

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department of Arts and English Language



**The Theme of Freedom in Contemporary African American Literature:
A Stylistic Study of Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings***

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

Submitted by:

ALAHOUM Ikram

SAKER Ilham

Supervised by:

Mr. DIDA Nassireddine

Board of Examiners:

Miss. KADDOURI Souad

President University of El-Oued

Mr. DIDA Nassireddine

Supervisor University of El-Oued

Miss SOUFLI Hassiba

Examiner University of El-Oued

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Dedication

All thanks to Allah, the most gracious and merciful, for giving me the strength to accomplish this work.

I dedicate this work to my parents for always being there to support me emotionally, spiritually, and financially. They are my role models and the reason I can do what I do.

To my grandma, siblings, friends, and beloved ones, to whoever believed in me and pushed me forward.

To the person closest to my heart, my best friend, with whom I shared the bittersweet memories.

Ikram

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To my dear friends, thank you for being my laughter, my support, and my inspiration. Every moment with you has been unforgettable.

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Abstract

The present research intends to shed light on the recurrent concept of freedom in contemporary African American literary texts. Specifically, a stylistic analysis is conducted on Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The present study endeavors to employ a descriptive-analytical approach to analyze the stylistic portrayal of freedom in Maya Angelou's literary work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The objective of this investigation is to scrutinize the utilization of language and literary devices used by the author in portraying the concept of freedom within the selected corpus. The research argues that Maya Angelou skillfully employs a diverse range of literary devices to effectively convey her vision of freedom from the unique perspective of an African American who has personally endured racial oppression. Maya Angelou has employed various stylistic devices and deviations in her writings, such as lexical deviation and figurative language. The present study is interested in the linguistic and stylistic features present in the works of Maya Angelou that underscore the theme of freedom. Specifically, the analysis elucidates how these features manifest in Angelou's novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, wherein the pursuit of personal freedom persists despite adversities. The study finds that Maya Angelou used a unique style to portray the idea of freedom.

Keywords: Contemporary African American Literature, Freedom, Stylistics, Maya Angelou, African American.

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The present study builds upon antecedent research endeavors relating to the Contemporary African American literature that includes works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and theatre written by African Americans today. It delves into subjects like race, identity, history, social justice, and human relationships, employing a range of strategies to depict the Black experience and challenge traditional literature. Through social commentary, cultural analysis, and narrative, it highlights varied African American voices and viewpoints on race, identity, and power relations. Its resilience and inventiveness reflect changing experiences, broaden cultural understanding, and foster conversation and social change.

Contemporary African American literature explores various themes pertinently related to the African American experience. These themes encompass race, identity, historical consciousness, social justice, and interpersonal relationships. This piece of writing explores topics related to matters of racial parity, systemic discrimination, and the interdependence of gender, sexual orientation, and social class. Contemporary African American authors employ a variety of strategies to communicate the Black experience and to question traditional literature. They use AAVE (African American Vernacular English) and worldwide influences to investigate cultural heritage and confront contemporary concerns. Through social commentary, cultural analysis, and narrative, this literature highlights varied African American voices and viewpoints on race, identity, and power dynamics. Contemporary African American writing exemplifies perseverance and inventiveness while reflecting on changing circumstances. It fosters cultural understanding, conversation, and societal transformation.

Modern African American writing has seen the rise of numerous critical writers who have made enduring contributions to the literary landscape and depict their works, whether it be

novels or poems, as a weapon to request freedom and autonomy due to their circumstances and clashes with prejudice such as Du Bois, Langston Hughes and Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou. These writers, among others, have played a significant part in forming contemporary African American writing. They have contributed to the investigation of the African American experience, challenged prevailing narratives, and given voice to marginalized communities. Their works proceed to resonate with readers around the world, inciting thought, cultivating empathy, and opening up discussions approximately race, identity, and social justice.

Maya Angelou's contribution to African American literature during that era is of paramount significance. Through style, she conveyed implicit messages to her readers. Analyzing Maya Angelou's works by uncovering stylistics reveal deeper themes and meanings. In order to comprehend Angelou's writing, it is important to examine the language elements she employs, such as diction, syntax, and narrative structure. Her lively imagery, metaphors, and rhythmic language form a unique style. She delves into identity, race, gender, and growth using distinct literary methods. Analyzing her style reveals her messages, commentary, and depth. By studying Maya Angelou's language and style, scholars can uncover the depth of her literary and cultural impact.

2. Statement of the problem

Maya Angelou's literary work has been the focus of extensive study, particularly in relation to themes such as racism, women, and social realities. However, there appears to be a gap in research concerning her unique stylistic approach and its effectiveness in depicting the themes presented within her autobiographies. The current study attempts to fill the gap by conducting a comprehensive stylistic analysis of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. This investigation goes into Angelou's linguistic and literary techniques with the goal of expressing the concept of freedom in contemporary African American literature.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

For the purpose of achieving the research objectives, the following questions are posed:

- 1- What kinds of freedom does portray Maya Angelou in the novel?
- 2- How does Maya Angelou stylistics devices represent the theme of freedom?
- 3- To what extent those devices reflect the theme of freedom in the text?

Based on the previously listed questions, the study attempts to test the following hypotheses:

- 1- Maya Angelou represents different kinds of freedoms like psychological freedom, political freedom, etc.
- 2- She has used different kinds of stylistics devices and deviations like: lexical deviation and figurative language.
- 3- The language and style used pervade in Maya Angelou's autobiography, reflecting the theme of freedom in the corpus.

4. Literature Review

This section summarizes two different studies which are relevant to our corpus. First, titled *Breaking the Silence of Caged Birds: Maya Angelou's Autobiography, Black Feminism, and the Me Too Movement* which explores the relationship between Maya Angelou's autobiography, black feminism, and Me-Too. This research examines Angelou's work, specifically *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, to better understand and treat black women's experiences with sexual assault, trauma, and silence. It investigates how Angelou's narrative inspires Black women by sharing their own experiences with sexual abuse and injustice. The study reveals a connection between Angelou's autobiography and the pursuit of justice and healing for black women. It focuses on Maya Angelou's autobiography and its significance in

modern feminist movements, integrating literature, Black feminism, and social activism (Stanković, 2021).

Second, this study entitled *What you looking at me for? I didn't come to stay*": *Displacement, Disruption & Black Female Subjectivity in Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"* explores the themes of displacement, disruption, and the formation of black female subjectivity in Maya Angelou's iconic autobiography. It analyzes Angelou's displacement and disruption as a young Black woman in the racially segregated South, exploring the impact of challenges on Angelou's subjectivity and how she negotiates her identity in a hostile environment. The study highlights how Angelou's protagonist shows resilience and agency by confronting challenges and shaping her own story and identity. The study offers insights on race, gender, and identity in Angelou's work (Manora, 2005).

5. Aims of the Study

The present study endeavors to examine the theme of freedom as depicted in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* from a stylistic perspective. Accordingly, the study aims to conduct a thorough analysis of the linguistic and literary features employed by the author in portraying the concept of freedom in the selected corpus.

6. Significance of Study

Contemporary African American literature has been extensively researched with a focus on the central theme of freedom and its impact on the American community's struggle against racism. The research delves into the diverse voices present in the literature, challenging existing stereotypes, addressing social issues, and offering a more profound understanding of the human experience. The current research contributes significantly to the field of literary analysis as it employs a unique stylistics approach to investigating contemporary African American literature.

It therefore presents a novel analysis of a case study concerning contemporary literature from a stylistic perspective.

7. Research Methodology

The utilization of a well-structured research methodology serves as a significant framework for the pursuit and application of our study. Therefore, this aspect includes three distinct components, namely the selection of the appropriate methodology, the utilization of appropriate data gathering instruments, and the choice of corpus analysis techniques.

The research initially employs a methodological approach that is qualitative in nature, aligning with the characteristics of our chosen subject matter. This study employs both analytical and descriptive approaches to explicate the autobiography entitled *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* through the lens of stylistic analysis. Thus, the utilization of this approach is employed in further expounding on our thesis regarding the pursuit of autonomy in the post-modern era.

The present study aims to investigate the data analysis that will be extracted from Maya Angelou's autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The corpus obtained from this analysis will encompass three key elements, namely contemporary African American literature, stylistic approach, and the theme of freedom. As such, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive academic account of the aforementioned literary elements through the analysis of Angelou's autobiography.

8. Research structure

The present research comprises of three distinct chapters. The introductory chapter is denoted as "Contemporary African American Literature: Conceptual Overview" within the academic context. This chapter traces the evolution of contemporary African American literature and expounds upon its most salient themes. It explores the various themes related to feminist dimensions, encompassing factors such as race and gender, black womanhood, and

community. Furthermore, the life of Maya Angelou and her distinctive literary style warrant attention.

The subsequent chapter aims at discussing the concepts of "style" and "stylistics", as well as the fundamental rationales underlying the study of stylistics. Furthermore, it endeavours to encompass the lexical strata of stylistic examination, including diction, repetition, certain rhetorical devices, its types, and functions, alongside linguistic deviation.

The third chapter is dedicated to the analysis under the rubric of "A Stylistic Analysis of the Theme of Freedom in the Autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*". The analysis endeavors to elucidate the interplay between stylistic analysis and the theme of freedom. Its objective is to discern the lexical, semantic attributes of the text through an inquiry into the use of figurative language, word choice, and linguistic deviation.

CHAPTER ONE

Contemporary African American Literature: Conceptual Overview

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Introduction

The emergence of African American literature was shaped by multiple social, cultural, and historical occurrences that prompted a significant number of African Americans to pursue careers as authors and poets. Focusing their narratives on subjects like raising black consciousness about their nationhood and criticizing racism, they were dedicated to their writings and were able to find a position within the American community. Both freedom and social justice are priorities for them. Therefore, their plethora of writings stressed the idea of being aware of themselves and values their identities. The present chapter reviews contemporary African American literature. Also, it examines the important characteristics of contemporary African American literature and highlights its main themes. In addition, it presents the biography of Maya Angelou as an example of an influential African American writer who has contributed to the theme of freedom and social justice in contemporary African American literature.

1.1. Contemporary African American Literature: Conceptual Overview

Contemporary African American literature pertains to the collection of literary compositions authored and disseminated within the United States subsequent to the culmination of World War II (De Roche, 2021). The era of African American literature under discussion is characterized by a multitude of varied literary styles, thematic motifs, and authorial voices, thereby resonating with the dynamic shifts taking place within the country's socio-cultural panorama.

This term means belonging to or happening in the present, suggesting that it was written after 1940. Historically, there is no specific date of the commencement of the era of contemporary literature. Some argue that its setting began with World War II, but others state that it started after World War II and expanded to till the moment. Therefore, contemporary

African American literature is the result of different events. Its period is marked by an abundance of events spanning from World War II to the new millennium (Joseph, 2013).

1.2. The Development of Contemporary African American Literature

The evolution of contemporary African American literature is characterized by its heterogeneous nature and its prowess in mirroring the dynamic socio-cultural milieu of the United States. The literary works produced during this historical epoch exhibit an ongoing process of evolution and adaptation in response to contemporary concerns, offering valuable perspectives into the intricate and diverse fabric that characterizes African American society.

