" Joanne M. Braxton says " The ancestral figure most common in the work of contemporary Black women writer is an outraged mother. She speaks in and through the narrator of the text to "bear witness" and to break down artificial barriers between the artist and the audience. Not only does this ancestor figure lend a "benevolent, instructive and protective" presense to the text, she also lends her benign influence to the very act of creation, for the Black woman artist works in the presense of this female ancestor, who passes on her feminine wisdom for the good of the "tribe" and the survival of all Black people, especially those in the African diaspora created by the Atlantic slave trade.

Joanne M. Braxton defines the outraged mother as

The outraged mother embodies the values of sacrifice, nurturance and, personal courage values necessary to an endangered group. She employs reserves of spritual strength, whether Christian or derived from African belief. Implied in all her actions and fueling her heroic ones is outrage at the abuse of her people and her person. She feels very keenly every wrong done her children, even to the furthest generations. She exists in art because she exists in life. (1990: 5).

In her “Black Women Writing Black Mother Figures: Reading Black Motherhood in Alice Walker’s *Meridian* and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*”, Alexis Durell Powe explores the connections between Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Alice Walker’s *Meridian*. While she presents the portrayals of black mothers, she also compares the presentations of black mothers in both of the novels by discussing on the superwoman myths, the traditional mother stereotypes and the reconstruction of black womanhood. Both *Their Eyes* and *Meridian* are revelatory novels not only because they show the author’s personal questionings of marriage and motherhood but also because they seek to expose the superwoman ideal held up for Black women as a cruel sharm (Powe, 2004: 53).

In creating intense mother figures in poems, stories, essays, autobiographies and fiction, African American writers have illustrated the beauty, the struggle and the pains of black motherhood. These various mother figures provide an important change in the negative images of black womanhood. The black writers have also proved that the black motherhood concept is more deeper than any stereotype circulated in the works of whites. The black mother is used as an icon in black American literature in order to celebrate the continuity of their race and their political overviews.

2.1.2 A NEW TREND: BLACK SINGLE MOTHERHOOD

Although most of the African-American families were married during the segregation, many of them were headed by women. After World War II there was a dramatic increase in the employment of black women. Expanded job opportunities of black women had an impact on marriage. As the black women started to gain her economical power, the incomes of black families start to espace poverty. Women's employment has increased their independence on men and given them to contribute to family budget. Employment possibilities also avoid them of marrying. Feminist consciousness and the economical and social independence of black women after the Civil Rights Movement released women from their traditional roles. The impacts of movements on sexual liberation, and public attitudes of abortion and divorce tranformed the traditional concept of marriage. As the black women were bored of carrying the burden of their patriarchal husbands, the proportions of divorce increased in 1960's. Barbara Omalade in her *The Culture of African American Adolescent Mothers* reports that

While Black men and women continue to have intense intimate relationships and desire to parent children, they no longer have the desire or ability to sustain and institutionalize these relationships by marriage. Nevertheless, Black women still expect men to father the children they sire and live with. But as Black fatherhood weakens, Black motherhood has been sustained by cultural patterns that exist independently of, and outside marriage. Mothering, more than marriage, has become the central means for many Black women to express their female identity (1997:119).

According to Omalade, although the black women continued on having relation with black men, they did not desire to marry. Nevertheless, these new trend of black single motherhood is created by giving birth to black children without being a member of institution of marriage. Therefore the mothering help the black women to achieve a status within and outside the community. As marriage was considered to be as an expression of Black manhood, the black single motherhood enabled black women to modify and alter the traditional roles of women.

III. READING BLACK MOTHERHOOD IN *I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS*

We think back through our mothers, if we are women. Woolf

Nominated for a National Book Award in 1970, Maya Angelou's first autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is the one of the best-seller touchstones of black female autobiography. Angelou's first attempt in nonfiction rises her up to the successful black writers canon. Angelou's autobiography which can be called as a literary achievement concentrates on herself as a black girl and finally a black woman in a racist society. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* treats themes that are traditional in black women autobiographies such as the maturity, the importance of the family, self-reliance as well as the definition of motherhood. She celebrates black motherhood by focusing on entirely her own life.

The autobiography takes place in 1930's and 40's of America. There was a segregation and Black people were not allowed to go to good schools, and wellfare jobs and so they were kept poor and uneducated. They were paid less than the whites and they were humiliated. The Ku Klux Klan was an anti-black organization that attack blacks especially at nights. They wore a mask on their heads and sometimes burn the houses of blacks. Segregation lead the inferiority of blacks and the superiority of whites. Moreover the women were also thought to be inferior than men regardless of their color. Therefore being a woman meant to be in the lowest status of the society. However the situation was easier and better for the blacks in the North. Although there was still segregation in the North, Blacks earn better and live in better conditions. In her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou moves from Arkansas to St. Louis so she encounters these two different worlds.

The title of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* seems to give the basic matter of the book. She sees the blacks especially the black females as the birds locked in a cage but nevertheless they keep on singing. The title of the book reveals the sense of displacement. It represents the restriction of the hostile world on blacks. Patriarchy,

the rules of fathers, is the basic cause of woman's oppression. The black women characters exposed to physical, psychological, economical, social and sexual oppression that lead to their traumatic ends. Black women's search of their identities are throughly made by, their struggle over patriarchy, and their experiences with "whites". In order to understand the mother's oppression Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, it would be better to define the word "oppression". The word oppressed includes human experience of limitation, restriction or entrapment. The root of the word "oppression" is the element "press". Marilyn Frye in her work of "Oppression" defines this word as " The press of the crowd; pressed into military service; to press a pair of pants; printing press; press the button. Sometimes press is something caught between amnog forces and barriers which are so related to each other. That jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent the things motion or mobility. Mold. Immobilize. Reduce" (Frye, 85).

The physical oppression of the black women can easily be understood by looking to the title of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The cage and bird image totally depicts "the physical oppression of woman". It is the worst of all to be a black woman. The claustrobic area is drawn in the novel that Maya finds herself in the library that is portrayed as a bird in a cage. Her singing is heard when she starts to read the books. Singing is like reading since she starts to use her imagination. Her reading helps her to ged rid of all the pains, and the curse of being a black woman. The cage image as Marilyn Frye suggests in her work is the metaphor for "illustrating the systematic and invisible nature of oppression". According to Frye in order to understand the entrapment of the bird, it is better to step back and stop looking at the wires long by one microscopically and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage. She explains this sense of entrapment as

Cages. Consider a bird cage. If you look very closely, you can not see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire up and down the length of it and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire anytime it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you stil could not see why a birdwould have trouble going past the wires to get anywhere. There is no physical property of any one wire, nothing that

the closest scrutiny could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way (Frye, 85)

Frye tries to analyse “the macroscopic” elements of oppression rather than “microscopic” ones. According to her it is better to understand women’s oppression and captivity not only by considering the cage itself but also inspecting other “macroscopic” elements of oppression. The cage is not only where the bird is locked but also it is made up of the wires. Each wire has its own characteristics that creates a different pain on the caged one. Similar to the black women’s position encircled by dozens of oppressions. In the *Masks* of Maya Angelou, Collette Simone Mangeau-Marshall also points out Maya’s cage,

When Maya defines her personal identity (the black, the female and the American), she transcends society’s message, learning how to free the self (the caged bird). Her identity is a completion of victories and defeats, both of which she grows from. Maya finds she can not define herself entirely separate from family and society because they do play a role in shaping her, she does not have to be caged by their definition either (1994: 128).

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou as the writer of the book look back on her childhood with the power of child imagination. Maya’s journey from childhood to adulthood is completed with a self-esteem that is shaped by some features of her mother figures. Her autobiography utilizes her mother figures as strong women characters who can provide for themselves. She demonstrates that even they are strong and self-confident, they face the struggles of of being black mothers in a white-ruled society. The black mother’s stresses of racism, sexism and motherhood are inevitable. The central themes of the book include the black motherhood, the displacement, the familial relations, the search of self, the notorious effect of racism and the power of religion.

This autobiography is sincerely written by the writer so it never creates a wall between the reader and the writer. Each chapter contains a character and a theme. Therefore dividing the autobiography into chapters helps Maya to put the attention of the reader. The reader is never bored of reading since it presents a new character and

a new event in each chapter. The reader can not quit on reading for she knows another event will be told in the next chapter. In the whole of the novel every chapter has a theme and a main character. This main character serves as a vehicle to give the theme of the chapter.

3.1 REPRESENTATIONS OF MOTHERHOOD IN *I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS*

According to Mary Jane Lupton, “ The consistent yet changing connection for Maya Angelou through the four subsequent narratives is that the same contact of mother and child – with herself and her son Guy; with herself and her own mother, Vivian Baxter; with her self and her paternal grandmother; and, finally, with the child-mother in herself ” (Lupton, 1990: 4). Maya Angelou’s autobiographical works *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman* reflect the female role as mother within the society and the family.

Annie Henderson who is the paternal grandmother of Maya and Bailey runs a store in the black section of Stamps, Arkansas. Maya and Bailey is raised by Annie Henderson according to Christian rules. Annie Henderson is the first mother figure who plays a dominant role in Maya’s life. Bailey’s and Maya’s mother Vivian Baxter is different from Annie although they are both strong and independent women. In *Tradition within a Tradition*, Joanne M. Braxton says that, “ Throughout the autobiography, Marguerita’s mother and grandmother play an important role both as protective and nurturing figures, and as models for Marguerita, who, at the end of the narrative, has become a mother herself (1998: 293).

Vivian seems to be the second powerful mother figure who provides for herself. While Momma takes her power from her store, Vivian takes her power from her beauty. Angelou presents us two black mother figures juxtapositioning each other. Momma is the traditional mother figure while Vivian never becomes a traditional mother. Whereas Momma deals with religion and family in a Christian

perspective, Vivian mostly represents the joy of Afro-American life style. Daniel Hoffman edits,

Maya Angelou's memoirs, beginning with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1968) give us a split-mother: her own, and her mother's mother, Momma. Momma was a storekeeper and kept it with disdain but defended it with funny. Maya's mother was a sophisticated woman, on her own in great cities. When the child, at seven, was sent to her, she decided that her mother was "too beautiful to have children, that's why she sent us away". The care she gave seemed to demand gratitude in return, and Angelou, like Maxine Kingston, found she had to rebel. Reconciliation came only years later, when seventeen-year old Maya, having concealed her pregnancy until the last moment, turned to her mother for help and the help was given (1979: 383).

Therefore Maya's portrayal of two distinct mothers is rooted from her split character: both African and American. She moves back and forth to her African origin and her American self, and she lives in the middle of two mothers, Vivian and Momma.

In the very beginning of the novel, Maya and her brother Bailey are sent to their grandmother's house in Stamps, Arkansas. Their parents send them alone and they were wearing tags that were written as "To Whom It May Concern" which shows the disinterest of their parents on them. While explaining her situation Maya Angelou also points out the social position of this event. She explains the disinterest and the increasing divorce rate of married couples, "Years later I discovered that the United States had been crossed thousands of times by frightened Black children traveling alone to their newly affluent parents in Northern cities, or back to grandmothers in Southern towns when the urban North reneged on its economic promises"(5). Therefore while explaining her own position years ago, she also mirrors the realities of the term that they were not the first and the last children being sent to their grandmother.

After being sent by her parents to her grandmother Momma, Maya's childhood passes under the domain of Momma. She becomes Maya's first real mother

figure and she is portrayed as a matriarchal figure who has self-confidence. Momma is a business woman who runs a store in a black community so she symbolizes the economical independence and power. Her “Store” also plays an important role in the development of Maya’s personality. It is the first place where Maya contacts with the outer world. In *Politics of Mothering: Womanhood, Identity & Resistance in African Literature*, Nnaemake Obioma says: “In narratives by women, the lessons that grandmother offer do not romanticize motherhood but rather present the various aspects of mothering: its trials and pains as well as its privileges and rewards” (1997: 197). Momma reveals the harsh realities of growing up child in South. The terror of lynching of her children and grandchildren persists throughout the sections of Momma Henderson.

While Maya lives in her grandmother’s house, she has the opportunity to experience the black Southern life. Her grandmother Momma sells lunches to the workers in Stamps. She expresses her feelings in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* as “In cotton-picking time the late afternoons revealed the harshness of Black Southern life, which in the early morning had been softened by nature’s blessing of grogginess, forgetfulness and the soft lamplight” (9). She reveals the harshness of Southern life and the tiredness of black labourers after the cotton-picking. She shows that earning money is not that easy in the Southern area. She also tells that her grandmother wakes up four o’clock in the morning during “the picking season”. Momma is associated with hard work and discipline that enables her to be the traditional black mother figure of the work.

3.1.1 JUXTAPOSITION OF REAL AND FAILED MOTHERS

Momma is the strongest mother figure of Angelou’s work that Maya’s two distinctive experiences proves her authority and her self-dignity. Momma is mocked by three white poor girls and Maya tells “ When I was ten years old those scruffy children caused me the most painful and confusing experience I had ever had with my grandmother”(1971: 29). These girls disrespect Momma that makes Maya cry. The girls come to Momma’s store and start to mock her and laugh at her. But

Momma does nothing against these girls attitude except singing hymns and songs. Maya Angelou shows that Momma wins the contest by her dignity and self-confidence. Another scene in the book which shows the black power is the part with Louis's victory over a white boxer. In chapter nineteen Angelou uses the Joe Louis's victory as a sign of black power. She presents us a character in each chapter in order to strengthen her themes. This time it is Louis and the theme is the black power. According to Angelou, Joe Louis's victory over whites shows that the blacks are the most strongest people in the world. Thus he becomes as a representative of black race. Angelou says " But at the end a black boy named Joe Louis was " champion of the world. A Black boy. Some black mother's son. He was the strongest man in the world" (136). She sees the match as a war on slavery and while Joe was going down she says "This might be the end of the world. If Joe lost we were back in slavery and beyond help" (135). Joe Louis and grandmother Momma Henderson become two figures who win victories over whites. Although they fight in different cycles of life, they are associated with the same feature: black power.

Another unforgettable memory of Maya is her memory with Momma and the white dentist. Maya confronts with racism when Momma takes her to a white dentist. When they arrive the dentist door, Momma wants the girl who opens the door to tell Dr. Lincoln Annie was there. Maya explains her grandmother's humiliation with this words as " The girl closed the door firmly. Now the humiliation of hearing Momma describe herself as if she had no last name to the young white girl was equal to the physical pain. It seemed terribly unfair to have toothache and a headache and have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness (1971: 187). Maya finds out that a physical pain can be sometimes much fewer than a pain of being "black". Dr.Lincoln is a white dentist to whom Momma has lent money during the Great Depression. However, Dr.Lincoln says Annie that he did not treat colored people. But Annie thinks that he owes her a favor. When Momma insists on Lincoln's help, Dr.Lincoln said " I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a niggers" (1871: 189). Maya and Momma go out but Momma again goes back to Dr. Lincoln's office. Even though Maya does not hear anything they speak, she fantasies about it. Maya is proud of being Momma's granddaughter since she shows her power over Dr.Lincoln.

Maya imagines that Momma battles with Dr. Lincoln and makes him lie to her knees, but in reality Momma asks Dr. Lincoln to pay her for his refusal to treat Maya. Hilary S. Crew states that “ the bonds of grandmothers, mothers and daughters are also reproduced in *I Know* ” and she added “ In Angelou’s biography, particularly, the voice of grandmother is strong, as she disciplines and protects her granddaughter in the face of racial inequality” (Crew,1994). Afterwards Momma takes Maya to a black dentist. This scene also illustrates the heroic power of Momma Henderson over her grandchild Maya. In *Understanding I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources & Historical Documents*, Joanne Megna Wallace points out that the African American family is strong and the grandmother has an important affect on the family. “Perhaps no one had greater influence on Maya’s early development than Momma, Angelou’s grandmother, with whom Maya and Bailey were sent to live after their parents’ divorce. Although Annie Henderson is not openly affectionated with her grandchildren, it is clear that Maya feels deeply loved by her grandmother” (1998: 117). Maya’s relation with her grandmother is distanced but strong so her grandmother has a distintive influence on her.

Besides being a symbol of power and dignity, Momma is also associated with religion. Through Momma, Maya learns the values and the concepts of religion. Momma participates the church activities and she turns to faith when she is threatened by the outer terrors. Momma becomes a religion icon for Maya so she even puts her grandmother in a more religious and respectful status than a religion man. It is obvious that she portrays the Reverend Howard Thomas as a hungry and an obese man to criticise the church’s hypocrisy but she never ridicules the black spritualism. The man who symbolizes the religion is described as

His obesity while disgusting, was not enough to incur the intense hate that we felt for him. The fact that he never bothered to remember our names was insulting, but neither was that slight, alone, enough to make us despise him. But the crime that tipped the scale and made our hate not only just but imperative was his actions at the diner table. He ate the biggest, brownest and best parts of the chicken at every Sunday meal (1971: 35).

While she portrays one of the most confident and respectful character in the society as a fatty hungry man, she portrays a black woman as a respectful one in the society in her next chapter. One day, Momma goes to the court because she is accused of hiding a black man assaulting a white woman. When she goes to the court, the judge calls “Mrs Henderson” to Momma that shows her social power and respect in the society. Maya writes,

The judge asked that Mrs. Henderson be subpoenaed, and when Momma arrived and said she was Mrs. Henderson, the judge, the bailiff and the other whites in the audience laughed. The judge had really made a gaffe calling a Negro woman Mrs., but then he was from Pine Bluff and couldn't have been expected to know that a woman who owned a store in that village would also turned out to be colored. The whites tickled their funny bones with the incident for a long time, and the Negroes thought it proved the worth and majesty of my grandmother (1971: 48).

Momma again emerges as a strong and respectful woman. The whites considered the incident a joke but the blacks realised the “majesty” of her. Thus, after showing her grandmother's economical power and her psychological power, Maya points out her social power on the other part of the community. In the *Outraged Mother* by Joanne Braxton, also emphasizes Momma's self-sufficiency as,

The ancestral presence in Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) is represented by the narrators paternal grandmother, who, though still living at the end of Caged Bird, embodies the “timeless” quality of the ancestor figure. Momma Henderson, a self-sufficient woman, provided for her two grandchildren and for her crippled son, Marguerita's Uncle Willie. (1990: 3).

Joanne Braxton states that this “outraged mother” figure is a result of “myth making” and says Maya Angelou celebrates and performs her “autobiographical act” in the ancestral presence of an outraged mother grandmother who embodies the values of nurturance, protection and self-sacrifice while exhibiting great personal courage. Thus for Angelou and indeed for readers of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Momma Henderson assumes the mythical proportions of the archetypal

outraged mother (1990: 4). According to Joanne M. Braxton Momma Henderson becomes a mythical figure who provides “the protection” and “nurturance”. Momma decides to take her grand children to California in order to protect them because a black man was killed and pushed into the pull by the whites. They come to California where their parents live. Maya and Bailey survive from the harsh experiences for young children to endure due to the protection received from their grandmother.

Maya portrays the confrontation of two mothers in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Momma and Vivian,

My Picture of Mother and Momma embracing on the train platform has been darkly retained through the coating of the then embarrassment and the now maturity. Mother was a blithe chick nuzzling around the large, solid dark hen. The sounds they made had a rich inner harmony. Momma’s deep, slow voice lay under my mother’s rapid peeps and chins like stones under rushing water” (1971: 202).

Her portraying of these two mother figures creates an effect of poetry. She reveals their confrontation as a secular activity that performs a harmony.

Vivian who is Maya’s biological mother is the second real mother figure in her autobiography. Vivian is associated with “black beauty” that ensures change of Maya’s beauty concept. In order to understand this change it is better to explain Maya’s previous thoughts of beauty. As a black girl in her early childhood, Maya finds her self ugly since she believes that the beauty is based on being “blond” and having “blue eyes”. Maya does not want to accept her blackness and she fantasies to be “white” in the beginning of her autobiography. Maya describes her fantasy of beauty,

Wouldn’t they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass that Momma wouldn’t let me straighten? My blue eyes were going to hypnotize them... Then they would understand why I never picked up a Southern accent or spoke the common slang and why I had to be forced to eat pigs’ tails and snouts. Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who

was understandably jealous of my beauty had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy blackhair, broad feet and a space between teeth that would hold a number two pencil (1971: 2).

Maya is ashamed of her blackness that contributes her inability to develop a self-confidence. She idealizes “the whiteness” and she thinks that one of the wires that surrounds her cage is her blackness. Her black body and her blackness trap her in a cage. She used to think that being beautiful depends on having blue eyes and white skin. She fantasizes that one day she will be awakened from her “black ugly dream” and be white and blond. Furthermore, she believes that one day her real self will emerge and everybody will be surprised. Her sense of humiliation stem from her displacement and her ugliness. Maya Angelou starts to question herself and her color,

Bailey was the greatest person in my world. And the fact that he was my brother, my only brother and I had no sisters to share him with, was such good fortune that it made me want to live a Christian life just to show God that I was grateful. Where I was big, elbowy and grating, he was small, graceful and smooth. When I was described by our playmates as being shit-color, he was lauded for his velvet-black skin. His hair fell down in black curls, and my head was covered with black steel wool. And yet he loved me (1971: 22).

Maya finds Bailey physically beautiful than her since he is lighter skinned. Thus, Bailey and her mother Vivian become the beauty concepts in her life that will change her definiton of beauty. When she first meets her mother, she is totally fascinated by her beauty even though she is black. She says “I had never seen a women as pretty as she who was called mother” (1971: 60). Therefore she “wakes up from her ugly dream” when Maya sees her mother and she understands that a black women can also be beautiful. When Maya and her brother Bailey watch a movie strarring Kay Francis, the actress reminds them of her mother. Although the actress is white, Angelou and Bailey find their mother more beautiful than Kay Francis. Therefore Maya’s notion of beauty changes and she writes,

I laughed too, but not at the hateful jokes (the movie) made on my people. I laughed because, except that she was white, the big movie

star looked just like my mother. Except that she lived in a big mansion with a thousand servants, she just looked like my mother. And it was funny to think of the whitefolks' not knowing that the woman they were adoring could be my mother's twin, except that she was white and my mother was prettier. Much prettier (1971: 119).

Vivian's similarity with a white actress Kay Francis shows Maya's celebration of blackness and her acceptance of black beauty. Vivian as a symbol of black beauty helps Maya to improve her self-reliance and self-confidence. In addition to being a beauty symbol, Vivian becomes a symbol of "music". She dances and she sings the heavy blues. Vivian resembles an "African goddess" of music and dance where Momma's only song is sermon. Vivian is like a sun shine, but Momma creates a gothic, and dark atmosphere with her disciplinary attitude.

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the importance of family is revealed. Maya's search of her identity ends with her questions on her family. She wants to learn more about her mother and father and wants to find out why they left them. She points out that sending the children toys and gifts is not enough since she is looking for a parental love. She explains the situation,

One Christmas we received gifts from our mother and father, who lived seperately in a heaven called California, where we were told they could have all the oranges they could eat. And the sun shone all the time. I was sure that wasn't so. I couldn't believe that our mother would laugh and eat oranges in the sunshine without her children. Until that Chrismas when we received the gifts I have been confident that they were both dead. I could cry anytime I wanted by picturing my mother (I didn't quiet know what she looked like) lying in her coffin. Her hair which was black, was spread out on a tiny little white pillow and her body was covered with a sheet. The face was Brown, like a big O, since I couldn't fill in the features I printed MOTHER across the O, the tears would fall down my cheeks like warm milk (1971: 52).