1.2.1. Slave Narratives

African American literature has experienced significant development throughout history. It initially began with slave narratives which presented the institutionalized slavery. Eventually, with talented poets like Langston Hughes spearheading what was known as the Harlem Renaissance in the 20th century, African American writings transmitted from being solely a political instrument to developed artistic values (Douglass et al., 2000). Despite this development, African American literature has always been loyal to political roots as its primary focus remained the oppression of the Black community in the United States. The role of Black writers in supporting the fight for black power remains a topic of debate (Gibson, 2012).

1.2.2. Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance made a significant contribution to the development of Contemporary African American Literature (CAAL). This artistic socio-cultural and intellectual movement was significantly influenced by the New Negro Movement, which compelled African American artists and writers to utilize their gifts in the examination of the racist system and

explication of the societal and psychological ramifications of racism for Black individuals in the United States.

The Harlem Renaissance afforded African American artists with an avenue to foster and mould their individual identities, as well as to articulate their yearning for freedom and equitable treatment, unencumbered by external constraints (Eversley, 2004).

According to Hutchinson, the Harlem Renaissance is the most influential movement in all African American culture. The most important product of the Harlem culture was jazz music, which became an iconic type of music that attracts even non-Black people. The 1920s are often referred to as the jazz age.

During the Harlem Renaissance, African American writers such as Angelina Weld Grimke and Marita Bonner greatly contributed to the development of American literature. Their works analyzed the theme of slavery, a deeply ingrained aspect of American history. The Harlem Renaissance is significant for its coverage of several subjects ranging from feminism to black aesthetics, but also for providing a platform for African American artists to express their creative identity and their desire for freedom and equality. As Smith and Jones note, this period of artistic and cultural flourishing is widely regarded as a watershed moment in the journey of African Americans from slavery to freedom.

1.2.3. Autobiography and Gender

In her academic work titled "*Defining Elements of African-American Literature*" (2012), Ebony Gibson conducts an in-depth analysis of the perpetual dispute among scholars concerning the characterization of African American literature. Gibson posits that a substantial portion of literary critics contend that works authored by African Americans, notwithstanding their content, merit inclusion in the literary canon. The writings that they have produced are inundated with a

fervent portrayal of their relentless struggle against the numerous injustices with which they were confronted throughout the course of their lives.

Nevertheless, Black authors are omitted from this delineation on account of their inadequate emphasis on Black characters and their experiences of adversity. In lieu of literature, diverse genres have surfaced, comprising but not limited to mystery, urban, erotica/romance, and science fiction. All of these works are classified as African American literature primarily attributable to the racial identity of the authors. Kathryn Stockett is in the process of composing a conventional African American literary work that places emphasis on her protagonists' efforts to overcome both segregation and racism. Nonetheless, her exclusion from the African American literary canon presents a challenge due to her non-Black authorial identity (Lauter, 1983).

Therefore, it can be observed that while white authors such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Harper Lee tend to portray their Black characters as victims, Black female writers tend to portray them as empowered individuals. Though the protagonists initially present themselves as victims, they embark upon a journey that ultimately culminates in their attainment of heroic status. The conventional Bildungsroman is characterized by the journey of the Caucasian male protagonist who strives towards attaining masculinity and realizing his accomplishments. In the depiction of black heroines, the focus shifts away from conventional themes such as the educational, matrimonial or financial aspects of their lives. Instead, the novel's young Black female lead character is presented with the complex choice of determining the most effective means by which she may withstand the profound impact of colonization on her physical, psychological, and spiritual self (Smith, 2014).

During this period, African American writers and artists played a crucial role in American literature focusing on their own creative works and portraying their experiences authentically. African American writers utilized the literary technique of realism to depict genuine characters and events during the first half of the 20th century, as noted by Mudrovčić (2012). These writers

employed their literary texts to narrate the social and psychological struggles faced by African Americans due to racial discrimination. While various writing styles were utilized, the primary goal was to depict genuine characters and experiences realistically, the rise of American literature marked the beginning of the movement to end racism and segregation and improve the lives of Black Americans (Abell, 2001). This is considered the "Golden Age" of African American literature. African writers in America strived to demonstrate their talent and convey their sense of Black pride. The literary pieces produced by the current generation of writers exhibit discernible disparities when compared to those created by their predecessors (Webb, 2001).

Since the 1970s until the current time, the inclusion of Black literature has been of notable importance in academic curricula. Furthermore, the voices of African American women emerged consequent to their participation in the women's movement and the Civil Rights Movement. In this sense, Maya Angelou (1969) declares that "throughout her youth, the Black lady is under attack from all of these natural factors, and she is also caught in the triangular crossfire of male prejudice, white partisanship, and black lack of authority" (p. 291).

The adult African American female's emergence as a formidable character is frequently greeted with astonishment, disgust, and occasionally belligerence. It rarely receives enthusiastic acceptance as the natural result of the struggle that survivors have won.

1.3. Features of CAAL

1.3.1. Realism and Authenticity

Modern authors often concentrate on romantic and realistic novels. They focused on producing their own creative works and presenting their experiences in an authentic manner. A key literary technique utilized during this period was realism, which allowed writers to depict genuine characters and events in a truthful manner, as discussed by Mudrovčić (2012). Through

their literary texts, these writers sought to narrate the social and psychological struggles that African Americans faced as a result of racial discrimination, as highlighted by (Rosenbaum, 2015). Despite the employment of various writing styles, the fundamental objective of African American writers during this era was to present realistic characters and experiences, as noted by Warren (1994).

1.3.2. Multidimensional Characters

Moreover, contemporary African American literature is known for its multidimensional characters. The characters in this literature are depicted as complex and dynamic, reflecting the diversity of experiences and perspectives of African Americans. They are not limited to stereotypes or archetypes, but rather are presented as fully human, with all of the complexities and contradictions that this entails (Scruggs & Jablon, 1998).

1.3.3. Language

Language constitutes a pivotal characteristic of African American literature in an academic context. Numerous writers of African American descent employ unconventional forms of English, specifically African American Vernacular English (AAVE), in order to produce an accurate depiction of the culture and experiences of their community. The utilization of this linguistic medium is frequently exercised to communicate a sense of amusement, sarcasm, and the distinctive viewpoints exhibited by African American personages (Desirée Kuthe, 2007).

1.3.4. Cultural Heritage

Moreover, African American literature is imbued with the cultural legacy of individuals of African descent. Numerous authors of African American descent utilize indigenous African American folklore, music, as well as verbal customs to generate a unique form of literature. The authors delve into the intricate nuances inherent in the history and cultural identity of the African

American population, with the aim of reclaiming and commemorating the significant contributions made by these individuals to American society (Louis & Smith, 2014).

Ultimately, modern African American literature is distinguished by its intersectional perspective towards concerns related to the promotion of equitable social outcomes. Scholars specialized in African American literature undertake a multifaceted analysis of the intersections between a wide range of identity elements, including but not limited to race, gender, class, and sexuality, alongside other pertinent factors that contribute to shaping the distinct experiences of African Americans. The implementation of an intersectional approach enables a higher level of precision and inclusiveness in comprehending the complex and diverse encounters of individuals of African descent in the United States (Perry, 2007).

A cohort of African American writers pioneered prominent literary genres and garnered a vast readership. Consequently, African American literary productions encompass seminal and profound works. Undoubtedly, the appalling implications of slavery, segregation, and discrimination contributed significantly to the endurance of black artistic imagination during the period spanning from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. During the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance marked a significant period in which Black authors demonstrated a noteworthy artistic prowess by delving into an array of previously unexplored creative subjects. Moreover, the late twentieth century witnessed a pronounced shift in the focus of African American writers towards historical themes, which were of substantial significance (Chinitz, 2006).

1.4. Themes of Contemporary African American Literature

Black American literature has evolved together with the struggle of African Americans for equality in American culture. In general terms, African American literature explores issues and concerns related to freedom, slavery, segregation, family, racism, African American culture, gender and social equality, identity etc. Of crucial importance to the understanding of African

American literature is also African American history of the United States. In the light of this line this part is an explanation of the main themes of Contemporary American literature.

1.4.1. Identity

Identity has been in focus due to the repercussions of WW2. People are fragmented and lose the boundaries of defining themselves. The identity concept emerged from a general sequence of memoirs by African American writers. Black writers have used their many roles, incarnations, and identities to connect the layers of oppression inside their particular histories (Lauret, 1994). They portrayed themselves as role models for Africans in general by recreating the image of Black people through themes of individual strength and the ability to overcome. African American writers attempted to investigate ethnic self-affirmation and diasporic sensibility while questioning preconceptions and delving into topics of identity, racial discrimination, and abusive parenting (Bouchria&Kaid, 2022).

African American writers, particularly women, were seeking to express their own stories of immigrant experiences, leading to a fresh literary era in African American literature. Black feminist works served to criticize and examine stereotypes and models of Black female identity. This distinct genre of writing addresses a wide range of issues, including sexual violence, racial stereotypes, oppression, the denigration of black beauty, and the impact of racism and patriarchy on the lives of Black women (Bouchria&Kaid, 2022).

Black women have been unfairly denied the right to live freely. Black females' perceptions of themselves influence how they act and interact in society. Furthermore, self-definition and self-perception influenced how others treat and view them. As a result, people could not improve their circumstances or overcome oppression unless they create new perspectives and a new spirit for themselves. Collins (2002) states, "Black feminist theory must empower African-American

women in order to address several oppressions at once. in order to reach this new mentality, black ladies must make peace with themselves and their traumatic pasts” (p. 36).

Hooks (1984) notes that, "Oppressed people fought for defining their reality, establishing their new identity, recognizing their past, and sharing their narrative” (p. 163). The Black American female identity was shattered. These writers aimed to reconstruct the identity of Black women by highlighting their experiences and struggles, which were often ignored or misrepresented in mainstream society. Through their writing, they sought to empower Black women and challenge the dominant narrative that oppressed them.

1.4.2. Freedom

According to Reed (2014), throughout the twentieth century, doubt emerged as a dominant characteristic of imagination, setting it apart from the Enlightenment era's conviction in the capability of reason to promote freedom and harmony. Since 1776, the United States has stressed people's freedom principles as pointed in the Declaration of Independence which affirms that each citizen has the right of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Dana, 1900, p. 323).

On the contrary, the themes of slavery, bondage, segregation, injustice, and freedom are essential in African American literature. The theme underwent a transformation to encompass contemplation on the institution of slavery and the quest for total freedom following the legal abolition of slavery. This study establishes a connection between the history of African American violence, segregation, and civil rights problems and the fundamental aspects of slavery.

The post-World War II era underscored the significance of freedom of cogitation and oratory articulation, thereby affording writers the opportunity to voice their discontentment with societal frameworks such as enslavement, while also criticizing how these frameworks impede individuals' capacity to engage in independent thinking. The authors additionally exercised their

freedom of expression not only through the substance but also through the text per se. A talented group of African writers is fighting for its independence.