This scene points out how Maya relies on family and family members. She dreams a family of which members live altogether. She used to think that her mother and father were dead but when they sent presents for Christmas she expressed her anger to her mother. She could not believe how her mother could be happy without

her children. She imagined her mother as a dead body and her face like a big O that reminded her again the “ O” that makes the letters of “MOTHER”.

Bailey and Maya move to their grandmother’s house. They move from one place to another place that’s why they don’t feel like belonging to anywhere. Maya starts to express her own feelings about her mother. Maya Angelou puts her mother Vivian in the role of Virgin Mary. Maya finds her mother unbelievably beautiful that’s why she creates a fair-like mother figure. While Momma is thought to be a totally real figure with all her strength and liveness, Vivian is like a fairy in a story. Maya idealizes her mother’s beauty and finally Vivian becomes an ideal mother figure.

Bailey persisted in calling her Mother Dear until the circumstance of proximity softened the phrase’s formality to “Muh Dear” , and finally to “M’Deah”. I could never put my finger on her realness. She was so pretty and so quick that even when she had just awakened, her eyes full of sleep and hair tousled, I thought she looked just like the Virgin Mary. But what mother and daughter understand each other, or even have the sympathy for each other’s lack of understanding? (Angelou, 1971: 68).

Failed mothers are the females who are failed in being a mother or bad symbols of motherhood. The failed mother figures of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* are Joyce and Dolores. Joyce, girlfriend of young Bailey, is the first failed mother figure who is connected with sex, and sexuality. Bailey’s love Joyce can be understood as the manifestation of the absence of a mother in his life. The second failed mother is Dolores, Big Bailey’s girl friend, is the symbol of jealousy and physical pain. She cuts Maya’s hand since she does not want anybody between her and Big Bailey. By using different kinds of mothers, Angelou draws us a variety of motherhood.

Joyce is Bailey’s girl friend who is 4 years older than him. Bailey’s long for a physical contact lead him to approach Joyce. He searches for motherly love in Joyce’s hands. It can be noted that it deals with the maturity of Bailey and his first

love. The children without parents search for another love so Bailey's search of love ends with his confrontation of sex. Maya defines Bailey's love,

I think she was Bailey's first love outside the family. For him, she was the mother who let him get as close as he dreamed, the sister who wasn't moody and withdrawing, and teary and tender-hearted. All he had to do was keep the food coming in and she kept the affection flowing. It made no difference to him that she was almost a woman, or possibly it was just that difference which made her so appealing (1971:150).

Joyce uses Bailey for her financial support and she takes his virginity. They both provide for their needs, Joyce uses Bailey for her financial and sexual needs, Bailey uses Joyce for his sexual and emotional needs. Bailey also finds the parental love he was looking for. According to Maya, Joyce comes between Maya and Bailey as Dolores will come between Big Bailey and Maya. Joyce becomes the centre of Bailey's life so when she runs off with a railroad porter, Bailey loses his "interest in everything".

Another failed mother figure is Dolores who is the girlfriend of her biological father Big Bailey. He plans to marry Dolores but Maya dislikes her. When Maya goes to her father's house to spend the summer, she is disappointed because she expects her father living in a big house but they live in a "trailer" park. Dolores' dirt also disturbs Maya. Dolores and Maya quarrel because they found themselves as opponents. Dolores wants to be the authority and Maya gets jealous of her father so they quarrel. Maya never wants to see Dolores as a mother figure. Maya explains her confrontation with Dolores as "When I met Dolores she had all the poses of Black bourgeoisie without the material basis to support the postures (Angelou, 1971: 227). She gets jealous of her and she never sees her as a mother. Maya said

We indulged in a test of strength for weeks as Dad stood figuratively on the sidelines, neither cheering nor booing but enjoying himself greatly. He asked me once if I "er liked erer my mother". I thought he meant my mother, so I answered yes- she was beautiful and gay and very kind. He said he wasn't talking about Vivian, he meant Dolores. Then I explained that I didn't like her because she was mean and petty and full of pretense (1971: 229).

Dolores thinks that Maya has come between her and Bailey. When Dolores calls Maya's mother a bitch, Maya starts to quarrel with her. Finally their war ends with Maya's cut by Dolores. Maya escapes from the house and lives in a junkyard. She turns back to her mother and says " I was at home, again. And my mother was a fine lady, Dolores was a fool, and more important, a liar"(Angelou, 1971: 255).

3.1.2 "OTHER " MOTHER FIGURES

There is also "other mother" figure in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* such as Mrs. Flowers. Hilary S. Crew her "Feminist Theories and the Voices of Mothers and Daughters in Selected African American Literature for Adults" defines "othermother" as

They represent for the daughter alternative values and roles for the young woman struggling to extricate herself from what she perceives as the confining structures of her mother. Without the boundaries of the confines of the maternal, these othermothers nurture, train and provide practical support to young women. They help daughters to traverse the boundaries of the outside while maintaining these connections to family and values that contribute to empowering the adolescent female (1994: 14).

In order to understand this figure, it will be helpful to remind Maya's rape by her mother's boy friend Mr. Freeman. Mr Freeman rapes Maya and he threatens to kill her and her brother Bailey if she tells it to anybody. Bailey finds the bloodied pants so the event revealed. After Maya's rape by Mr. Freeman, her uncles kill him. She finds herself guilty because of Mr. Freeman's death. Maya isolates and silences herself in order not to create another man's death. She carries the burden of guilt. Mrs. Bertha Flowers helps Maya in those hard times. She allows Maya to speak through the books and poems. Mrs. Flowers wants Maya to read the books loud so she helps her to regain her power to speak and sing. She says "Now no one is to make you talk, possibly no one can. But bear in mind, language is man's way of communicating with his fellow man and it is language alone which seperates him from the lower animals"(98).

In this sense, Mrs. Flowers can also be defined as a "mother figure" since she becomes one of "nurturer, trainer and provider" females in Maya's life. Mrs. Flowers saves Maya from her mute and dark world after the rape. According to Maya, Mrs. Flowers is one of the wonderful people in the world and she makes Maya proud of her black body. Mrs. Flowers tells "Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with the shades of deeper meaning (98). Mrs. Flowers teaches Maya how to speak that leads to Maya's rebirth. Mrs. Flowers helps Maya to understand life and to analyse the world. In *The Masks of Maya Angelou: Discovered, Discarded, and Designed* Collette Simone Mangeau-Marshall defines the connection of Mrs. Flowers and Maya,

Maya's and Mrs Flowers connection through the world of muteness, loneliness, and isolation awakens to the powers of the written and the spoken word. Words Maya comes to discover give her personal power. Mrs. Flowers represents a significant treasure that Maya discovers in her quest of identity. Now empowered with a voice, Maya can create through speaking, listening, reading, writing, sharing, expanding, and reflecting on language- singing her song. She returns to speaking with a sense of the power of language both to console her for her powerlessness and to give her a new power: this caged bird has learned to sing (1994: 34).

Therefore, Maya no longer feels herself inferior by the help of Mrs. Flowers. Mrs. Flowers becomes a symbol of her literal power and helps Maya to regain her self-esteem. She fills a blank in Maya's broken heart after the rape. Mrs. Flowers helps Maya's "reevaluation of her self image" by using the power of the words, or in other words by singing. In *African American Autobiography: A Sourcebook*, Emanuel S. Nelson edits

The quest for identity, a related theme to imprisonment and displacement, threads its way through all the volumes of Angelou's narratives. Although there are many psychological and emotional setbacks for Maya in her quest for self, she does find self-affirmation along the journey. In *Caged Bird*, during Maya's time of voluntary muteness, its Mrs. Flowers, as surrogate mother figure, through affirmation and acceptance of the child for herself, who helps Maya reevaluate herself image (1983: 19).

She respects to Mrs. Flowers and doesn't want her grandmother call her "sister". She finds "sister" humiliating for Mrs. Flowers since she deserves "Mrs". She positions Mrs. Flowers in an upper state and she wants the others to respect her.

On the other hand Mrs. Cullinan is another female figure in *Caged Bird*, but she is not a mother. Mrs. Cullinan is the woman who Maya works for. Maya starts to question the motherhood of Mrs. Cullinan when the housekeeper Miss Glory says her that Mrs. Cullinan could not have children. When she asks Bailey about this situation he said her that her husband Mr. Cullinan is the father of two daughters who were given birth by a black lady. He says that the girls look like their father. Maya tries to imagine the girls as light skinned. She pities of Mrs. Cullinan as she does not have a child and she is not a mother. She describes Mrs. Cullinan as "white, fat, old and without children". Maya thinks that having no children means to be lonely.

3.2 SEXUAL ABUSE AND "VICTIMIZED" DAUGHTER

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou not only stresses on her relations with her mothers she also gives the details about her father figures. In this part of my thesis, the father figures will be discussed by differentiating them from mother figures. I will divide her father figures as her biological father Big Bailey, her real father Daddy Clidell, her fake father Mr. Freeman and finally her literal father Shakespeare.

Mr. Freeman is the worst father figure since he rapes his stepdaughter Maya. Her sexual abuse by her mother's boy friend Mr. Freeman is depicted in her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*,

One morning she got out of bed for an early errand, and I feel a sleep again. But I woke to a pressure, a strange feeling in my left leg. It was too soft to be a hand and it wasn't the touch of the clothes. Whatever it was, I hadn't encountered the sensation all the years of sleeping with Momma. It didn't move and, I was too startled to. I turned my head a little to the left to see if Mr. Freeman was awake and gone, but his eyes were open and both hands were above the cover. I know as if I had always known, it was his "thing" on my leg(1971: 72).

She thinks that Mr. Freeman's movement is a lovely attempt but in fact it was totally sexual. She thinks that Mr. Freeman is holding her so for the first time she "feels at home". "Finally he was quiet and then came the nice part. He held me softly that I wished he wouldn't ever let me go. I felt at home. From the way he was holding me he'd never let me go or let anything bad ever happen to me. This was probably my real father and we had found each other at last" (1971: 73). While Mr. Freeman was satisfying himself with Maya's weak body, Maya thinks that Mr. Freeman was her "real father" and she wants to "rest her head on it". She needs a physical contact, a hug or a hold by a fatherly power. Her world has been "Bailey, food, Momma, the Store, reading books and Uncle Willie" but she needs a "physical contact". The next attempt of Mr. Freeman's physical contact ends with "rape". Maya explains rape "Then there was the pain. A breaking and entering when even the senses were torn apart. The act of rape on a eight-year-old girl is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't (78). Angelou writes her experience of rape as "I was eight and grown. Even the nurses in the hospital had told me that now I have nothing to fear. "The worst is over for you" they said (84). In "Daughters Seduction: Sexual Violence and Literary History" Christina Froula says

An adult can see that the daughters need for a father's affection does not cancel his culpability for sexually abusing her. But the child can not resolve the conflict between her desire to tell the truth, which means acknowledging the pleasure she felt when Mr. Freeman gently held her and her awareness of the social condemnation that would greet this revelation (Froula, 1986: 16).

Maya's silence after the rape can be a model for psychological oppression. It is possible to be oppressed in ways that need involve neither physical deprivation, legal inequality nor economic exploitation. One can also be oppressed psychologically. Psychological oppression of which Sandra Bartky speaks "To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighted down in your mind, it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors; they come to be exercised over their own self-esteem" (105). She starts to re-create a new life of silence. She finds out a new life in the books by using her fantasy and imagination. She tries to get rid of her oppression by building a secure life without speaking. She creates a world where she is totally free and where

there is no voice but only words exist. She attempts to escape from real life and she tries to be invisible. It demonstrates that the act of rape which is a man power act also destroys the victim's social relations. She does not want to speak with anyone after her rape. It also ruins her relation with her mother.

Christina Froula writes "The Iliad suggests that women's silence in culture is neither a natural nor an accidental phenomenon but a cultural achievement, indeed a constitutive accomplishment of male culture" (9). Froula adds "In silencing her self, Maya- who knows why the caged bird sings- plays all the parts in this cultural drama. She suffers as victim, speaks the father's death, and cuts out her own tongue for fear of its crying "Father" (1986: 17).

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya explains her rape as "I thought I had died- I woke up in a white walled world and it had to be heaven. But Mr. Freeman was there. His hands shook but he held me upright in the tub and washed my legs. "I didn't mean to hurt you Rittie. I didn't mean it. But don't you tell... Remember don't you tell a soul" (65). In "Victimized Daughters: Sexual Violence and the Empathic Female Self", Janet Liebman Jacobs describes Maya's rape,

In this retelling of the rape, Angelou reconstructs the child self who simultaneously experiences the suffering of the victim while responding to the remorse of the victimizer. Immediately after the assault, the perpetrator is caring for her and apologizing asking that she, the abused child understand that he did not mean to hurt her. She in turn is aware of his shaking hands even while her own body feels shattered and torn. In that moment of awareness, the physical and emotional boundary violations converge as the child feels both her pain and the pain of her abuser (1993: 10).

Patricia Dannette Hopkins in her dissertation "Invisible Woman: Reading Rape and Sexual Exploitation",

It is important to emphasize that Marguerita feels extremely burdened by the lie that she tells in court while under oath. Therefore, when later she finds out that Freeman is found murdered while out on bail, despite what critics traditionally argue, I suggest that it is the effect of

the lie and not the rape, which sends Marguerita into a world of silence (2002: 155).

3.3 CYCLES OF DISPLACEMENT & MOTHERLESSNESS

The beginning of the autobiography shows the displacement of Maya Angelou. This prologue creates an atmosphere of pain and alienation of a little girl in front of a crowd. “What you looking at me for? I didn’t come to stay...”(Angelou, 1971:1) exactly illustrates the psychological despair of a little girl. This little girl, Maya Angelou, starts her autobiography by the words of little Maya. This little Maya is humiliated in front of the crowd since she forgets the poem she is supposed to recite. She also shares her personal feelings about her being totally ugly because of skin color. Therefore the autobiography starts with a restricted and psychologically depressed mood. Her cage is drawn in the very beginning of the autobiography. She is depicted as “little”, “black” and “girl”.

In second and third chapters Maya Angelou presents another figure in her life that struggles with the racism: Uncle Willie. Uncle Willie is a handicapped man and she sympathizes with him when he hides her crippled leg from the strangers who are trying to cause a damage in the Store. Uncle Willie also hides himself while the sheriff comes to Store declaring that “a black man messed with a white woman” and the whites were looking for this man. Momma hides Uncle Willie in the potatoe bins so she saves her son to be lynched by the whites. This shows the cruciality of the whites and shows that the racism can choose its victims from innocent people. Uncle Willie’s cage is also drawn by his “body” as deformed and his color as black.

Racism also persists in different work fields, education and medical science. Racism in education is strongly drawn by Maya Angelou. The black schools and white schools are distinguished since white schools have more facilities than the black schools. For instance the white schools have tennis court but the blacks have not. Another important issue discussed in the autobiography is the racist valedictory speech of one of the teachers. Mr. Donleavy in his speech focuses on the mental

skills of the white students by humiliating the black ones. According to Mr. Donleavy white kids have a chance to become Galileos and Madame Curies and Edisons and Gauguins while black children try to be Jesse Owens and Joe Louises. Thus, Mr. Donleavy points out that the white kids would be successful in science, physics and maths whereas black kids would be successful in only sports. He ignores the black children's mental skills. Maya expresses her anger with these words,

We were maids and farmers, handymen and washerwomen and anything higher that we aspired to was forcial and presumptuous. Then I wished that Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner had killed all whitefolks in their beds and that Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that Harriet Tumban had been killed by that blow on her head and Christopher Colombus had drowned in the Santa Maria (1971: 181).

Angelou added "It awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to changes brought against my color with no chance of defense" (1971:181). Edward Donleavy's speech becomes one of the most racist attitude in this autobiography. He discouraged the black children in their graduation ceremony. Doubtless, Henry Reed's speech will be a cure after Mr. Donleavy's speech. He leads a song known as Negro National Anthem so the depressed atmosphere vanishes. Maya and the other black kids gain their self-confidence and power.

However, while reading the rest of the book we come across another racist attitude. While Maya was suffering from toothache, her grandmother took her to a white dentist since there was not a Negro dentist nearby. As Dr. Lincoln had borrowed some amount of money from Momma, she took her grandchildren to Dr.Lincoln's office. Nevertheless, she encounters with a racist reaction and Dr.Lincoln says " Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's" (1971: 189). This speech can be noted as one of the most striking racist attitudes in the novel. The next chapter is also opened by another racist event. Bailey sees a colored man's body rotten in the pond. When Momma hears it, she

decides to send the children to their parents. She starts to be nervous about her grandchildren's security.

Thus, when we look back to these previous three chapters Maya Angelou fights back to racism and she presents the affect of racism on children's psychology. These three chapters teach us that the racism keeps on in education with Mr. Donleavy's valedictory speech, in the field of medical science with the cruel attitude of Dr. Lincoln and in the social life with the lynching of blacks' bodies. However she also wants to illustrate that there are some exceptances in these fields such as Miss Kirwin. Miss Kirwin is the teacher of Maya who behaves everychildren equally and she never notices Maya as a different student.

On the other hand, Maya Angelou gives the historical background of her time. She says " World War II started on a Sunday afternoon when I was on my way to the movies. People in the streets shouted " We're at war. We have declared war on Japan"(Angelou, 1971:208). She also notes that the World War II changed the balance of powers. As the war started between Americans and Japanese, Japanese workers were removed and blacks replaced Japanese workers.

After the quarrel with Dolores, Maya left home and spent the night in a junkyard where a group of homeless people lived. They consist of Mexicans, blacks and white homeless people. Maya in this chapter conquers the other side of life, the reality of life. She stays there for a month and learns how to survive. At the end of the chapter she asks her mother to pay for fare and she turns back to her mother. She was "at home" again next to her mother where she feels safe and happy.

When Maya decides to work as a street-car conductor, she gains her power and dignity Her mother Vivian encourages her. Maya uses the capitals to express her decision and her determination to work. When she starts to work as a first Negro streetcar conductor, her relationship with her mother also improves. They start to admire each other. One day her mother says, " Life is going to give you just what you put in it. Put your whole heart in everything you do, and pray, then you can

wait” (1971: 269). God helps those who help themselves (Angelou, 1971: 269). Her mother teaches Maya how to survive in the harsh realities of life to be powerful against the difficulties. Maya decides to work since it mostly encourages the black soul to stand up and do something in order to draw her destiny. As she starts to be mature in the junkyard, her journey into maturity accelerates in the work and it ends with her giving birth to a baby. She expresses her maturity with her words “ To be left alone on the tightrope of youthful unknowing is to experience the excruciating beauty of full freedom and the threat of eternal indecision. Few, if only, survive their teens. Most surrender to the vague but murderous pressure of adult conformity. It becomes easier to die and avoid conflicts than to maintain a constant battle with the superior forces of maturity.

In *The Heart of a Woman*, Maya tries to find a house but the landlord does not want to hire the house to a black woman. Guy’s problem at school. Guy was accused of telling some worst words to the school-mates. In fact it throughly depends on his skin-color. When Maya goes to Guy’s school, she says

The impossibility of the situation filled my mouth bitter saliva. How could I explain a young black boy to a grown man who had been born white? How could the two women understand a black mother who had nothing to give her son except a contrived arrogance? If I had an eternity and the poetry of old spirituals, I could not maket hem live with met he painful moments when I tried to prove to Guy that his color was not a cruel joke, but a healthful design. (1986: 19).

So she starts to search for another school. I began searching for another school and another house. We needed an area where black skin was not regarded as one of nature’s more unsightly mistakes (Angelou, 1986: 21).

The end of the novel illustrates a journey of a black soul in to the waves of adulthood. Her journey into junkyard, her work as a streetcar conductor and as a mother, mature her. Her stay in junkyard serves as a psychological maturity, her work as a social maturity and her giving birth to a baby as a physical maturity. In the end of the novel Maya Angelou becomes totally a matured woman. Her journey into maturity weakens her cycles of displacement. Her displacement was caused by her

alienation from the society because of her color and her motherlessness in the familial sphere. As Maya starts to discover her self and find out her place in the society, she gets rid of her sense of displacement.

VI. PORTRAITS OF MATERNITY IN *THE HEART OF A WOMAN*

The Heart of a Woman is about the sixties America when Maya Angelou engaged in political field as Northern Coordinator for the SCLC. The sixties were the age of baby-boom as 70 million babies were born after the World War II. It was a time of revolution and change. The Civil Rights Movement in 1960's started with Martin Luther King leading sit-ins and peaceful riots. In 1960's another important figure of Black nation was Malcolm X. But in the end of the era, these two black leaders were both assassinated. Malcolm X was also assassinated in 1965, and Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968. In 1963, John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald. The Space Race begun by the Soviets in 1957. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in Apollo XI were the first men to step on the moon in 1963. Sheila Radford-Hill in her *Further to Fly: Black Women and the Politics of Empowerment* revises the 1960's as,

The black teens and young adults of the 1960's absorbed the heady, optimistic "young, gifted, and black" spirit of the times. Protests were filled with freedom songs, political slogans, and social ideals. Black people began walking in Montgomery but were soon "marchin up to Freedom Land" Freedom rides, civil rights, the March on Washington, Free Africa, voting rights, the worldwide liberation struggle, and black power all changed America (Radford-Hill, 2000: 42).

Maya Angelou was also a member of an organisation called SCLC leaded by Martin Luther King. She wrote *The Heart of a Woman* in this political harsh atmosphere and she stresses the 1960s chaotic atmosphere with those words in the beginning of her autobiography "It was the awakening summer of 1960 and the entire country was in labour. Something wonderful was about to be born, and we were all going to be good parents to the welcome child. It's name was Freedom" (71). Maya Angelou stories about out well-known people from the history in her *The Heart of a Woman* such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman. As

Maya Angelou became the northern coordinator of a black organization built by Malcolm X, she writes about her confrontation with him and his political reviews. Betty Thomas Collier in *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements* describes Malcolm X as the protector of black women and adds “Large numbers of the urban women to whom Malcolm X spoke were the daughters of or were themselves women who fled to South in an attempt to escape the threat of rape from white males. Black women also found themselves the victims of economic exploitation, unfair employment practices, medical experimentation, and domestic violence. Who was deemed better to play the role of protector than black men? This of course, is a role that had been denied black men throughout the history (Collier, 2001: 217). Therefore Malcolm X becomes a protector of Maya Angelou so she joins his activism. She is not only an observer for the events, she also participates in them. *The Heart of a Woman* deals with more political and social concerns than the personal atmosphere of her previous autobiography. Therefore, *The Heart of a Woman* tries to explain the “survival” from the harsh realities of the world and from a perspective of a woman’s life in this changing century.

However she explores the black consciousness of equality and political power, most of her autobiography contextualizes her maternity. Maya Angelou explains how to be a black mother and a black woman in political, social and psychological sense in *The Heart of a Woman*. Undoubtedly, she writes as an individual influenced by her historical times. Therefore, this study creates the framework of African-American autobiography from a theoretical and thematic perspective by investigating the historical stages of her.