Toni Morrison identified the ways in which American literature specifically fiction by white Americans predicated on concepts of freedom and the American dream, depends on the existence of Black people for its strength. In her book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Morrison writes that "The idea of being free didn't come out of nothing, because nothing highlighted freedom if it did not in fact create it like slavery" (1992, p. 38). That proves that 'freedom' is not a realistic attitude permitted for all Americans. It is evident that Americans suffer from the institutionalized racism that permeates society between the white and the Black people.

1.4.3. Family

The African people have faced tremendous hardship in terms of displacement and familial dislocation. Accordingly, African writers have placed great emphasis on the theme of family, recognizing its vital significance within their cultural framework several of the stories, poems, and films shown to us dealt with family, either being away from them or emphasizing how essential they are to them. Sahoo claimed that the Black family or African continuity is one of the primary concerns of Black women playwrights in America. Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, and Ntozake Shange saw the Black family through fresh and broad lenses, allowing them to broaden this social unit to encompass not just blood relatives, but also those tied by race, culture, heritage, and common ancestry.

In addition to, Sahoo argued that this interactive family, which brought together Black individuals from all over the world, educated, inspired, and helped Black people overcome adversity. This interactive family, which unites Black people all around the world, informs, encourages, motivates, and enables Black people to overcome the most adversity. Approaching the Black family in America and abroad as the descendants of Africa lends validity to its

completeness. A detailed inspection of these authors' chosen plays indicates that the portrayals of Black families vary, but the message is consistent: an indissoluble and personal link that fortifies and sustains the integrity of Black families. According to Childress, Hansberry, and Shange, the Black family is strong and stable and does have a history that extends beyond slavery.

Since African people have such a deep connection to their heritage, the Black family in America is unbreakable and regenerable. Sahoo stated that, the writers placed emphasis on the shared past, attitudes to the white world, and fate of Black people. Childress, Hansberry, and Shange's plays emphasized the importance of African Americans as a part of the African continuum, with allusions to Africa as a motherland and source of strength.

The playwrights have written about Black families who have been able to survive numerous challenges due to their adaptability to changing family dynamics. Black families without blood relatives leave holes, but families with interactional or fictive members provide Black people with the spirit, history, and bravery they need to survive in American culture.

The study of Black women authors has focused attention, both purposefully and unconsciously to the African American family. Childress, Hansberry, and Shange talk of drums that beckon and urge them to write about the heartbeats and rhythms of individuals whose single most significant force is the safety and security of African American children in the African American family structure.

1.4.4. Racism

The theme of racism in African American literature morrior the historical circumstances that justify the existence of slavery, the civil war, the period of reconstruction, and the push for civil rights. Perry (2007) defines racism as a specific community or minority that shares similar physical and social characteristics upon which they are segregated and excluded from the whole of society.

Historically, the U.S is defined and characterized by diversity and multiculturalism. The American society consists different citizens who have different social and cultural backgrounds by time and law, they came together to live their displacement peacefully. A multitude of people from various races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions have relocated to the United States with the aim of achieving a higher standard of living (As cited in Algan et al, 2012).

Nevertheless, a segment of American populace exhibited a lack of acknowledgement towards the presence of minority groups within the country and pursued endeavors to coerce them into vacating the territory. Minority groups within US society have developed various strategies, including assimilation, the melting pot theory, pluralism, and multiculturalism, as a means of achieving acceptance within the broader cultural context. Minorities adopt various strategies to sustain their existence and maintain their cultural and traditional practices.

The feminist African women writers depicted the racist behaviours and acts that portrayed the hierarchies in the American community. They emphasized their experiences as oppressed women and members of minority groups. Their works addressed important issues such as race and gender injustice, black female situations, and identity creation.

Finally, African American literature portrays the oppression of white supremacy over Black Africans. It discusses the literary works of many writers who sought to dispel misunderstandings about Black Americans and to react to racial conduct and police injustice, particularly following George Floyd's tragedy. It also highlights the creative works of other writers who have no connection to African origin.

1.4.5. Feminist themes in Contemporary African American literature

Contemporary African American literature often explores feminist themes, highlighting the experiences of African American women and their struggles for equality and agency. According to critic Claudia Tate, "Black women's writing is defined by the sustained effort to excavate and

to recover the stories of African American women" (Tate, 1992, p. 17). This recovery of women's stories is a central theme in many works of African American literature.

1.4.5.1. Race and Gender

Contemporary African American literature highlights a significant feminist perspective centered on the convergence of race and gender. African American women have encountered distinct difficulties owing to their dual identities as both Black and female throughout history. Numerous literary works have delved into the complex interplay between these identities and their influence on the experiences of African American women. According to scholar bell hooks, "the struggle against both gender discrimination and racial prejudice are closely intertwined and inseparable, particularly for Black women" (Hooks, 1981, p. 22).

1.4.5.2. Black Womanhood

A recurring feminist motif evident in present-day African American literature is the acknowledgement and exaltation of black womanhood, as well as the retrieval of Black women's voices and encounters. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are notable exemplars among writers who have underscored the significance of foregrounding Black women in their literary oeuvres. Through their art, they have forged potent narratives that confront the tendency to overlook and marginalize Black women's experiences.

1.4.5.3. Community

A cognate concept pertains to the significance of communal and unified measures in attaining feminist objectives. Numerous literary compositions within the African American tradition underscore the potency of collective unity and the criticality of constructing interconnected systems of advocacy and rebellion against systemic repression. In the novel "*The*

Color Purple," Alice Walker depicts the methods by which African American females provide mutual assistance and encouragement in response to patriarchal violence and oppression.

In summary, feminist themes are a significant aspect of contemporary African American literature. These themes highlight the experiences of African American women, explore the intersection of race and gender, celebrate Black womanhood, and emphasize the importance of community and collective action in achieving feminist goals.

1.5. Maya Angelou: CAAL Poet

Contemporary African American literature, being the birthplace of many renowned African American authors and poets at the start of the twentieth century, gives a platform for writers to carry on its heritage of celebrating black American culture. American literature by African Americans famous authors like Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Zora Neal Hurston, and others attained the greatest literary honors and recognition for their work. Maya Angelou, an African American female poet, holds the title of being the most renowned poet of the contemporary era. Maya Angelou is widely recognized for her autobiographical series titled "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*," which initially debuted in 1969. In her autobiographies, Angelou discusses how racism impacts kids just as much as it does to adults, both physically and psychologically.

1.5.1. Biographical Overview

The famous Black American author Maya Angelou is an essayist, novelist, poet, political activist, singer, and dancer. President Obama called her a "really phenomenal woman"(ALS, 2002). Rita is her nickname in public, but her older brother, Bailey Jr., who had been calling her 'my' or 'mine', gave her the moniker. Angelou was born on April 4th, 1946, in a town called St. Louis, Missouri. Maya Angelou's mother had different jobs like dealing cards, owning a boarding house, and being a nurse. The paternal figure was gainfully employed as a doorman

before rendering his services in the domain of sustenance provision for the naval forces. The Johnson family relocated to Long Beach, California, accompanied by their two offspring, subsequent to the birth of their daughter. Three years after their parents' divorce, Maya and Bailey Jr. were taken care of by their dad's mom, Annie Henderson, who owned a small store in the little town of Stamps, Arkansas.

She adored reading and inspired by great poets and authors since she was a child. As she grew up, she wrote her autobiographical masterpiece, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). In 1940, Angelou and her brother Bailey received their eighth-grade diplomas from Lafayette County Training School, and they joined their mother in San Francisco. Clyde Guy Johnson was born to a single mother. When Maya was sixteen years old, she married Tosh Angelou sometime in the 1950s, but their marriage did not endure, and they divorced. Her love of reading and writing led her to join the Harlem authors. There, she connected with several significant African American writers, including her mentor and friend James Baldwin.

Following the speech of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She was motivated to join the Civil Rights Movement after hearing herself speak for the first time in 1960. He appointed her Northern Coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference after she orchestrated a number of perks for him. She spent a number of years working as a journalist, actress, and teacher in Ghana, West Africa, and both her work and her personal development and growth were evident. Malcolm X asked her to come back to the US to work for him just before he was killed in 1965 (Gillespie et al, 2008). Minzesheimer and Younge said that “In 1968, King asked her to organize a march, but he too was assassinated on April 4, which also happened to be her birthday” (As cited in Meyer, 2019, p. 2).

Baldwin accompanied Angelou to a dinner party at the residence of cartoonist Jules Feiffer and his wife Judy in late 1968 to try to improve her spirits because Angelou had been suffering from severe depression for months after King's death. The visitors started sharing tales from their

youth, and Judy Feiffer was moved by Angelou's tales. She called Random House's Robert Loomis the following day and "told him that he ought to get this woman to write a book", Smith said. Italie stated that " he served as Angelou's editor for the duration of her lengthy writing career until he retired in 2011" (As cited in Meyer, 2019, p. 2).

As Angelou considered herself to be a poet and dramatist, she initially declined. Smith said Angelou claimed that Loomis tricked her into writing the book by daring her: "It's just as well," he said, "because to write an autobiography as literature is just about impossible. Angelou also claimed that Baldwin had a "covert hand" in persuading her to write the book and advised Loomis to use "a little reverse psychology," as Neary declared (As cited in Meyer, 2019, p. 2). When faced with a dilemma, Angelou couldn't help but write *The Caged Bird* (Walker, 1995).

1.5.2. Maya Angelou's Style

Maya Angelou wrote seven autobiographies in addition to being a prolific and well-read poet. In her autobiographies, she pioneered the use of fiction-writing methods like dialogue and narrative, which complicated the link between truth and memory in the genre (Tetteh, 2017). The events in her stories rarely follow a strict chronology and are frequently arranged to accentuate themes. Her writings are episodic and meticulously written (Sasidhar& Lakshmi, 2013).

1.5.2.1. Organic Unity

Beginning with *The Caged Bird*, she set out to give her works "organic unity," and the events she wrote about were episodic, written like a collection of short stories, and positioned to highlight the themes of her books (Walker, 1995). Although she wrote in a straightforward manner, her words have a powerful impact due to the repetition she uses to highlight a mood and her unwavering energy (Jayanti, 2021).

1.5.2.2. Clarity, Simplicity, and Poetic Quality

Maya Angelou's unique style, which blends poetry and prose, has earned her a reputation as one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. Her works are not only insightful but also emotionally charged, making them an inspiration to readers worldwide (Jayanti, 2021).

1.5.2.3. Imagery and Sensory

Angelou makes her writing more colourful and interesting by using descriptive words and details that appeal to our senses. Maya Angelou wrote a book about her life called "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*." She wrote about her childhood in great detail, so readers can easily imagine what happened in the story. Angelou's writing style often includes stories from her own life to discuss bigger topics like race, gender, and identity. She talks about her own life as a black woman in America and uses her experiences to teach us lessons that apply to everyone.

Conclusion

This chapter overviewed the emergence of African American literature highlighting its developments and origins. Hence, the focus was on the contemporary Black female writings and its characteristics. Thus, they portrayed society and politics, cultural roots, and focused on fairness and equality for all people. Therefore, the chapter outlines the characteristics of contemporary African American literature, shedding light on its themes and peculiarities. Besides, Maya Angelou's significant contribution to the topic of freedom and social justice.

CHAPTER TWO

Stylistic Approach: Theoretical Background

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Introduction

There is no doubt that language is a crucial component of the communication process since it is a means of conveying information. In essence, language is transmitted in written or spoken form and applied as needed. Over time, people have strived to develop means of communication to convey information and use language and its functions efficiently. Throughout human history, language has played a significant role in human development. Thus, people pay attention to language because of its relevance in forming knowledge based on the study of human language, known as linguistics. In this regard, linguistics is the study of how people convey information through spoken or written form, using different styles of language depending on the speaker or writer. In linguistics, this study is referred to as stylistics. The reader is provided with a brief definition of stylistics and style. In addition, the chapter will introduce the objectives of stylistics, levels of stylistics analysis and linguistic deviations. It also focuses on figurative language in stylistics, types, and functions.

2.1. Definition of Stylistics

Stylistics is an area of study that focuses on language and style. It is a linguistic description of the study of language; hence, Stylistics is a linguistic discipline that is centered upon the study of language as the primary area of inquiry in stylistic research. Stylistics, initially limited to the scrutiny of poetry and prose within literary compositions, it has broadened its scope to encompass an analysis of language and literary critique. The principles of stylistics are also incorporated within non-literary compositions (Verdonk, 2002).

Simpson (2004) stated that the study of stylistics is not limited to the analysis of literary works alone, but extends to diverse forms of discourse, including advertising, journalism, popular music, and everyday conversation that exhibit elevated stylistic elements. Contemporary

research on stylistics is characterized by a broad range of applications and greater flexibility, making it accessible to a wider audience.

Besides, Leech and Short (2007) state that the study of stylistics aims to explain language use and its artistic function. They also posit that by analyzing the author's style, one can discern the artistic principles underlying their writing choices. Furthermore, the essential objective of stylistics is to explore language and creativity in language use (Simpson, 2004). In general, the field of stylistics involves linking specific stylistic categories with corresponding linguistic components, thereby establishing a close relationship between language style and linguistic structure.

2.1.1. Definition of Style

The etymology of the term "style" can be traced back to the Latin word *stilus*, which refers to an instrument for writing or a manner of writing or self-expression. According to the French Stylisticians Bally and Riffaterre (2015), "style defines as the expressive or emotive dimension of language which is added to the neutral presentation of message itself" (p. 30).

In this context, Abrams and Harpham (2009) noted that " style pertains to the linguistic approach used in both prose and poetry, whether it is spoken by speakers or written by authors " (p. 349). According to Nordquist, style refers to the particular manner in which information is conveyed, expressed, or carried out in speech and writing. In linguistics, stylistics has been explained briefly as the characteristics that elevate discourse or written communication. It encompasses all forms of speech and serves as a reflection of the communicator's personal style.

Leech and Short (2007) have provided a summary of style, which refers to the manner in which language is utilized and is hence considered a constituent of parole as opposed to language itself. Thus, the concept of style requires the thoughtful and intentional selection of linguistic options that are available. The notion of style is typically formulated with reference to a specific

sphere of language usage, encompassing factors such as an author's linguistic preferences, genre-specific conventions, and textual features. Within the field of literary stylistics, scholars undertake a detailed analysis of the interplay between style and particular aesthetic or literary functions, as articulated by Leech and Short (2007). In the grand scheme of critical theory, debates centered around the topic of literary style serve as a valuable addition to our collective understanding of language.

2.1.2. The Objective of Stylistics

According to previous definitions of stylistics, style has a significant relationship with stylistics, which examines certain aspects of language variation that is primarily based on the writer's decision. A discussion of the primary goals of studying stylistics will be presented in this section of the chapter. Simpson (2004) defines stylistics as the study of creativity in language usage; that is, the study of stylistics sheds light on the creative side of a piece of literature's author; the way an author employs language, and the style the writer adopts in his/her writing. The goal of stylistics, according to Crystal and Davy (1969), is "to analyze language habits with the main purpose of identifying, from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used in every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts" (p. 3).

As a result, stylistics teaches students about the several types of language and how selecting specific elements and terminology impacts the reader's perception of a text. In this regard, Ghazal (1987) emphasizes that the purpose of stylistics is to examine and investigate the meaning that is constructed and created by the various features of the language, as well as how these features are interconnected; whether written or spoken. It also seeks to determine the interrelationship between language features and meaning.

2.2. Stylistic Analysis

Stylistic analysis is a method of linking linguistic figures through the reader's inference to interpret the text in detail and to provide thorough interpretations as well. Besides, stylistics focuses on the study of style as it seeks to understand the different concepts raised by the concept of style. It also focuses on how readers can recognize that a piece of writing belongs to a particular author, even when the author is unknown. The linguistic analysis aims to reveal author patterns, text patterns, and other types of patterns because they realize that style and meaning are interconnected. A further objective of linguistic analysis is to identify the relationship between linguistic forms on the one hand and the meanings and effects readers derive from them on the other hand (Short, 2013).

According to Verdonk (1993), the process of stylistic analysis constitutes a comprehensive examination of the linguistic structures employed within a given text. This exposition delineates the significance of linguistic structures in facilitating the reader's comprehension and interpretation of textual material. This study aims to analyze the application of linguistic tools in the transmission of communication.

In this particular context, Verdonk (1993) posited that the employment of style analysis plays a significant role in the advancement of an unequivocal and well-reasoned foundation for the selection of interpretations. It is necessary to modify the language and style used in the given text to align with the academic way of writing.

2.2.1. Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Crystal and Davy (1969), Leech and Short (1981) concur that the examination of texts can facilitate the attainment of various levels of style analysis. The investigations conducted unveil that style encompasses diverse characteristics of language, such as sentence configurations, paragraph arrangement, recurrence, imagery, stress, sequence of concepts, and other

interconnected devices. The findings of the studies indicate that breaking down the analysis into its linguistic levels streamlines the identification process of the stylistic elements present in a literary text.

Leech (2007) has provided evidence to suggest that the term 'feature' in literary studies pertains to the manifestation of linguistic or stylistic categories within a given text. It can be observed that all literary compositions are constituted of linguistic and stylistic classifications. Linguistic categories may include consonants, nouns, transitive verbs, interrogative, and body terms, among others. In contrast, stylistic categories encompass more complex elements, such as balanced sentences, alliteration, personification, and metaphor. Nonetheless, it is imperative to take into account both classifications when scrutinizing the style.

The present discourse posits that there exist four general headings for the categorization of stylistic features. The present classification system identifies categories, namely, lexical categories, grammatical categories, idioms, and context and cohesion. The levels are delineated as follows: graphology, phonology, grammar, morphology, lexis, and semantics (Leech, 2007).

2.2.2. Lexical Level

"Lexis is a fundamental aspect of linguistic analysis since it deals with the arrangement of language vocabulary. This concept possesses distinct qualities that differentiate it from other traditional levels of linguistic study. It refers to the inventory of words that writers and speakers use in their writing or speech, depending on the purpose" (As cited in Yeibo, 2001, p. 137).

Lexical items play a crucial role in the originality of writers' language by assisting them in conveying their intended meaning effectively and expressing their ideas and emotions in a way that captivates the readers in what they say. All of these factors contribute to the beauty of the language (Yeibo, 2001). Moreover, Synonyms and antonyms, collocations, proverbs and phrasal

verbs, registers, adjectives, and prepositions are all covered at the lexical level. This section focuses on two important elements of the lexical level: "diction" and "repetition" (Yeibo, 2001).

2.2.2.1. Diction

The literary device "diction" refers to choosing specific words or phrases that identify one author's writing from that of others. Dictation can involve attitude, dialect, emotion, writing style, and word choice. Some current writers utilize phrases like "thy" and "thee" that date back to Shakespeare's use of these terms (Literary-devices.com).

2.2.2.2. Repetition

Repetition is regarded as a rhetorical technique that effectively expresses logical emphasis and draws the reader's attention to a key concept or phrase in the text. A rhetorical strategy used to emphasize the importance of an argument is repetition. This method entails the repetition of sounds, phrases, expressions, and sentences, either in a predetermined order or without consideration to the syntactical structure. Writers tend to employ repetition in their writings as an effective approach to beautify language yet abuse of this device has a negative impact on the writer's language and style (Manjavidze, 2013).

2.3. Linguistic Deviation

Fictional language can deviate from conventional language rules in various ways, some of which are noticeable while others are more subtle (Leech, 1969). Poets and creative writers have an unparalleled degree of freedom in their use of language, as they are not limited by the social and historical contexts in which it is used (ibid). They can draw on language from previous eras or incorporate literary features. Additionally, writers can create unexpected effects by introducing words from other varieties of language into their work. In literature, language takes on a form that diverges from what is typically considered normal or everyday language within a

speech community. It is worth noting, however, that writers can only deviate from linguistic norms by intentionally breaking the rules of language.

2.3.1. Definition of Deviation

In academic prose, it can be stated that the expression "deviation" refers to any instance of lexical selection, phonetic realization, or syntactical construction that diverges from the established standard (Richards et al., 1985). "The concept of norm in the field of linguistics can be characterized as a conventional and traditional practice that is prevalent in both verbal and written communication" (Crystal, 2003, p. 105). The norm can be broadly divided into two fundamental categories that are characterized by their general and internal nature. The common standard pertains to the customary usage of a particular language or the literary mode under consideration. The local norm can be characterized as a regulation established by the author within the confines of a particular written work, as opposed to a standardized or widely recognized convention.

The phenomenon of deviation is considered from a literary perspective as a form of license granted to poets and writers, allowing them to express ideas or concepts that would be deemed inappropriate or unconventional in ordinary discourse. Literary practitioners, specifically poets, employ diverse linguistic features across multiple levels in order to realize distinct aesthetic objectives and outcomes. These individuals use language as a means of conveying concepts that are not readily expressed through conventional linguistic means. The act of producing a work of art necessitates a departure from conventional linguistic usage. An example of an artist who transcends the limitations of language to investigate and convey innovative concepts and outcomes through the carefully selected terms and techniques employed to captivate the audience is a poet.

The disruption of linguistic norms, commonly referred to as deviation, has the potential to hinder effective communication for readers. However, it can also function as an intriguing and captivating feature, stimulating the reader's curiosity and prompting them to seek clarification regarding the content. Furthermore, this enhances the linguistic sensitivity and proficiency of readers and facilitates their understanding of literary compositions and their stylistic variations. Hence, the utilization of deviation is deemed beneficial for augmenting the textual content in which it is present (John & Coyle, 1995).

The occurrence of deviation from conventional English rules, comprising syntactic, phonological, graphological, morphological, semantic, and similar aspects, is a recurring phenomenon in written language, particularly in the realm of poetry. A deviation can be described as a departure from the customary conventions of language, including both lexical and syntactic elements. Geoffrey Leech (1969) is accredited with the origination of the terminology "linguistic deviation" in the year 1969 during his extensive research on several poems. In light of a linguistic analysis, Rahman and Weda (2019) ascertained the existence of various anomalies in language utilization. This finding indicates possible deviations from established linguistic norms and conventions that warrant further investigation.