Although her autobiography claims the recognition of black motherhood as the central theme, she develops a circle of relations; mother-son, female-male, and white-black. She keeps up with business life, political rights and institution of marriage while bringing up a child. Before concentrating on these three levels of my investigation, I will firstly write about how being a mother affects Maya’s writing tradition since she mostly concentrates on the bringing up a son under a white

dominated society. Alicia Ostriker in her *Writing like a Woman* highlights an awareness of being a mother during writing activity,

The advantage of motherhood for a woman artist is that it puts her in immediate and inescapable contact with the sources of life, death, growth, corruption. If she is a theoretician it teaches her things she could not learn otherwise; if she is a moralist it engages her in serious and useful work; if she is a romantic it constitutes an adventure which can not be duplicated by any other, and which is guaranteed to supply her with experiences of utter joy and utter misery; if she is a classicist it will nicely illustrate the vanity of human wishes. If the woman artist has been trained to believe that the activities of motherhood are trivial, tangential to main issues of life, irrelevant to the great themes of literature, she should untrain herself. The training is misogynist, it protects and perpetuates systems of thought and feeling which prefer violence and death to love and birth, and it is a lie (1983: 130- 131).

Angelou's motherhood influenced her works of art since she starts to take place in both domestic and public sphere. Her identity is divided into two levels, a mother and Maya herself. Consequently, her mothering process sticks her between the social responsibilities and domestic works. *The Heart of a Woman* traces how Maya metamorphoses from being a political activist to a mother.

The Heart of a Woman also dispels the dualities of Maya Angelou since she moves from America to Africa, from optimism to pessimism, from happiness to sadness, from daughter to mother. These opposing representations are interwoven in her autobiography that supports her split character. Ultimately, Angelou synthesizes how her split character evolves from a harmony of separations. In *Order Out of Chaos: The Autobiographical Works of Maya Angelou* Dolly Aimee Mcpherson records these dualities of Angelou's themes, "There are themes in *The Heart of a Woman*, must begun in the earlier volumes of the autobiography, which critics will continue to explore: the tight-rope walk between reality and fantasy; the way the autobiographer records and other events; the autobiographer's movement from innocence to knowledge; and the moments of decision and indecision" (1986: 143).

Enchanted with the sense of growth, sexuality, Maya starts to question herself. Maya's quest of self ends with her experience of motherhood in the end of her first autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. She asks questions to her mother about her body and the incomprehensible growth in her vagina. Her mother says they are all natural growths and every girl experiences it. When Marguerita sees one of her friends naked, she thinks her breasts are very beautiful. She starts to be afraid of being a lesbian. In order to understand it better, she thinks it would be really good to have a sexual intercourse with a man. Therefore, Maya finds a man to have sex and she asks him if he would like to have a sexual intercourse with her. The guy says "You mean, you're going to give me some trim?" (281). Maya finds his words insulting, in fact it is her intention to "take something from him". After having sex with the guy, she finds herself pregnant. She learns her pregnancy and says "The little pleasure I was able to take from the fact that if I could have a baby I obviously wasn't a lesbian was crowded into my mind's tiniest corner by the massive pushing in of fear, guilt and self-revulsion" (284). Therefore her journey as a mother starts after this unusual sexual intercourse. Emphasizing her first feelings as a mother, Angelou writes in the final of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*,

After a short labour, and without too much pain (I decided that the pain of delivery was overrated), my son was born. Just as gratefulness was confused in my mind with love, so possession become mixed up with motherhood. I had a baby. He was beautiful and mine. Totally mine. No one had bought him for me. No one had helped me endure the sickly gray months. I had had help in the child's conception, but no one could deny that I had had an immaculate pregnancy (1971: 288).

Maya's first words on her motherhood explains her exciting feelings about her motherhood. She sees her son as a possession of her and never denies her pains to give birth her son. Motherhood is associated with pain and "gray months" that foreshadows the reader that the motherhood will not be easy for her. She knows that growing up a black boy will be more painful than delivering him. As Maya's first autobiography ends with a portrait of mother and her baby son, it indicates a new beginning of life with her new born baby. Vivian's desire of Maya's sleeping with her baby while "touching her side" indicates the bond between mother and child.

Mary Vermillion in “Reemboying the Self: Representations of Rape in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*” comments on the last words of Vivian as,

“See”, Vivian whispers, “you don’t have to think about doing the right thing. If you’re for the right thing then you do it without thinking” (246). Presenting the mother/child bond as a symbol of Maya’s newfound autonomy, this closing scene reverses her earlier privileging of the verbal over the physical and celebrates the harmonious interaction of her body and will (1992: 256).

According to Vermillion, Maya Angelou’s “celebration of black motherhood” is a sign of “personal autonomy”. The embracing scene is revealed as an idealization of mother and child relation. On the other hand, Angelou accomplish this portrayal by demonstrating not only one mother and child bond but also two mothers approachment. Vivian embraces Maya and Maya embraces Guy. Thus, Angelou is able to present the last scene as a portrayal of three generations: Maya, Vivian and Guy.

4.1 MAYA’S MATERNITY: THE BLACK MOTHER and CHILD BOND

Stephen Butterfield in *Black Autobiography*, 1974 he says “continuity is achieved by the contact of mother and child, the sense of life begetting life that happens automatically in spite of all confusion-perhaps also because of it”. In *The Heart of a Woman*, mother and child bond is investigated under three notions; the displacement of the child, the mother’s necessity in the child’s development and the psychological outlook of Oedipal stage.

The displacement is the shared theme of Angelou’s both autobiographical works of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman*. Maya’s sense of displacement starts with the first two lines of her previous autobiography: “What are you looking at me for? I didn’t come to stay...” (1).

Maya was sent to her grandmother's house in Stamps after their parents divorce. These lines show how Maya's sense of displacement makes her unable to adapt into her new environment. She suffers from the deep sense of displacement so she never feels herself completely at home. She describes her insulting emotional displacement in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; "If growing up is painful for the Southern black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is unnecessary insult" (3). Throughout the book Maya looks for a place to stay in order to feel herself at home. Her sense of not belonging to anywhere not only rooted from her emotional removal of her family, but also because of her color. In *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women*, Nancy A. Walker points out

The Black Southern community is itself a precarious entity politically and historically. A sense of displacement characterises its people, something which is perceptible not only in *Caged Bird* but in most Afro-American autobiographies. Displacement evokes black people's sense of being out of place in American society: historically, they were removed not only from their homeplace but also from their family ties during the period of slavery. In *Caged Bird*, the theme of displacement is represented at the conjunction of the personal and the political (1990: 59).

The displacement is not only a problem of Maya, but also some other characters share the same problem such as her father Bailey and her uncle Willie. Bailey's displacement is caused by his status position in the society because of his color and his class. Although he works as a porter in a hotel, he tries to uncover her social class by his clothes and his speech. Uncle Willie is also another victim of displacement since he is crippled and black. In *The Heart of a Woman*, Maya's son Guy suffers from the sense of displacement since he moves from one city to another. Angelou writes her son's in need of a home to belong as,

In his nine years of schooling, we had lived in five areas of San Francisco, three townships in Los Angeles, New York City, Hawaii, Cleveland, Ohio. I followed the jobs, against the advice of a pompous school psychologist, I had taken Guy along. The psychologist had been white, obviously educated and with those assets I knew he was also

well-to-do. How could he know what a young Negro boy needed in a racist world (29).

Maya's and Guy's inability to connect with their environment is also rooted from their lack of a family unit. Maya is sent to her grandmother, she looks for a maternal and paternal love and a place called "home" where the father and mother live together. Guy also does not have a father even though he has a mother. However he needs a father figure to take as role model. In *The Heart of a Woman*, Maya empathizes with Guy, since they share a similar childhood.

He covered the hurt with a look of unconcern, but I knew his face better than my own. Each fold, every plane, the light or shadow in his eyes had been objects of my close scrutiny. He had been born to me when I was an unmarried adventurous seventeen-year-old; we grown up together. Since he was fatherless most of his fourteen years, the flash of panic in his eyes was exchanged for scorn whenever I brought a new man into our lives. I know the relief when he discovered the newcomer cared for me and respected him. I recognized the confusion that changed his features each time the man packed to leave. I understood the unformed question. "She made him leave. What will she do if I displace her too?" he remained standing, hands in his pockets, waiting for me to convince him of the stability of my love. Words were useless (1986: 35).

Maya understanding the feelings of her son Guy since she used to have similar thoughts when she was a child. Both Maya and Guy were grown up in a disunited familial bond. A single mother raises Guy as a single grandmother and then a single mother raises Maya. Maya knows how to be fatherless that's why she makes a connection with Guy. When a new man comes to Maya's life, Guy finds him as a threat for him. He relieves when he finds out that the man cares for his mother. However if Maya leaves the man, he again starts to worry. He wants to hear the permanent love of his mother as he does not want to be left by her.

Maya's similar quest of love ends with her rape by her mother's boyfriend Mr. Freeman. Maya's rape is also a result of her search of a familial love and bond. Maya needs a father figure to hug and that's why she holds Mr. Freeman. Ruberta Rubenstein in her *Boundaries of Self* notes down,

In the absence of close bonds with one or both parents, a child seeks some other person who will satisfy the need for a deep, aiding emotional attachment. A central representation of the problems of boundary and attachment that originate in the parent-child bond is that of symbiosis: the mutually dependent emotional connection that ultimately may either facilitate or impede growth of the self. (Rubenstein, 1987: 134)

Maya's absence of father ends with her abuse by her mother's boy friend. She tries to satisfy her emotional hunger by holding Mr. Freeman. Articulating the significance of "mother" in child's development, Maya Angelou analyses the mother and daughter relations. In her thesis *Classifying Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings as an African-American Female Bildungsroman* Clifford J. Kurkowski utters

As Marguerita views her mother in a different light she questions her own admiration towards her mother but does not lose respect. Here again, Marguerita tries to separate herself from her mother's identity as she ponders the lifestyle her mother has chosen. Marguerita wants a role model, but she questions whether her mother is the role model she wants to look up to (2004: 15).

Maya's hesitation of choosing her mother as a role model is rooted from her links to her grandmother Mamma. Since she was raised under the domain of her grandmother's strict rules of Christianity and work ethics, she hesitates to put her mother as a role model. Kurkowski adds,

By discussing sex, femininity and the female autonomy, Vivian creates a mother/daughter bond between them. Vivian strengthens Marguerita's self esteem as only a mother could and she gives her the guidance to understand her own femininity, and it's an important growth process for Marguerita. As Marguerita begins her ascent into womanhood and maturity, her bond with women, her image of herself in society all come together at this point. Vivian gives Marguerita the push into womanhood and maturity that her daughter needs by being there as a mother, a friend, a confidante and teacher (2004: 19).

Vivian accomplishes to give Maya her self-esteem which is extremely important for her growth. Vivian forces her to step into womanhood in order to gain Vivian's maternal practices. In the very beginning of her autobiography Angelou

portrays two mother figures by presenting their relations with their children, Maya and Vivian; Maya and Guy.

During our stay in Sausalito, my mother struggled with her maternal instincts. On her monthly visits, dressed in Stone metren furs, diamonds and spike heels, which constantly caught between loose floorboards she forced smiles and held her tongue. Her eyes, however, were frightened for her baby, and her baby's baby. She left words of money under my pillow or gave me cheeks as she kissed me goodbye. She could have relaxed had she remembered the Biblical assurance "Fruit does not fall far from the tree".

...

In less than a year, I began to yearn for privacy, wall-to wall carpets and manicures. Guy was becoming rambunctious and young-animal wild. He was taking fewer baths than I thought healthy, and because my friends treated him like a young adult, he was forgetting his place in the scheme of our mother-son relationship (1986: 4).

The mother and child relationship is put forth by Angelou while declaring Vivian's care for her and Maya's anxiety of Guy's growth. "Fruit does not fall from the tree" also refers to the mother and child bond. Fruit is implied as child while tree is implied as mother. Thus, the child copies her/his mother's attitudes and also they can not be totally seperated.

Whenever Maya feels herself in trouble she calls her mother Vivian. Similarly, when Guy has some problems at school, Maya calls her mother Vivian. Vivian still calls Maya "baby" even though Maya is a matured mother. In *The Heart of a Woman*, Maya writes " 'Of course, we can meet, of course, I want to see you, baby'. Six feet tall, with a fourteen-year-old son, and I was still called baby" (1986: 23).