Leech (1976) describes the concept of linguistic politeness and its manifestations within various languages and cultures. The author discusses the social and cognitive factors that influence the use of polite language, including power dynamics and situational context. Furthermore, Leech highlights the importance of analyzing the functions and effects of polite language within discourse. There are a total of nine distinct categories of linguistic deviation that are commonly found within poetry. These categories encompass a variety of different types of deviation, such as deviations in the lexical, semantic, syntactic, and grammatical aspects of poetic language.

2.3.2. Lexical Deviation

Lexical deviation is a phenomenon in literature that involves words departing from their standard usage or being newly created through neologism or nonce formation. This process is employed to impart more profound meaning and esthetic value, achieve particular stylistic effects, or meet specific lexical demands for a single occurrence (Leech, 1969). Accordingly, Crystal (2003) reported that a nonce-formation refers to a consciously devised or inadvertently employed linguistic form by an individual speaker on a single occasion. This process is commonly recognized as lexical innovation or invention.

Besides, malapropism is a lexical deviation of a different kind. This term refers to the incorrect use of language that occurs when an incorrect word is used unintentionally, often due to its similarity in sound to the intended word. Thus, poetry's structure benefits from the use of artistic repetition. Poetic repetitions can enhance the poem's musicality and beauty. Briefly, lexical deviation is a deviation from the language's lexis norms. A lexiceme is a piece of vocabulary from a language that can be found in a dictionary. Pray, for example, is a lexeme, but prays and praying are words derived from the headword. Lexical deviation occurs when certain elements are created by breaking the rules. This occurs when a poet creates a new term that is not found in dictionaries. Such forms can be created by affixation, prefixes and suffixes, in order to create new meanings (Short, 1969).

2.3.3. Semantic Deviation

The concept of deviation is a commonly used term which possesses significant connotations contingent upon the personal experiences and cultural milieu of the poet, novelist, or writer. Nonetheless, it is the anomalous nature of this feature that necessitates the reader to seek interpretation beyond the confines of the dictionary. When the evaluation of the literal or denotative meaning takes place, the semantic variation could potentially be perceived as

unmeaningful or absurd. Nevertheless, the term possesses a non-literal, or connotative, significance. Irony, in general, is the use of language to convey a meaning that is opposite from the literal meaning. It is a literary method or rhetorical device when what seems to be confirmed on the surface differs significantly from what is true (Muecke, 1969). Irony is often used to mock someone or something, to minimize their importance as a display of disdain or scorn.

An irony is a literary device that occurs when a disparity of meaning is implied under the language's surface. It has three types: i.e., verbal irony, dramatic irony, and irony of situation (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007). According to Perrine, verbal irony is a technique of expressing what the opposite means. In other words, verbal irony suggests a contrast or disparity between what is stated and what is meant (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007). Dramatic irony happens when a scenario is "on stage," yet the character does not realize the implications and meaning (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007). Although frequently the readers or the audiences are aware of what actually must happen in that situation, the writer or the story maker considers it to make a dramatic effect. Besides, the irony of the situation occurs when a character is about to experience something unexpectedly while anticipating the opposite circumstance.

A notable literary device is metonymy, which constitutes a rhetorical figure utilized in referring to an object through its closely related idea or related entity, thereby establishing a representative-symbolic linkage (Yule, 1996). The act of employing one term to refer to a related entity, grounded upon significant logical associations between the two, is commonly defined as metonymy (Cowie, 2009). Examples of figurative language commonly employed in discourse include the utilization of the term's "crown" or "monarch" as synonyms for "king" or "queen", and "White House" as a metonymy for the office of the President of the United States.

Moreover, synecdoche constitutes a literary technique that entails the deployment of a whole or a fraction of a concept to stand for or indicate another concept. The aforementioned is an expression commonly used in rhetoric to denote instances where a term referring to one

feature of an object is employed to describe another feature of the same entity or, conversely, where a term referring to one feature is used to denote another aspect of the same item. According to the research (Kovácses Zoltán et al., 2006) we can determine that the metonymic phenomenon of synecdoche involves the representation of an object through the substitution of a part for the whole. The application of synecdoche is an effective means of simplifying speech by selectively emphasizing exclusively pertinent details. In the context of literary devices, a synecdoche employs the use of a part to represent the whole. As such, the concept of a "whole" can be utilized as a symbolic representation of a particular component within this rhetorical figure.

2.3.4. Syntactic Deviation

Syntactic deviation refers to an instance in which a writer departs from established syntax norms. The divergence from conventional grammatical norms is apparent. This phenomenon refers to a divergence from proper grammar and sentence construction protocols commonly observed among poets. According to John Peck and Coyle (1995), poets commonly exhibit a proclivity towards departing from conventional linguistic form in order to convey concepts that cannot be adequately expressed through standard grammar and terminology.

A prevalent syntactic aberration observed in literary language is word order inversion. The phenomenon known as hyperbaton is recognized as a syntactic deviation wherein the natural order of words is displaced or reversed within a sentence. The lack of subject and verb in ill-formed, ungrammatical sentences also constitutes a type of syntactic deviation. Labov asserts that the use of multiple negations is not an inherently ungrammatical or illogical occurrence; rather, it operates as a cohesive system with discernible regulations (Mazzon, 2004).

The employment of parentheses constitutes an additional form of syntactic modification that conflicts with conventional sentence organization. The phenomenon occurs when protracted

brackets, commonly denoted by either round or square brackets, dashes, or commas, are utilized. Syntactic variation includes an element known as parallelism, which is a type of foregrounding technique. Foregrounding is an academic term that refers to the practice of highlighting or emphasizing a particular element or feature in a given text or visual media with the intention of making it more prominent compared to its surrounding words or visuals. Parallelism and divergence are acknowledged as the fundamental forms of foregrounding in academic discourse. The concept of parallelism showcases a striking level of consistency, while deviation epitomizes unanticipated irregularities.

The linguistic phenomenon characterized by the recurrence of a specific grammatical structure within a phrase is commonly referred to as parallelism in academic discourse. The linguistic phenomenon of poetry encompasses semantic equivalence, sonic resonance, and metrical structure, in conjunction with its functional syntactic capacity to convey structural equivalence (Ghazala, 1994).

2.3.5. Grammatical Deviation

The English language encompasses a wide range of grammatical rules, thereby providing opportunities for potential foregrounding through grammatical deviation. To effectively distinguish between the numerous forms of grammatical variation, one should possess foundational knowledge regarding the basic contrast between morphology, which centers around word grammar, and syntax, which relates to the grammar associated with patterns of words in sentences. An illustration of grammatical deviation includes the following sentence: "I does not like him." It is worth noting that grammatical variation can also serve as a revealing indicator of the social status of speakers.

In parallel, scholars of literature have been found to deviate from strict adherence to grammatical norms in order to emphasize degrees of comparison through the cumulative

application of both suffixation and the use of inherently comparative and superlative language in the guise of the independent adjectives "more" and "most". Shakespeare effectively merges two variations of the term "unkind" in the expression "This was the unkindest cut of all" (Huhmann, 2018, p. 230).

2.4. Figurative language in stylistics

According to Perrine, figure of speech means the use of words or expressions in beyond literal meaning. More specifically, it is a literary device which refers to a particular way of expressing something to convey a different meaning (Perrine & Arp, 1978).

2.4.1. Types of figurative language

Figurative language has several forms that allow us to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. Perrine categorizes figurative language into different types based on their functions: figures of speech that involve comparison (such as metaphor, personification), figures of speech that involve association (symbol).

2.4.1.1. Figures of speech by comparison

In the realm of figurative language focused on comparison, words used in literary works carry a sense of comparison. This type of figurative language can be further categorized as follows.

2.4.1.1.1. Metaphor

Metaphor is a literary device which refers to the comparison between two fundamentally dissimilar things. In metaphor, the comparison is implied, and the figurative term is used to substitute or identify the literal term (Perrine & Arp, 1978). Furthermore, Leech and Short argue that these metaphors create a sense of unreal tranquility by expressing the vastness of nature in

familiar terms, often related to human-made and solid objects. Metaphor serves the purpose of bringing life and human characteristics to what is otherwise inanimate (Leech & Short, 2007). In other words, a metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unrelated things by highlighting their shared qualities.

2.4.1.1.2. Personification

Personification involves attributing human qualities to animals, objects, or abstract concepts. Personification varies in the extent to which it prompts readers to envision the literal term as a human entity (Perrine & Arp, 1978). Thus, personification portrays inanimate objects, animals, or abstract concepts as capable of behaving like human beings.

2.4.1.2. Figure of speech by association

2.4.1.2.1. Symbols

According to Perrine (1978), "a symbol is generally described as something that holds a deeper meaning beyond its literal representation" (p. 80). In other sense, A symbol can take the form of a word, character, place, or object, carrying a meaning that goes beyond its literal interpretation.

2.4.1.2.2. Imagery

Imagery is defined as the verbal representation of sensory experience (Arp, 2011). However, it indirectly appeals to our senses through pictures, the mental representation of sensory experience. According to Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson (2011), imagery classified into seven types which are:

2.4.1.2.2.1. Visual imagery

Visual imagery creates a mental image of something that is often seen in the mind's eye, known as the sight effect.

2.4.1.2.2.2. Auditory imagery

Auditory imagery portrays a sound by using terms like "buzzing, tinkling, chimming" and others. It is not the same as auditory experience, as it implies a feeling of hearing but not actual hearing.

2.4.1.2.2.3. Olfactory imagery

Olfactory imagery evokes the reader's sense of smell, such as fragrant and disagreeable aromas.

2.4.1.2.2.4. Gustatory imagery

Gustatory imagery is imagery that is associated with taste, such as sweet and other flavors.

2.4.1.2.2.5. Tactile imagery

This imagery relates to tactile senses such as hardness, softness, wetness or heat and cold.

2.4.2. The function of figurative language

Perrine defines "figurative language" as stating things in a way that is not conventional. He categorizes it into four categories: creative delight, more imagery, emotional intensity, and expresses a lot in a short amount of time (Arp & Perrine, 1978).

2.4.2.1. To afford imaginative pleasure

The author uses figurative language to bring imaginative enjoyment to readers or listeners through written material, particularly literary works. This power of the mind to make sudden movements from one place to another is known as imagination (Arp & Perrine, 1978).

2.4.2.2. To bring additionally imagery

Figurative language serves a variety of purposes, including the insertion of images. The use of metaphorical language in particular works can broaden the reader's or listener's imagination (Arp & Perrine, 1978).

2.4.2.3. To add emotional intensity

Figurative language can provide an emotional sense in addition to an informational statement (Arp & Perrine, 1978).

2.4.2.4. To say much in brief compass

To say a lot in a short amount of time suggests that the author does not need to go into great detail while presenting the message. Readers convey the desired meaning of text in a concise manner (Arp & Perrine, 1978).

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of style, stylistics, and stylistic analysis, and highlights the significance of studying style in the context of language. Stylistics aims to uncover how language is utilized and to enable analysts to evaluate the content and form of any given instance of language, facilitating a more meaningful interaction with the text. In essence, stylistic analysis helps readers to better comprehend the language of a text. Stylistics is commonly considered a branch of linguistics that examines and studies the use of language by applying linguistic

theories. It involves analyzing style at various levels, including lexical, semantic. In addition to, this chapter focuses on analyzing and investigating the phenomenon of linguistic deviation in literary style, with its different types ranging from syntactic, semantics, grammatical and lexical. This chapter also focuses on figurative language in stylistics including its types and functions.

CHAPTER THREE

**A Stylistic Analysis of the Theme of Freedom in the
Autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***

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Introduction

The autobiography *I Know Why the caged bird sings* addresses the issue of freedom as a contemporary African American subject through its sequence of events, multiple narratives, and characterizations that Maya Angelou represents in her autobiography. Maya Angelou is a significant contributor to the growth and evolution of American literature in this particular era. Angelou's unique writing style garnered significant attention among avid readers, as she regularly challenged conventional literary norms and delved into complex issues of freedom. In particular, her renowned masterpiece, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, serves as a prime case study for this research project as it exemplifies the stylistic and thematic elements that are central to Angelou's literary contributions.

This chapter provides a stylistics analysis, which is accompanied by a persistently employed word choice that serves to underscore the importance of the theme of freedom. Additionally, it endeavors to expound upon the stylistic deviations that contribute to and augment the notions of both figurative and metaphorical freedom, consisting of elements such as metaphor, personification, imagery, and symbolism. Finally, the chapter explicates the stylistic analysis of the theme of freedom in the novel.

3.1. Contextualizing the Novel

Maya Angelou's seminal autobiography, titled *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, published in 1969, endures as a unique literary composition that explores the fundamental motif of liberty. The section endeavors to comprehensively examine the contextualization of Angelou's literary work, scrutinizing the historical and societal factors contributing to the depiction of freedom found in its pages.

Maya Angelou's literary masterpiece, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, was published during a significant phase of social and political turmoil in the United States (US). This was

during the Civil Rights Movement, which aimed to achieve equal rights for African Americans. The book was released in 1969, close to the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This event sparked increased social engagement and emphasized the urgent need for fair treatment for individuals, regardless of their race.

3.2. The Use of Diction

In the book, the author uses different words to convey different ideas. Some words depict the vivid imagery of the Black experience and the desire for freedom, while others suggest that Black people are deprived of their rights due to a restricting system.

Firstly, Maya Angelou uses special diction words to reflect the desire for freedom in the Black community, particularly Black women. For example, in the quote, "The idea of sleeping in the near open bolstered my sense of freedom"(Chpt. 32), she emphasizes the importance of freedom in her life and the lives of other Black women in the Black community. She uses "sleeping" in the "near open" as a metaphor for breaking free from confinement and embracing personal freedom. Angelou's book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* delves into the numerous ways in which this reflects a form of personal freedom, exploring the experiences of African Americans who have been historically and contemporarily denied their freedom. She discusses the limitations of racism, sexism, poverty, and violence, as well as her own battles to transcend them and achieve personal freedom. Her words empower her readers to seek and cherish their own sense of freedom. Moreover, Angelou includes various technical words related to freedom since the novel's events revolve around Maya's life. For instance, she used words like "freely", "freedom", "free", "righteousness", "right the rightful Ownership", "triumphant", "triumph", and "win" to help readers better understand the importance of achieving freedom.

Far from freedom, Angelou's autobiography depicts the racist experiences of Black women in their community, highlighting oppression and discrimination. For instance, phrases like

"caged bird" represent the limited freedom and opportunities for Black women. Similarly, the use of "whitefolks" depicts the racial division and power imbalance in society. She also uses "lynching" to show the violent and unjust treatment of Black people. In this context, the word "freedom" emerges as a powerful symbol, representing the desire for freedom from oppression and living without constraints. The repetition of this word throughout the text underscores the central theme of freedom.

Lexical analysis involves carefully examining language usage, particularly the selection and use of words within a given textual corpus. For example, Angelou employs an extensive vocabulary and varied expressions in the book to articulate diverse themes and concepts, including the notion of freedom.

3.2.1. Freedom

As mentioned earlier, the autobiography uses the word "free" and its variations to convey the concept of freedom from societal and economic oppression confronting African Americans during the era. Maya and other characters yearned for freedom, but obstacles and struggles faced Black individuals in their pursuit of true freedom. The frequent use of the word "free" emphasizes the difference in liberty granted to white individuals versus the lack of autonomy within the Black community. Maya and other figures in the book recognize that discrimination and racial prejudice limit their freedom, which emphasizes the significance of their efforts towards achieving freedom.

3.2.2. Escape

The autobiography highlights the desire for freedom and the urge to escape the awful social and economic difficulties for Black people. The word "escape" is used to symbolize this theme, particularly when Maya and her brother flee their father's controlling partner. Maya finds a path to escape racial and gender discrimination through the character of Louis, who embodies a world

of freedom. Angelou also uses the term "escape" to describe a range of events in her book, including running from a dangerous circumstance, fleeing from a town or state, and fleeing from a location or condition. For instance, Stamps and Arkansas portrayed by Angelou as a place where the racial divide is glaring, causing her to feel imprisoned. Stamps are described as a wooden-frame storefront on downtown's main street, a movie theater on a side street, and a bridge across a stream where so-called nice country Negroes lived. The word "escape" and its different forms come up a lot in the book because the characters want to escape society's restrictions, racism, and being poor. This phenomenon might be seen as an expression of social freedom, as shown by Angelou's portrayal of the difficult fight for social freedom among African Americans living in the Jim Crow South. Maya Angelou's autobiography highlights significant issues about racism, segregation, and the difficult quest of civil rights.

3.2.3. Black Girl

The book uses the term "Black girl" repeatedly to highlight the main character's racial identity and the unique challenges she faced as a Black female in the Southern US. This analysis emphasizes the limited opportunities available to Black girls in Southern society during the period of segregation. These individuals were frequently denied educational opportunities, equal employment prospects, and social mobility. This reflects how *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* shows a kind of intellectual freedom is important in the process of self-discovery and authority augmentation for black girl. The growth of Maya Angelou's intellectual freedom is represented in the literary work as a medium for transcending the constraints imposed by racial and gender injustices. Maya's struggles reflect the Civil Rights Movement's fight against systemic barriers for Black American community. Nevertheless, the repetition of the aforementioned expression serves to emphasize the tenacity and fortitude demonstrated by Maya and other young black females who persevered in the face of considerable impediments. In general, the frequent use of "Black girl" conveys the interplay between race and gender in Maya's encounters, underscoring

the challenges of both the Civil Rights Movement and the larger quest to attain freedom and parity in America.

3.3. Lexical Deviation and Freedom

Angelou employs lexical deviation to express the theme of freedom in her book. Through this technique, Angelou captures the struggles of African Americans' fight for independence in an unjust and racist society. Using linguistic deviations from standard norms, Angelou effectively captures the distinctive perspectives, adversities, and aspirations of Black individuals in pursuit of freedom and self-determination. These lexical deviations offer a vibrant portrayal of the African American experience and serve as a potent instrument for conveying the yearning for freedom. Using distinct language features, she highlights her community's unique perspective and cultural heritage, shedding insight into their challenges, victories, and unceasing strive for independence.

"Brought back to the Store, the pickers would step out of the backs of trucks and fold down, dirt-disappointed, to the ground"(Chpt. 1). In this quote, Angelou used the phrase "dirt-disappointed" to convey a significant idea about freedom, which is closely tied to the main theme of the freedom work. The term is an example of unconventional language use, as it combines two words in a unique way. It refers to weariness, exhaustion, and disappointment felt by farmers when they step out of their vehicles and rest on the ground. This vividly portrays the struggles of those who have faced difficult situations, possibly in the field of farming or manual work, leaving them drained both physically and mentally. This is related to a prominent theme in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* which is psychological freedom where Maya Angelou's literary work examines the psychological impact of racism and injustice on individuals of African descent, with a specific focus on her personal journey and development.

In addition, the use of the term "the ground" adds layers of meaning. This passage suggests that "the ground" signifies more than just the earth beneath our feet. It is a symbol of the negative associations with difficult work and social injustices, conveying a sense of worthlessness and shame.

Angelou described how her grandmother, Momma, made fruit cakes using juice to get a dark color, "Momma used the juice to make almost-black fruit cakes"(Chpt. 3). The quote highlights a lexical deviation as it creatively describes the color of the fruit cakes. The term "almost-black" implies that the fruit is extremely dark and rich in color. Angelou's choice of words intensifies the description of the fruit cake, going beyond the usual descriptors of it being simply dark or deep-colored.

Angelou's grandmother was an adaptable woman who created delicious fruit cakes despite facing racial discrimination and limited resources, making people happy. This shows that the Black community strives to find happiness even in difficult times. By celebrating the "almost-black" color of her cakes, Momma defied negative stereotypes and discrimination often associated with blackness and showed pride in her identity while rejecting societal expectations.

In other words, fruit cakes are like striving for freedom. Using whatever ingredients available, like juice, Momma creates visually appealing cakes. This shows how Black community is strong and smart in overcoming obstacles. In short, the sentence "Momma used the juice to make almost-black fruit cakes" demonstrates African Americans' intelligence and determination in pursuing self-expression despite limited resources. It represents the pursuit of freedom and individuality amidst challenging circumstances.

"People in Stamps used to say that the whites in our town were so prejudiced that a Negro couldn't buy vanilla ice cream. Except on July Fourth. Other days he had to be satisfied with chocolate"(Chpt. 8). In this quote, Angelou used "Negro" and "whites" to refer to African Americans and white people, respectively, is considered deviant. These terms represent the

historical context and racial dynamics of the time when the story is set and are often used at that time. The term "Negro" was frequently utilized when describing Black individuals, while "whites" was primarily used when referring to the white population.

The sentence "couldn't buy vanilla ice cream" shows how African Americans in Stamps were mistreated because of their race. This means that Black people were not allowed to do certain things that white people could do. This indicates that African Americans do not have the same options or freedoms as others due to unjust treatment and discrimination. The Black community widely believes they are treated unfairly and have fewer possibilities than the rest of society. This is demonstrated by restricting certain foods to specific days, such as vanilla ice cream being the sole permissible choice on the Fourth of July, while chocolate is permitted on all other days. This reflects to a type of political freedom through the autobiography of Maya Angelou that addresses the political struggle for civil rights and equality, highlighting, community organization in achieving political freedom and social justice between white and Black people.

This unusual use of words shows how important freedom is in the autobiography. This highlights how African Americans faced unfair hurdles in their daily lives. Angelou illustrated the injustices people of colour endure. She advocated for equality, justice, and freedom from racial oppression. By employing this lexical deviation, Angelou wrote that a Black person could not buy vanilla ice cream, which means people were discriminated against based on their race, which stopped them from being truly free.

3.4. Grammatical Deviation

Angelou intentionally used grammatical deviation in her book, to represent the various ways African Americans speak and live. She also showed how they fought for their rights and the ability to express themselves.