In *The Heart of a Woman*, the mother and daughter bond strongly felt by these words of Maya Angelou, " I needed to see my mother. I needed to be told just one more time life was what you make it and that every thought to sit on its own bottom. I had to hear her say " They spell my name W-O-M-A-N cause the difference between a female and a woman is the difference between shit and shinola" (1986: 209, 210). She wants to get her mother's advise although she knows she will say the same words. When Maya is in NewYork if there is a problem, she could call

her friends and her mom but in Cairo they're too far away. However whenever there is a problem she says that "And always there was Mom" (221). When Maya and Vivian decide to meet at a hotel, Maya seems to be afraid of the people around her since they are the only black customers. Vivian teaches her something about her "fear". Vivian says "Animals can see fear. They feel it. Well you know that human beings are animals, too. Never, never let a person know you're frightened. And a group of them... absolutely never. Fear brings out the worst thing in everybody. Now, in that lobby you were as scared as a rabbit. I knew it and all those white folks knew it" (26).

However the roles of Maya and Vivian as mother and child sometimes change depending on their needs. Angelou writes "The next few weeks brought a change in our relationship which I never expected: we reserved roles. Vivian Baxter began to lean on me; to look to me for support and wisdom, I, automatically, without thinking about it, started to perform as the shrewd authority, the judicious one, the mother" (210).

By trying to illustrate both daughter and son relation with mother, Angelou focuses on her relation with Guy in the end of her autobiography. When Maya is out of town, there is a trouble with Guy again. She immediately comes to New York to see what happened. She encounters with her friends in the plane and she drinks and chats with them. She thinks "what a poor kind of mother I was. Drinking and laughing it up with a group of strangers white men at that, while my son was in some kind of trouble (75). She wants to move to another place since the gang threatens her son Guy. However Guy does not want to move because he thinks it is not a solution and that will be the same in another place. Therefore he does not want to run away from those boys. Maya as a mother in order to protect her son, goes to the house of Susie to find the head of the gang. When she arrives the house she threatens Jerry that she would kill Susie and her mother and she would kill Jerry and family if he touches her son. Therefore the mother instinct of protection can be understood by this reaction of Maya. When she comes back to home at night and asks Guy about the gang, he says he has talked with the gang and he has said that he has also a gang

in California in order to make them afraid. Maya finds out that her son is “following her steps” and said “He was definitely my son” (1986: 84).

There is a generation gap between Guy and Maya as usual. When Maya wants to see Guy’s friends, Guy finds it “foolish”and says “Mom, that’s old time. This isn’t Los Angeles, this is New York City.”,“I haven’t even met most of those guys folks. Look, Mom, some of them are seventeen and eighteen. How would I look if I said “my mom wants to meet your mom? Foolish”(178). On the other hand,, Maya’s story of a car accident that she had while she was with her ex-husband Tosh, strengthens the unity between them. Guy was also in the car and when she got consciousness she asked for Guy. When she got out of the car, she realized that her son was angry with her and when she tried to hold him, he screamed and “strike out at her”. Angelou tells the memory of accident as,

We had not caused the accident. Tosh had been the driver, and I was the most injured person. But I was the mother, the most powerful person in his world who could make everything better. Why I had made them worse? I could have prevented the accident. I should not have allowed our truck to be at that place at that time. If I hadn’t been so neglectful, my face would not have been cut, my teeth would not been broken and he would not have been scared out of his wits.

Now eight years later, Guy was asking himself. Why had I, by neglecting my duty, why had I put his pride in jeopardy? Had I thought that being married removed responsibility to keep the world on its axis and universe order? (1986: 208)

Another accident takes place when Guy and her friends are on the way home has an accident. As soon as Maya hears about the accident, she asks where his son is and she remembers “ her grandmother’s voice when she heard of a lynching ” (263). When the doctor asks if she had contacts at a military hospital and Maya said “I’m on my way ” and said “She meant well but she didn’t know my son. She didn’t know the cocky boy who had to live daily with his father’s rejection, or the young man who had lived with the certainty of white insolence and the unsureness of moving from school to school, coast to coast, and was made to find his way through another continent and new cultures. A person whose only certitude lay in the knowledge that

Mom, effective or not, was never too faraway” (267). After Guy is out of danger Maya calls her mother and Vivian sends her money and Vivian says she will come immediately if she needs her. This part demonstrates the love of mother and child and their inseparable link.

4.1.1 ANGELOU’S DEFINITION OF BLACK MOTHER

Angelou’s experience of motherhood is captured in her work *The Heart of a Woman* since the title also focuses on “the heart of a woman”. The heart of a woman is nobody but her child. Maya Angelou as a mother of thirteen years old son comes across the racial and social problems. In *The Heart of a Woman*, Angelou defines the black motherhood and writes about the problems all the black mothers faced,

The Black mother perceives destruction at every door, ruination at each window, and even she herself is not beyond her own suspicion. She questions whether she loves her children enough-or more terribly, does she love them too much? Do her looks cause embarrassment-or even more terrifying, is she so attractive her sons begin to desire her and her daughters begin to hate her. If she is unmarried, the challenges are increased. Her singleness indicates she has rejected, or has been rejected by her mate. Yet she is raising children who will become mates. Beyond her door, all authority is the hands of people who do not look or think or act like her and her children. Teachers, doctors, salesclerks, librarians, policemen, welfare workers are white and exert control over her family’s moods, conditions and personality; yet within the home, she must display a right to rule which at any moment, by a knock at the door, or ring of the telephone can be exposed as false. In the face of these contradictions, she must provide a blanket of stability, which warms but does not suffocate, and she must tell her children the truth about the power of white power without suggesting that it can not be challenged (1986: 36, 37).

Maya Angeolu defines the black mothers as suspicious and anxious women who only think their children. She adds in her definition of black motherhood if she “the black mother” is single, this indicates that her partner has rejected her. She says in the outer world all authority is in the hands of whites who do not think as her. Every work field consists of whites. Angelou thinks that a black mother is always anxious at home since serenity will be destroyed by a phone call from the police

declaring her child's lynching or a knock at the door announcing her daughter's lynching. With these words, Angelou warns black mothers to be aware of the white power which can devastate their peaceful homes. While she expresses her own feelings about being a black mother, she also becomes the voice of other black mothers. Angelou narrates this same experience of being a black mother when she tells about the story of Guy's being threatened by a gang which has killed a child. It can be noted that not only the whites are the source of threats for a black boy but also people from his own race. A friend's mother of Maya, Mom Willie defines the difficulties of being a black mother,

Well honey, raising boys in this world is more than a notion. Ask me about it. While they're young, you pray you can feed them and keep them in school. They get up some size and you pray some crazy white woman don't scream rape around them and get them lynched. They come of age and white men call them up to go fight, and you pray they don't get killed over there fighting some white folk's war. Now, raising a black boy makes you sit down and think (1986: 78).

She thinks that raising a black boy in this world is not that easy. She adds when they're young, you only pray God to feed them. Mom Willie states that when they grow up, the mother starts to fear about lynching, when they get older, the black mother again prays God for her children not to be get killed in the war of whites. Thus, the other name of the black mother becomes "fear". In Angelou's first autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the same fear can be witnessed in the eyes of Momma when the police came to her Store and announces about searching for a black man in order to lynch. She gets scared of Uncle Willie's lynching. Thus, although Maya's story is extremely personal, it portrays the black mothers who have always been anxious about their children's situations in case they lose them because of racism.

However, in the end of *The Heart of a Woman* Angelou redefines the motherhood and reveals the separation of Guy and herself. Guy will stay in the dormitory and he will attend to university that's why Maya and Guy separate from each other. Although her first autobiography ends with a unity of mother and child,

her latter autobiography ends with a redefinition of motherhood and celebration of self. She writes the separation as,

Guy was moving into Mensa Sabra Hall. I had seen his room in the dormitory and it looked too small and too dark, but he loved it. For the first time in his life, he was going to live alone, away from my persistent commands. Responsible to himself and for himself. My reaction was in direct contrast with his excitement. I was going to be alone, also for the first time. I was in my mother's house at his birth, and we had been together ever since. Sometimes we lived with others, or they lived with us, but he had always been the powerful axle of my life (1986: 271).

In *The Heart of a Woman* Guy separates from his mother for the first time in his life. They will continue their lives alone. Guy wants to separate from his mother and explains it with these words when Maya warns him to be careful about his neck while carrying the heavy things, he said " Mom, I know I'm your only child and you love me. But there is something for you to remember. It is my neck and my life. I will live it whole or not at all" (1986: 271). He wants to prove her mother that he can live without her on his foot. He desires to live his own life without her mother's wings. He adds "I love you Mom. Maybe now you'll have a chance to grow up (1986: 271). Guy wants her mother to "grow up" and find her real identity. The motherhood concept is deconstructed in the end of *The Heart of a Woman*. Guy is portrayed as a powerful man trying to reshape her own identity and start a new life. Maya also starts a new life without her son and says "I closed the door and held my breath. Waiting for the wave of emotion to surge over me, knock me down, take my breath away. Nothing happened. I didn't feel bereft and desolate. I didn't feel lonely or abandoned" (272). In the end of the work it is shown that Maya and Guy separate that causes the rebirth of both. Neither Maya feels herself alone after Guy's departure, nor Guy feels unhappy. Maya's last line "The first thought that came to me, perfectly formed and promising was 'At last, I'll be able to eat the whole breast of a roast chicken by myself'" (272).

Therefore the end of *The Heart of a Woman* portrays that it is not only a beginning for Guy, it is also a fresh start for Maya. Maya will find time to think of

more about herself. Nobody even Guy will become the centre of her life. She reexamines herself by the separation from her son that causes motherhood's reconstruction. Although the only goal of her life used to be Guy's happiness, now she becomes her life's axle. She regains her self-confidence and she will be cheerful even her son is not next to her.

4.1.2. THE BURDEN OF BLACK MOTHER: OEDIPAL STAGE

Angelou thinks that the black mother suffers from Oedipal stage of her son if she is beautiful. As black mothers both Maya and Vivian experience the desires of their sons. Angelou explains Bailey and Vivian's relation in an Oedipal stage,

Mother and Bailey were entangled in the Oedipal skein. Neither could do without or do with the other; yet the constrictions of conscience and society, morality and ethos dictated a separation. On some flimsy excuse, Mother ordered Bailey out of house. On an equally flimsy excuse he complied. Bailey was sixteen, small for his age, bright for any and hopelessly in love with Mother Dear (1986: 257).

Angelou gives an example of her and Guy. One summer Maya and Guy went to a party in Beverly Hills, Guy pointed out that his mother has an excellent body and is even more beautiful than Marilyn Monroe. In "Displacement and Autobiographical Style in Maya Angelou's *The Heart of a Woman*", Carol Neubauer reveals the Oedipal stage as "Many parents, alarmed at the dreadful possibility of raising incestuous thoughts in their children's minds, withdraw, refusing all physical contact and leaving the children yearning and befuddled with ideas of unworthiness" (Neubauer, 1983: 130). As Neubauer states, Maya gets afraid of her son's sexual desires and being a figure in them, she separates the attractive clothes and chooses the "motherly" ones. Thus, Maya as a black mother suffers from an Oedipal fear.

In order to understand the Oedipal stage which the black mother suffers from, it would be reasonable to analyse the Oedipus Complex from a Freudian perspective. Oedipus Complex briefly can be defined as a young boy's sexual desires for his mother. *In the Id and Ego* Sigmund Freud defines the Oedipus Complex as,

At a very young early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus Complex originates. (1927:141)

Thus, the boy's identification with his father lead him to get rid of his father. In *The Heart of a Woman* Guy suffers from this sense of identification with his lack father, while Bailey suffers from the same complex in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The both black boy figures are drawn as suffering from the Oedipal Stage to illustrate the pain of black mother. "In The Oedipus Problem in Freud and Lacan", Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen mentions the two traits of the description of the Oedipus Complex, first trait states that the oedipal triangle contains the libidinal object, cathexis and identification, and the second trait means this triangle arises from object and the desire for the mother is strengthened by the identification of father. (1994: 269). So the boy's identification with his father creates a rivalry and hostile atmosphere between father and the boy.

4.2 AN ALTERNATIVE MOTHER: AFRICA

In *The Heart of a Woman*, another alternative mother figure is Africa. Africa is portrayed as a mother figure in *The Heart of a Woman*, and it plays as a vehicle between the characters. Maya's husband Vus Make is associated with Africa since he is a South African freedom fighter who mostly uses the metaphor of "Mother Africa". He is the representative of Africa and he plays a role as a son of "Mother Africa". Make says "Make then systematically, explained how Africa was bludgeoned by slavery, having her strongest sons and daughters stolen and brought to build the country of the slaves" (105). In these words he tries to explain Africa's devastation by the whites through slavery. He believes that "the sons and daughters" of Mother Africa are stolen by the whites and are made slaves. Vus uses African figures and Mother Africa throughout the book. While Vus and Maya are having a

dinner at Vus's house, Vus "spreads the lights and shadows of Africa". They watch a film about Africa and Maya explains;

Glories stood in thrilling array. Warrior queens, in necklaces of blue and white beads led armies against marauding Europeans. Nubile girls danced in celebrations of the Victories of Shaka, the Zulu king. The actual earth of Africa was "black and strong like the girls back home" and glistened with gold and diamond. African men covered their betrothed with precious stones and specially woven cloth. He asked me to forgive the paucity of the gift he had for me and to understand that when we returned to Mother Africa he would adorn me with riches the likes of which I had never imagined. When he led me into the darkened guest room and placed a string of beads around my neck, all my senses were tantalized (1986: 128).

This description of Africa is fantasized by Maya since she was fascinated by the "shadows of Africa". Vus tries to evoke Maya's inner African soul so he gives her "a string of beads" as a gift. Vus is the dominant African figure in the novel who tries to gain a political power. Vus attracts the attention of Maya by going into her roots and her inner African self. Maya Angelou probably chooses Vus as a husband since he is totally full of African qualities.

Vus uses "Mother Africa", "Now you'll have two strong men to take care of. We three will be the only invaders Mother Africa will willingly take her breast"(1986: 132). Vus's personification of Africa as a mother helps him to create an atmosphere of despair and ex-slavery image. Mother Africa is portrayed as a mother who embraces the children of her and who cures the pains of them.

When Maya attends a meeting of national fighters' wives, there are many women from Kenya, Somali and other African countries. One of them shouts that "they fight against imperialism". She sings a song that was written by a slave. All of the women shout "Sister, Mother Africa is proud of you", "A true daughter of a true mother" (136). This song which has a healing quality reminds them of the soil they blurred up. They remember that they all belong to Africa. Therefore, the song becomes an element of Mother Africa. Spirituals and the melody are also important

elements to remind Mother Africa. Maya and her husband's friend David Dubois sometimes sing spirituals and she writes,

Surely exhibitionism was a part of our decision to sing in a room of talkers, but a deeper motivation was also present. The lyrics and melody had the power to transport us back into womb like familiarity. Admittedly, Africa was our place of genesis, long, long ago, but more recently, and more clearly known were the sounds of black America (1986: 219).

She makes a bond with her past and her roots through music and melody. She turns back to her mother's womb when she sings spirituals. So the music and the rhythm help her to "transport back into womb" that means to transport to Africa. Moreover when Vus talks about the imperialism and the white hierarchy over Africa, he says "Tell them, tell the savages of your country, that, Mother Africa will no longer allow them to suck from her breast (236). Vus says it to a white man while he is quarrelling with him. Mother Africa is portrayed as a strong woman recently gained her power so nobody can "suck from her breast" anymore. Angelou draws a strong Mother Africa as In her *The Search of Mother Africa: Poetry revises Women's Struggle for Freedom*, Colleen O'Brien says,

There is not important distinction to be made between the black male author's portrayal of the mythological Mother Africa and the verisimilitude of the South African mother who appears in women's writing. As opposed to the stereotypical, passive, idealized mother men allude to, we see in women's poetry the suffering and struggle involved in gaining control over their own lives and defining their own harsh, unglamorous role in the salvation of the country and its children (1994: 3).

O'Brien suggests that the male writers mostly figures out a "passive and stereotypical" African mother figure whereas the female writers creates powerful and struggling ones like Angelou does. Angelou's creation of a strong Mother Africa figure can be resulted from her search of her roots.

4.3 MOTHERS VS. FATHERS: A CRITICAL OF MARRIAGE

In *the Heart of a Woman*, Maya Angelou questions the institution of marriage by criticising relationships between men and women. This part will shortly assume the impact of marriage and the mother's place at home by focusing on Angelou's marriage with Vus Make, an African freedom fighter. Robert Staples portrays the relation of a black man and a woman with those words:

The black woman marries with the expectation that her husband will be the breadwinner for the family. But in a society of monopoly, capitalism, and white racism, the black male finds it difficult to obtain employment. Often the wife is forced to supplement the family income by taking a job. She is put in the unnatural position of breadwinner and wife mother. Consequently, the resentments of the Black mother accumulate. Under such conditions she is hardly inclined to be a congenial wife who can relate to her husband's problems. Both husband and wife begin to see themselves in perpetual conflict with different values and interests. The black male demands the rights and status of being the head of the household while rejecting the responsibilities. The Black woman may not try to hide the fact that he is fulfilling her expectations of a husband and a father. Such a situation frequently leads to marital discord, divorce and female-headed households (1970: 125 -126).

In her relations with Thomas Allen, Angelou looks for a love that enables her sex and food, but this relation is intellectually absent. Vus Make who is her second husband intellectually satisfies her. But she questions the marriage when Vus starts to gain the control over Maya's life. He limits her life and makes a typical housewife while he makes love with other women. When Maya decides to marry Vus Make, she thinks that it will be a combination of Africa and America and says, "This is the joining of Africa and Africa-America!"(120). She went to Cairo since Vus was working there. When she comes to their house, she finds out that it's luxurious and expensively decorated. Anggelou gives her first impression of the house,

A profound sense of worthlessness had made me pull away from owing good things, expensive furniture, rare rugs. That was exactly how white folks wanted me to feel. I was black, so obviously I didn't deserve to have armoires, shiny with good French veneer or tapestries, where mounted warriors waged their ancient battles in silk of thread.

No, I decided to crush that feeling of unworthiness. I deserved everything beautiful and I merited putting my long black feet on Oriental carpets as much as Lady Astor (1986: 215).

That was an indication of celebration of her self and celebration of black identity. Maya wants to get a job but Vus does not want her to work, “You black women. Who knows what to do with you? His laughter was more restrained. “Black and American. You think you can come to Egypt and just go get a job? That’s foolish. It shows the nevre of the black woman and the arragonce of the American. I must say, my dear wife, those are not very attractive qualities” (225). He adds “ As my wife, and a foreigner as well, you would never find a job. Besides, I look after you, I like you to look after me and Guy, and...” here he rubbed his chin lovingly-“ and maybe we’ll have a child, a little brother for Guy” (225). So he draws the duties of a wife, to give birth to child and to look after her husband. When Maya said she found a job in *The Arab Observer* as an editor, Vus said” You took a job without consulting me? Are you a man?” (226). When she said that she gave a promise to David that she is going to work there, Vus said “ You must call David and explain that you acted as an American woman, but that I returned home and reminded you that now you’re an African wife” (227). David said that he should be proud of his wife because all she wanted to work was because of Vus’s tiredness. Vus accompanied her to the *Arab Observer*. In this part Vus took the role of Maya’s father. “ I had to admit that although Vus’s decision to escort me to my job (my father never accompanied me on the first day of school) infuriated me, his attendance had been a godsend” (229). As Vus is African, and Maya is African- American, there are cultural diversities between them. Vus thinks that as an African man he can have more than one woman so he has a sexual intercourse with Mendinah who is an African dancer.

Angelou defines her work as a housewife, “It seemed to me that I washed, scrubbed, mopped, dusted and waxed throughly every other day. Vus was particular. He checked on my progress” (141). “Each meal at home was a culinary creation”(141).“A good woman put ironed sheets on the beds and matched the toilet paper to the color of the bathroom tile. I was unemployed but I had never worked so hard in all my life. Monday nights at the Harlem Writers Guild challenged my

control. Heavy lids closed my eyes and the best reading of the best writing could not hold my exhausted attention”(141). Maya was living in luxury and she was not asking to Vus where the money came from. Since she had earned her own money for years, it was not easy for her to waste her husband’s money. One of her friends Abbey said “You wanted a man, Maya Angelou. You’ve got one”(142).She defines her new position as a mother, as a housewife, “My position had always been that no one was responsible for Guy only until he reached maturity, and then he had to take control of his own existence. Of course, no man had ever tried to persuade me differently by offering the security of his protection (143). Abbey summarizes the position of Vus and Maya as “ The worst injury of slavery was that the white man took away the black man’s chance to be in charge of himself, his wife and his family. Vus is teaching you that you are not a man, no matter how strong you are. He’s going to make you into an African woman (143). When Maya wants to take part in a play, Vus rejects it and says “No wife of an African leader can go on a stage” and he added “Can you imagine the wife of Martin Luther King or Sobukwe or Malcolm X standing on a stage being examined by white men?” (174). Maya starts to question Vus and her marriage,

I was a good actress, not great but certainly competent. For years before I met Vus, my rent had been paid and my son and I had eaten and been clothed by money I made working on stages. When I gave Vus my body and loyalty I hadn’t included all the rights to my life. I felt no loyalty to the Blacks, since it had not earned my approval, yet I chafed under Vus’s attitude of total control. I said nothing (1986: 174).

Maya gets some unknown calls. They say that Make is killed but she understands that they’re all fake calls. Maya one day sees the form that depicts the non-payment of the rent. “I had read the form again. I was holding the third and last notice, which meant that Vus had collected the other two and said nothing to me. Then the responsibility was his. I had played the cared-for housewife, who made no money. I hadn’t asked for the position, but had accepted the role marriage had forced upon me” (206). She reads the unpayed bill and realizes that she has taken the role of house-wife. She talked the situation with Vus and he said he had enough money and

there is nothing to worry about it. Therefore Maya becomes a passive housewife under the dominion of male patriarchy.

In addition to the impact of marriage, the father's impact on children's growth will be detailed in this part. While mothers play a strong role in the development of children, it can not be underestimated the role of fathers. On black history, fathers become a symbol of "slaves" and the whipped one so they do not develop a sense of self-confidence. The fathers even do not associate with their children since they are not at home. The father figures in both of the novels play important roles that shape or change the development of the children. Mr. Freeman is the worst father figure that his sexual desires on Maya's body end with the rape of Maya. Maya's rape affects her whole life and her relationship with other men. She is both physically and emotionally raped. The other father figure is her biological father Bailey who has a trivial effect on Maya since he is too detached from her. Maya's bar experience with Bailey ends with her escape. The last father figure for Maya is Dady Clidell who is her mother's boy friend and she feels as if he is her real father. Her creation of father figures is rooted from her lack of love. On the other hand, Guys first father figure is Thomas but he is mostly affected by his second father figure Vus. Vus becomes a role model for Guy.

As a child in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* Maya Angelou, relied on the family. Growing up under the domain of her grandmother, she felt abandoned by her parents. As she felt isolated from her parents, she got close to her brother Bailey. Maya looked for a brotherly love and protection so she listened his words. As Bailey knows her sister's lack of beauty and self-reliance, he mostly tried to protect her. Bailey also created Maya's name by abbreviating her name Margaret. Maya became very fond of her new name which is given by her brother Bailey. Bailey becomes the first father figure or role model in her previous autobiography.