“Ritie, don’t worry ’cause you ain’t pretty. Plenty pretty women I seen digging ditches or worse. You smart. I swear to God, I rather you have a good mind than a cute behind.” (Chpt. 10). The quote represents a linguistic anomaly known as non-standard or informal grammar. Instead of using "doesn't " or "does not," Angelou uses the term "don't," which deviates from standard English grammar ,this aberration manifests itself in the use it when referring to a solitary third-person subject (he, she, it), the acceptable expression in standard English grammar is "doesn't worry."

The word "don't" is more commonly employed in casual or colloquial speech, when it is used regardless of the subject. It gives the statement a more relaxed or conversational tone.s . It is more commonly used in informal contexts or conversations.

Grammar deviation in the autobiography serve to depict the characters actual speech and linguistic patterns accurately. By incorporating this common expression into her story and giving it credence, Angelou successfully conveys the cultural and linguistic details of her Black American heritage. Additionally, the grammatical irregularity accords with the literature's general atmosphere and style, characterized by Angelou's unique storytelling style and her desire to convey the experiences and voices of African Americans.

In terms of its relation to the theme of freedom, this grammatical error highlights the significance of inner traits and intelligence over physical appearance. Angelou's use of unconventional grammar emphasizes the characters authenticity and self-expression, revealing the value of being true to oneself. This shows the power and uniqueness of African Americans in their experiences.

In the same context, the phrase “women been gittin’ pregnant ever since Eve ate that apple.” (Chpt. 36) is an example of dialectal or non-standard English that uses regional dialects or AAVE. African American women's real experiences and perspectives in the face of social issues like racial oppression and gender inequity are captured by Angelou. The expression

implies that women have persisted to carry the obligations and responsibilities of delivering and parenting despite the difficulties and repercussions they have experienced.

In Angelou's autobiography, she used different kinds of grammar that black people use. This shows that Black people have their own way of speaking. It also demonstrates that they want to be free, accept, and express themselves. This work goes against people's expectations and highlights how strong and determined African Americans are in their fight for freedom and being themselves.

3.5. Semantic Deviation

"It was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life"(Chpt. 23). The type of deviation in this quotation is a semantic deviation. Unexpectedly or unusually, the word "awful" is used to imply a strong sensation of unfavorable sentiment and helplessness. The term "awful" conveys the feeling of being a Black individual and lacking power over one's own being. It also characterizes something extremely disagreeable or undesirable. This deviation emphasizes the speaker's deep frustration and despair caused by the lack of freedom and agency. Regarding the theme of freedom, this deviation highlights the profound impact of systemic racism and oppression on the individual's sense of personal freedom. It underscores the harsh reality the speaker faces as a Black person who is denied control over their own life due to the racial inequalities and injustices prevailing in society. The deviation underscores the urgent need for freedom and equality, exposing the oppressive conditions hindering the speaker's ability to exercise autonomy and determine their destiny.

"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"(Chpt. 34).

The above statement describes the multiple challenges and oppressions faced by Black women. For instance, the word "assaulted" suggests the violation and mistreatment experienced by Black women from various sources. Besides, the phrase "common forces of nature" emphasizes the pervasive and widespread nature of these challenges. Furthermore, the use of "masculine prejudice, white illogical hate, and Black lack of power" highlights the intersecting forms of oppression that Black women face. Thus, this statement highlights the significant challenges and institutional obstacles that Black women face when striving for their freedom. This illustrates that societal barriers to equitable decision-making and treatment of others can shape individuals' perspectives on the world.

3.6. Syntactic Deviation

Throughout the book, Angelou employs various syntactic deviations to enhance the narrative and convey her experiences. She used a technique of fragmented sentences to reflect the shattered experiences and disconnected realities encountered by those striving for freedom. For example, she writes, "It was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life"(Chpt. 23) instead of a complete sentence such as "Being Negro and lacking control over my life was awful". The disjointed construction highlights the powerlessness and absence of autonomy experienced by African Americans in their battle for independence.

3.7. Semantic Level (Figurative Freedom)

Angelou's autobiography is full of metaphorical language that explores the concept of freedom. It uses metaphors and similes to express the experience of being confined and limited and emphasizes the conflict for freedom as a central issue. For example, Angelou's title, "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*", is a metaphor for her wish to break free from society's limitations. The imagery of freedom helps readers connect with the author's experiences on a deeper, more emotional level. This imagery helps readers understand the necessity of freedom personally and

meaningfully. Furthermore, the metaphorical language of freedom emphasizes the power of imagination and creativity, showing that freedom is not just physical but also mental and emotional.

Besides, Angelou used figurative freedom language to convey her struggles for freedom and self-determination. She used themes to bring her narrative to life, encouraging readers to relate to her experiences more deeply. These figures of language include metaphor, personification, symbolism and imagery.

3.7.1. Metaphor

Angelou has a unique style of figurative language. She intentionally represents her ideas through metaphors, which she employs to explore the theme of freedom. Angelou's title, "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*", is a metaphor for freedom, referring to African Americans' struggle for freedom and equality. It focuses on the difficulties and struggles faced by the African American population. Angelou has direct experience with these issues and thoroughly understands the issues facing the African American community. The title implies that Angelou understands why the caged bird sings and will share this awareness with her readers through her autobiography. Angelou's "Caged Bird" metaphor is linked to her life experiences as an African American woman in the segregated South. She suffered cultural restraints and overcame personal obstacles such as trauma, abuse, and discrimination. The word "sings" also refers to Angelou's own voice. Angelou discusses her personal life and experiences in her autobiography, utilizing her voice to communicate her challenges and achievements. Like the bird's song, the title implies that Angelou's voice is a strong statement of optimism and tenacity in the face of hardship. In short, the caged bird represents the African American community, trapped in a society that oppresses and limits their opportunities, and the bird's song expresses their desire for freedom and equality.

Moreover, in another quotation, Angelou said "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"(Chpt. 34). She employs a metaphor as a means to describe the experiences encountered by Black women who confront diverse manifestations of oppression. The aforementioned phrase "assaulted in her tender years" alludes to the notion that Black women endure distressing experiences during their childhood, encompassing racism, sexism, and other types of prejudice.

Besides, the metaphorical phrase "common forces of nature" suggests that these feelings are universal and impossible to ignore, like natural forces like gravity or weather. Also, the expression "caught in the tripartite crossfire" expands on this metaphor by equating Black women's experiences to being caught in the middle of a conflict. The "tripartite" character of the crossfire alludes to the three types of oppression that Black women face: male prejudice, white irrational hatred, and Black powerlessness.

In another quote, Angelou said:

"My race groaned. It was our people falling. It was another lynching, yet another Black man hanging on a tree. One more woman ambushed and raped. A Black boy whipped and maimed. It was hounds on the trail of a man running through slimy swamps. It was a white woman slapping her maid for being forgetful" (Chpt. 19).

The phrases "My race groaned" and "It was our people falling" refer to a communal feeling of sorrow and suffering among Black people as a result of racial violence and oppression. The use of the term "race" instead of "people" underscores the collective experiences of individuals of African descent who have encountered systematic oppression and marginalization within society. The aforementioned metaphor also implies a curtailment of personal liberties and infringing upon fundamental human entitlements. Furthermore, the phrase "groaned" implies misery and despair, whereas "our people falling" implies the loss of life and the denial of the

right to exist without fear of violence. Using the possessive pronoun "our" stresses community ownership of the pain and suffering, emphasizing that the battle for freedom and liberation is a shared one.

Furthermore, the metaphor stresses Black people's freedom fight throughout history. The phrase "falling" indicates a never-ending struggle, with each act of racial cruelty and oppression adding to the collective load of Black people. The metaphor highlights that freedom is a never-ending battle against systematic oppression and discrimination rather than a single event or moment. In short, the author uses a metaphor to draw attention to the ongoing battle for racial justice and encourages readers to confront and deconstruct the structural systems that perpetuate oppression in order to achieve genuine freedom and equality. The section emphasizes the African American community's ongoing battle for independence, weaving together historical and modern experiences to show the multifaceted nature of racism. The metaphor of freedom symbolizes the aspiration for equality, respect, and emancipation from the repressive forces that have tormented Black people throughout history.

In the prologue, Angelou said, "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 an unnecessary insult". The metaphor of "rust on the razor that threatens the throat" illustrates the influence of displacement awareness on the sense of freedom. "The razor" symbolizes independence, while "rust" indicates degradation and potential injury. The rust symbolizes the societal restrictions and cultural restraints that the Southern Black girl faces, which limit her autonomy and self-expression. It also expresses the sense that her consciousness of being moved heightens the difficulties she experiences, further restricting her independence. Furthermore, the phrase "unnecessary insult" emphasizes the injustice and unfairness of her circumstances, highlighting the unneeded burden she bears due to societal discrimination and marginalization. This metaphor emphasizes the difficulties and challenges Southern Black girls face as they seek self-

determination and equality. It highlights the need to address and remove structural impediments to her independence, allowing her to traverse society without excessive limits and hazards.

The metaphor urges readers to examine the limitations on freedom faced by oppressed individuals, particularly Black women in the Southern region. It asks for recognition of the injustices they face and action to correct them.

3.7.2. Personification

Angelou uses personification to create a stronger emotional connection with the reader and convey the sense of tyranny and imprisonment felt by African Americans during the period of segregation.

The African American community is represented by the caged bird, whereas the white community is represented by the free bird. Angelou uses personification to give the imprisoned bird a voice and let it convey its wishes and feelings. This starkly contrasts the free bird, which can soar freely and reflects the white community's privilege and freedom. In chapter 5, Angelou personifies freedom in the following quote " the world had taken a deep breath and was having doubts about continuing to revolve. (Chpt. 5) . In the first section, "The World Had Taken a Deep Breath," Angelou gives the planet a human-like activity by claiming that the world "had taken a deep breath." Actually, the world cannot breathe the same way humans do, but assigning this activity to the universe provides a vivid image and indicates that something major or meaningful is taking place. In "was having doubts about continuing to revolve", Angelou personifies the planet further by implying that it is capable of experiencing doubts. "Doubts "are commonly linked to human mental processes and emotions. By imbuing the globe with uncertainties, the author implies that the world is questioning or contemplating its typical rotating function, a metaphor for the world's continual existence or evolution.

Angelou uses personification in this quotation as a poetic method to produce a vivid and creative depiction. In addition, it contributes to the impression of unease and contemplation, stressing the concept that even the world might suffer hesitation or doubt.

3.8. Symbolism

3.8.1. The Caged Bird

Angelou's "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" uses the caged bird to symbolize Maya herself, caged in by bars of racism and self-doubt, and the caged bird sings for freedom just as Maya seeks freedom to follow her dreams. The caged bird is a potent symbol of the African American experience, particularly for Black women facing racism and oppression.

"The caged bird "represents confinement and loss of freedom, reflecting the oppression faced by African Americans during Angelou's upbringing. It symbolizes the limited lives of Black individuals in a segregated society. Angelou uses this metaphor to explore themes of resilience and freedom. Moreover, the caged bird's song symbolizes marginalized communities' resilience and ability to assert their humanity despite adversity.