In *The Heart of a Woman*, Maya was in the centre of three guys; her son Guy, her fiance Thomas and her future husband Vus. Her son Guy was expecting "warmth, food, housing, clothes and stability" but Maya thinks that he should not

think that their world will not be change. She knows that she could not make their world unchangeable. Thomas wanted “a nice wife” who can cook well and finally Vus wanted an African woman as a representative of the “endurance of a people who had survived three hundred and fifty years of slavery” (123). Vus also wanted Maya to end his loneliness in bed. Maya was stuck in a combination of the male dominancy. Every man in her life wants something from her. She chooses her son Guy and Vus to continue her life and leaves Thomas.

Vus Make sustains to be the symbol of Africa and African roots in Angelou’s autobiography. When Maya meets Vus, she thinks he could be a good African father figure for Guy and she said “ There could be no greater future for a black American boy than to have a strong, black, politically aware father. His being African would add an enriching spice” (119). When Maya thinks about marriage she utters that a husband means “ someone to share responsibilities and guilt”(131).

However after marrying Vus, Maya gets dissappointed. She starts to feel the wires of patriarchy that unlocks her in a cage. Vus and Guy establish an invisible male aristocracy at home. They treated Maya as a housekeeper or a cook,

They sat together, laughing, talking and playing chess. They were pleased with the dinners I prepared, but when I called their attention to the flesh flowers on the table or a new dress I was wearing, their reactions were identical.

“How very nice, my wife”

“Lovely, Mom. Really very lovely”

“Guy your mother makes a beautiful house for us”

They treated me as if I were the kind and competent family retainer (1986: 187).

Guy takes Vus as a role model since he is an African that reminds her roots. Angelou was shocked of her son’s approachment to Vus and his ignorance of her. Guy starts to treat like Vus and they become very close. Angelou utters her sense of departure from her son with those words,

Guy had forgotten the years when I had encouraged him to interrogate me, question my rules, try to pick apart my every conclusion. There had been no father to bring balance into the pattern of my parenting,

so he had had the right to question and I had the responsibility of explaining. Now Vus was teaching him to be an African male and he was an apt student. Ambiguity stretched me like elastic. I yearned for our old closeness, and his dependence, but I knew he needed a father, a male image, a man in his life. I had been raised in a fatherless home, so I didn't even know what fathers talked about to their daughters, and surely I had no inkling of what they thought their sons (1986: 188).

Although the marriage with Vus proves sexually and intellectually satisfies Maya, he takes control over Maya and Guy. Maya gets envious of the relationship between Vus and Guy but she also knows that Guy needs a father figure. However Vus limits her involvement in her organizations so he puts her behind the political area and make her passive in the action. The marriage as an institution restricts her and locates her in the domestic arena. Her boundaries were drawn by her husband Vus and she does housework instead of involving in the struggle for racial equality. Therefore, the marriage becomes a hindrance to her personal quest for identity.

CONCLUSION

This study viewed the autobiography of black American women by differing from that of men within the tradition of African American autobiographical tradition. Although the emergence of the term autobiography appeared toward the end of eighteenth century, the studies of autobiography as a theory started to begin in the early 1960's. By the 1980's the black woman autobiography had begin to win importance.

In nineteenth century women also wrote about their ordinary lives, domestic duties and family ties. The women writers aimed at entertaining and educating the other women. Women's autobiographies differ from in their focus that women mostly emphasize their roles and their lives or the lives of other women. Women by writing the autobiographies originate the public voice so they can speak for themselves. In addition, women emphasize the aspects of life in women's sphere such as childcare, family, housekeeping and marriage in their autobiographies so they capture the family sphere and domestic area.

Women's autobiography, from the earliest has revised the definitions of the genre. As the women wrote themselves differently then the white bourgeois man, they exposed the traditional form of autobiography assumed essentially white male subject. The fixed and stable identity that most white male autobiographers created did not fit the women autobiographers. The traditional male autobiographer tells the story from his birth and mostly purposes to tell his life story as an example to follow. But there was a little space for women in male tradition. Women were excluded because they were placed in domestic realm. Contemporary American women writers's autobiography as a source for their works and they question the limits of the autobiography. They write their histories by declaring their personal lives and sharing their feelings with the reader.

Blacks mostly perceive themselves through art so they overcome the problems. This is why the black writer chooses autobiography as a genre to write.

Eventually, the black women autobiography was explored as a sub-genre which led the black female to utter the pains and provided them to remove the false image of black women. The images of black women were prejudiced so autobiography enables them to create their own images. Therefore the redefinition of the self stayed in the hands of the autobiographer to define who she is and to change the old images. As the black women were thought to be inferior in the history, the autobiographical writing process permit them to think deeply on their life stories and to dispose the negative image and create a positive self-identity.

Motherhood was associated with domesticity for women in America in the 1940's and 1950's. However for the black women the motherhood has been inseparable from her work, the black women autobiographers started to use it in their life stories. Angelou's experience of motherhood is also inseparably from her work that the theme of motherhood intertwined with her narrating autobiographies. Scholars such as Mary Jane Lupton, Carol Neubaur and Stephen Butterfield also traced the importance of motherhood as a unifying element in Angelou's five volumes. The end of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* shows the beginning of Maya's life as a mother and captures the mother figures in her life. *Gather Together in My Name* is the story of Maya as a teenage mother. *Singin' and Swingin'* and *Getting Merry Like Christmas* reveals the struggle of a mother to bring up her son and her desire to provide her son a better life. In these both autobiographies Maya becomes a sacrificed mother who even can sell her body to ensure her son a better future. *The Heart of a Woman* also portrays Maya's motherhood as a more matured and wiser woman. *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* also delianetes the mother and child bond. Therefore the theme of motherhood connects Maya's autobiographical tradition

In my study of Angelou's exploration of the concept of motherhood, I emphasized how her writing is involved with dynamics of autobiography, the elements of racial politics and the gender roles. Focussing on Angelou's autobiographical works *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman*, enabled me to reveal the roles of mothers, and to define the black

motherhood. I traced the significance of Angelou's maternal politics to contribute the struggle for equality of black women. By narrating her personal life she became a voice of women of color to demonstrate the harsh realities they faced in 20th century. As she was black, woman and mother, Angelou previously saw her blackness as a humiliation, but as she matured her color became a source of pride and honor. In celebrating her blackness Angelou got the opportunity to make a self analysis.

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* Maya Angelou looked back on her own childhood as a mature woman. This autobiography showed the development of a person starting from a child to a matured, self-aware woman. While *The Heart of a Woman* documented a period of Angelou's active political period, it also helped the reader to understand the confusion felt by Black activists in America in 1960's. Doubtless, Angelou recounted the years of 1960's in her autobiography especially by putting the famous icons such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King into her interest. Meanwhile *The Heart of a Woman* as storying Angelou's struggle extends the perspective of a woman's life in this rapidly changing century. In her dissertation Siphokazi Z. Koyana notes down "It is by injecting the role of mother with the themes of racial protest and the quest for personal fulfillment that Angelou takes the best of all that has preceded her and redefines the black American autobiographical statement" (1999: 249).

In this dissertation, I examined the significance of women's roles as mothers in selected autobiographies of Maya Angelou in order to indicate the black motherhood tradition in African American women's writing. Her autobiographies *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman* not only enabled me to investigate the dynamics of black motherhood but also help me to define it. Furthermore, these autobiographies enabled Angelou to reveal her feelings, conflicts and struggles she encounters as they develop her self-fulfillment. I have reviewed some stereotypical characteristics of matriarchy, strength, spirituality and motherliness. It provide me to define the myth of black matriarchy which took its roots from slavery.

Angelou in one of her interview with Jeffrey M. Elliot articulates:

When we look at a diamond, a diomand is the result of extreme pressure. Less, it is cyrstal; less than that, it is coal; and less than that, it is fossillized leaves or just pain dirt. It is necessary therefore, to be though enough to bite the bullet as it is in fact shot into one's mouth, to bite it and stop it before it tears a hole in one's throat. At the same time, one must learn to care for oneself first, so that one can then dare to care for someoneelse. That's what it takes to make the caged bird sings (1977: 694).

Her maternal impulse existed in both of her works that show how autobiographical writing about motherhood reflects the domestic issues. While I was exploring the selected autobiographies of Maya Angelou, I never underestimated the Africanist and womanist perspective of the writer. Maya Angelou's portrayal of white, racist oppression embodies her maternal concerns and justifies her resistance to white racism as a black mother. Moreover, the act of writing autobiography also embodies the maternal politics of Angelou. By narrating her own experiences, Angelou aims to become a mother for the young people who must learn lessons from her experiences.

In the first chapter a survey on autobiography was done in order to define and analyze the autobiographical review of Western thought in order to distinguish it from black autobiographical tradition. Starting from slave narratives to the modern black American writing, I tend to blur the distinctions between the conceptions of black and white experiences. The historical review of Black literature and important events of black history in America justified how the literature affected by the historical changes. Black women autobiographical tradition was also set out to establish links between the race and gender in autobiographical outlook. As the autobiography has been the unique and common appeal for black women, it helped them to express their personal experiences and feelings. I begin by distinguishing Black writing tradition from the western traidition. I then contextualized Angelou within her autobiographical tradition emphasizing how she advanced the womanist consciousness in her works of art.

In chapter two I concentrated on black motherhood since black mothers have been the most sacrificing figures in history. The various definitions of black motherhood in American Literature was revealed. Since the black motherhood was defined as a symbol of resistance and self-celebration, there was a tendency to depict black mothers to fight against sexist and racist policy in contemporary writing by black women. The black motherhood was marked as the opposer of racism and sexism that weaken the women's power. However, black women writers created a literal tradition that provided motherhood as a natural situation. This tradition not only stayed as only a reaction against racist and sexist ideology, it also redefined the motherhood. Motherhood as profiled in contemporary writers by African-American woman aimed at a political aspect to combat the racist and sexist tyranny in their communities.

In chapter three, I composed the mother figures in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by dividing them into groups such as real mother figures, failed mother figures and other mother figures. Maya Angelou used "motherhood" in her autobiographies both as a literal continuation and spiritual continuation. Her concern on motherhood her grandmother Annie, her mother Vivian, her stepmother Dolores, Bailey's failed mother Joyce, Maya's other mother Mrs. Flowers, and Maya herself as a mother continues as indicating the life-circle.

Maya fights against her husband's patriarchal world which is also shaped under black malehood. In this sense, Maya's pain is doubled by both racism and sexism. In this chapter marriage was extremely pointed out as a device to weaken mother's power. Black mother however, was seen as protector and nurturer in the historical context, in the contemporary period she was located at home. Maya's husband Vus, an African freedom fighter, tried to take her freedom. Therefore in the last chapter, I analysed the institution of marriage, and the mother's place in marriage. The marriage with Vus affects Maya's life and she confronts with a more restricted world which is domestic. The house becomes her place and she waits for her husband at home. She totally distracted from the outer world, and her duties are limited with the housework at home.

Throughout this study, I tried to understand the connection between autobiography and life: how Angelou also perceived that connection and how she used it in her works. By concentrating on her theme of “black motherhood” I wanted to limit my survey. By showing Maya Angelou’s autobiographical writing about her mothers, her maternal experiences, her son and her family, I tried to radicalize Angelou’s use of autobiography to show the struggle of the black mothers. I also emphasized the dilemmas of women of color which multiplies her burdens. The black women has to balance the familial ties for performing domestic issues or performing political act. Therefore, the black women has to work in both the inside and outside the home that challenges with the domestic roles of traditional mother images. Consequently, the Black mothers become powerful, tough, and independent.

The autobiographical works of Maya Angelou *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman* both trace representations of black mother figures from the twentieth century. The author shows how the stereotypical attributes of black mother is devastated by the construction of a new black motherhood. Angelou’s portrayal of the powerful mother figures skillfully illustrates how these icons of Black motherhood struggle against the hierarchies of race, gender and class. Consequently, the blackmotherhood is remade and redefined in Maya Angelou’s autobiographical works in order to celebrate the self.

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