3.8.2. The Easter Dress

Angelou's Easter dress symbolizes hope, transformation, and dignity. It brings her joy and a new start. The dress symbolizes self-expression and individuality, standing out and bringing attention to Maya, making her feel unique. Selecting and wearing an Easter dress is a self-discovery ritual for personal identity. In this context, Maya's excitement reflects her longing for a brighter future and a sense of belonging. The dress represents Maya's need for approval from others, especially her mom and community. Maya aims to overcome bias as a Black girl in her pretty new dress. It also symbolizes perseverance and self-respect. Maya finds strength and empowerment in wearing the dress despite challenges.

3.8.3. The Blue Serge Suit

Angelou uses "the Blue Serge Suit" to symbolize Maya's desire for acceptance, identity, and equality, worn during her eighth-grade graduation ceremony. The Blue Serge Suit contrasts with Maya's marginalization and insecurity from childhood racism. The Blue Serge Suit represents transformation and self-expression for Maya, giving her pride, confidence, and empowerment. Maya embraces a new phase, breaking free from societal limits as an African American girl and redefining herself through her suit. "The Blue Serge Suit" symbolizes the influence of appearances in society. Maya uses it to command respect. The Blue Serge Suit represents Maya's progress in accepting herself, building resilience, and striving to achieve her aspirations.

3.8.4. The Doll

In Angelou's autobiography, the doll represents Maya's early struggle with self-acceptance and the feelings of abandonment she experiences. The doll, with its features of "blue eyes and rosy cheeks and yellow hair," (Chpt. 8) embodies the societal standards of beauty that Maya is exposed to as a young Black girl. However, the doll's appearance contrasts with Maya's own physical attributes, reinforcing a sense of inadequacy and not measuring up to the dominant beauty ideals.

Maya's desire to own the doll shows that she craves acceptance and validation in a society that values white features and European standards of beauty. As Maya internalizes these ideals, she begins to question her own self-worth and struggles with accepting herself. The doll represents an unattainable standard that Maya feels she must meet in order to be recognized and approved of for her appearance.

All in all, Angelou's autobiography employs the doll as a potent representation that highlights her initial challenges in accepting herself and battling against societal beauty norms.

The intricacies of Maya's identity, race, and gender are depicted as she navigates towards discovering and freeing herself.

3.8.5. Imagery

This autobiography is filled with vivid imagery. To begin with, "My gift from Mother was a tea set—a teapot, four cups and saucers and tiny spoons—and a doll with blue eyes and rosy cheeks and yellow hair painted on her head"(Chpt. 8) . The passage under discussion makes use of imagery. The portrayal of the tea set and doll evokes a powerful mental image in the reader's mind, showing a highly noticeable evocation that generates a feeling of imagery. The linguistic components "teapot," "cups," "saucers," "spoons," "doll," "blue eyes," "rosy cheeks," and "yellow hair" all add to the vivid visual vision. Furthermore, the reader may visualize the tea set's and doll's physical traits and subtleties, including their shapes, colours, and attributes. The imagery used in the text illustrates and depicts the things under discussion, allowing the audience to effectively immerse themselves in the sensory particulars of the environment effectively. The tea set and the doll are items associated with play and the human creative faculty, symbolizing the freedom of expression and inventiveness that often characterizes adolescence. The aforementioned expressions evoke exhilaration, capriciousness, and unconstrained inquiry, consistent with the overriding motif of freedom. Additionally, receiving a gift from Mother hints at a nourishing and caring relationship, which may add to a sense of emotional stability and independence. It stands for the freedom to accept and value the care and affection of a caregiver, which is crucial to one's independence and well-being.

In "The sounds of tag beat through the trees while the top branches waved in contrapuntal rhythms"(Chpt. 20). The author's visual imagery and auditory imagery by the author serve to depict the scene. This statement employs vivid imagery using sensory language to evoke a specific ambiance and convey a precise mental picture. The author adeptly draws upon the aural sensation of the rhythmic beats of tag echoing through the opulent foliage, inducing a contrasting

visual spectacle of the upper branches gently swaying in a counterpoised manner. This technique has the potential to elicit sensory engagement and captivate the readers.

Regarding its connection to the subject of freedom, this visual interpretation evokes feelings of enjoyment, joy, and harmony. The resonant tones of tag echoing among the greenery create an energetic and passionate atmosphere that symbolizes the freedom to engage in childish activities and appreciate the natural surroundings. The swaying boughs suggest an organic and harmonious oscillation, symbolizing the interconnectedness of the natural world and the freedom to travel and express unrestrained thoughts. They move at a contrapuntal pace. The use of imagery in the aforementioned sentence successfully evokes the sense of independence and unrestrained behavior that are frequently indicative of the juvenile stage, highlighting the crucial idea of freedom and the joy that can be found in play and interactions with others.

Conclusion

Maya Angelou is regarded as one of the most exceptional American writers. Her writing style is recognized for its subjective perspective, as well as its clarity and simplicity. Additionally, her writing contains elements of ambiguity, complexity, and mystery, which contribute to the enigmatic nature of its interpretation. Most of the writings authored by the individual in question are replete with factual information. This can be attributed to the author's personal experiences and past, significantly influencing her writing style. This chapter aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the literary work "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" by implementing stylistic analysis that encompasses lexical level, figures of speech, and linguistic deviations. Through her novel, Maya Angelou aims to convey the idea of freedom, as illustrated by her life as a protagonist. The novel highlights the importance of striving for freedom despite facing challenges.

General Conclusion

Maya Angelou's "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" is regarded as a considerable accomplishment in the realm of literature. The present literary work, characterized as a postmodern novel, endeavors to depict the challenges and fundamental concerns encountered by the African American populace in the United States of America. A salient concern is the endeavor to attain freedom against racism and sexism. The primary objective of this dissertation was to conduct an exploration of the theme of freedom as it is manifest within the literary work of Angelou.

The objective of the study was to examine how Maya Angelou employs language and literary devices to portray the theme of freedom in her novel, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. It was crucial to look into sub-goals, particularly in terms of examining the concept of freedom from a stylistic standpoint. The research is focused on conducting a comprehensive examination of the linguistic and literary aspects used by the author to depict the idea of freedom.

A literature review was conducted to synthesize studies relevant to the present study. The present investigation is structured into three distinct sections or chapters. The initial chapter was designated as "Contemporary African American Literature: Conceptual Overview". Its primary objective was to furnish a lucid elucidation on the progression of current American literature and to delve into its most distinct motifs. Furthermore, it endeavored to examine the multifarious themes relevant to feminist perspectives, comprising of factors such as race, gender, black womanhood, and community. Moreover, the life and literary style of Maya Angelou are deserving of substantial consideration. The second chapter is dedicated to elucidating the concepts of "style" and "stylistics," in addition to discussing the fundamental justifications that underpin the pursuit of stylistic inquiry. Moreover, the aim is to encompass the lexical level of stylistic analysis, comprising of elements such as diction, repetition, selected rhetorical devices, its types and functions, as well as linguistic deviation. The third chapter, which served as a

practical component, was devoted to analyzing the subject matter. The present analysis examines the theme of freedom in the autobiography "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" through a stylistic lens. Its objective is to elucidate the interdependence and relationship between the stylistic features of the text and the theme of freedom. The aim is to identify the lexical and semantic properties of the text by investigating the application of figurative language, word choice, and linguistic deviation.

To attain the objectives of the study, a set of three inquiries were posed. The initial inquiry delved into the depiction of varying forms of freedom as presented in Maya Angelou's autobiography. The second analysis focused on the portrayal of Maya Angelou through the utilization of stylistic devices with an emphasis on the theme of freedom. The third elucidated the influence that aforementioned devices have upon highlighting the theme of freedom in the given literary work. The initial hypothesis posited that Maya Angelou conveys an array of themes like psychological and political freedom. The second proposition posits that Maya Angelou has effectively employed various stylistic devices and deviations, such as lexical deviation and figurative language. The third element expands upon the notion that the language and style utilized in Maya Angelou's works serve to permeate the overarching theme of freedom within her corpus.

In order to test our hypotheses, we selected the related corpus and, correspondingly, we conducted the following methods: Firstly, The investigated study initially employed a methodological approach that is qualitative in nature, aligning with the characteristics of our chosen subject matter. The study employed both analytical and descriptive approaches to explicate the autobiography entitled "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" through the lens of stylistic analysis. Thus, the utilization of descriptive analytics was employed in further expounding on our thesis regarding the pursuit of freedom in the post-modern era.

The study aimed to investigate the data analysis that was extracted from Maya Angelou's autobiography. The corpus obtained from this analysis was consisted of three key elements, namely contemporary African American literature, stylistic approach, and the theme of freedom. As such, the research sought to provide a comprehensive academic account of the aforementioned literary elements through the analysis of Angelou's autobiography.

The study's findings confirmed the prior hypothesis and revealed the following conclusions: we concluded from our reading of Angelou's autobiography, "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*", that she portrayed multiple kinds of freedom in her work such as psychological, social and political freedom, particularly, personal freedom in relation to self-expression and self-determination when she struggled to find her voice and assert her own identity in the face of societal and familial pressures. Second, we noticed that Maya employed several stylistic methods and deviations to depict the notion of freedom, such as lexical variation and figurative language. Third, in her representation of the concept of freedom in her autobiography through her personal, Angelou employed a distinctive language and style to express the theme of freedom in the corpus.

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ملخص

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى إلقاء الضوء على المفهوم المتكرر للحرية في النصوص الأدبية الأفريقية الأمريكية المعاصرة. على وجه التحديد ، تم إجراء تحليل أسلوب لرواية مايا أنجيلو "أنا أعرف لماذا يغني الطائر المسجون في قفص". تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتحليل الصورة الأسلوبية للحرية في عمل مايا أنجيلو الأدبي. الهدف من هذا التحقيق هو التدقيق في استخدام اللغة والأدوات الأدبية من قبل المؤلف في تصوير مفهوم الحرية داخل المجموعة المختارة. ويذهب البحث إلى أن مايا أنجيلو تستخدم بمهارة مجموعة متنوعة من الأدوات الأدبية لكي تنقل بفعالية رؤيتها للحرية من منظور فريد لأفريقية أمريكية عانت شخصياً من القمع العنصري. وقد استخدمت مايا أنجيلو أجهزة وأوجه انحراف مختلفة في كتاباتها، مثل الانحراف اللغوي واللغة المجازية. وتهتم هذه الدراسة بالسمات اللغوية والأسلوبية التي تنطوي عليها أعمال مايا أنجيلو التي تؤكد على موضوع الحرية. على وجه التحديد، يوضح التحليل كيف تظهر هذه السمات في رواية أنجيلو أعرف لماذا يغني الطائر المسجون في قفص حيث لا يزال السعي للحرية الشخصية مستمراً على الرغم من الشدائد. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أن مايا أنجيلو استخدمت أسلوباً فريداً لتصوير فكرة الحرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب الأفريقي الأمريكي المعاصر ، الحرية ، الأسلوب ، مايا أنجيلو ، أمريكي من أصل أفريقي.