

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen



Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English
Section of English

**Recovery from Trauma in Maya Angelou's *I Know*
*Why the Caged Bird Sings***

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English as a Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of << Master >> in
English Literature and Civilization.*

Presented by:

Mis. KHALED Nouria Malika

Supervised by:

Dr. MOURO Wassila

Mrs. BERBAR Souad

Academic Year 2015/2016

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents, Samir and Karima Kendouci Tani, who supported me with their pure love and encouragements and whose prayers of day and night made me fulfill this work. Thanks for your moral and financial supports, you never failed me, and I will never be able to thank you enough!

To my uncle Mohammed to whom I wish a soon recovery, and his wife Karima who encouraged me and supported me with her wise advice. I thank you for being present when I needed you.

I thank my sisters Radia and Cherifa as well as my brothers Abdallah and Mohamed Nadjib for their encouragements and support.

To the memory of my dearest friend Baladi Abd-el-Kader, may his soul rest in peace, Amen!

I love you all...

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank Allah The Almighty for all the gifts and the blessings He endowed me with, and for giving me the power and patience to finish my studies.

I thank my supervisor Dr. Mouro Wassila for her help and wise advice.

My sincere acknowledgements go to my co-supervisor Mrs. Berbar Souad, I thank her for her availability and the brilliant ideas she provided me with. Dear teacher Mrs. Berbar I would like to let you know that working with you is such an honor to me.

I am indebted to the words and advice of my teachers, in particular Dr. Bassou Abderrahmane who encouraged me and believed in me and in my capacities, and whose feedbacks were of great help; He was such an inspiration to me! Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Kamech Mohammad, Dr. Zidane Rahmouna and Miss. Mengouchi Meriem who helped me and never let me down when I needed help. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

At last, I would like to thank even those who did not help me. It was thanks to them that my huge insistence to do it has increased. "I am thankful for all of those who said no to me. It's because of them I'm doing it myself." Albert Einstein

Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyze trauma of the main character in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* who is Maya herself, and come up at the end with her recovery. This book was selected because it seems to hold very important themes which can change many lives. Literature plays its significant role in this book, and thanks to it Maya could manage her serious situations and psychological state to shift from her trauma, insecurity and feeling of shamefulness to self-confidence, race pride and speech recovery. This research includes two chapters where the first one contains a theoretical presentation of the African-American society and literature in the 20th century, as well as the definition of trauma, its types and effects on the person. On the other hand, the second chapter is devoted to analyze trauma and recovery in this book. In this case the author's or the major character's trauma is analyzed from a psychological perspective in order to examine her inner state and feeling as a child who experienced trauma at an early age and how she succeeded to free herself from these cages and traumas throughout literature and her desire for the change. The conclusions that are reached from this research are the importance and power of literature and reading books in Maya's life, how they could do miracles in changing her situation from the worse to the better, and her survival after all what she went through.

Contents

Dedication	I
Acknowledgments.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Contents.....	IV
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society	
1.1. Introduction.....	5
1.2. African Americans in the 20 th Century Society.....	5
1.2.1 Segregation Laws.....	6
1.2.2 Education.....	7
1.2.3 The Civil Rights Movement.....	9
1.3. African-American Literature in the 20 th Century.....	10
1.3.1 The Harlem Renaissance.....	11
1.3.2 The Role of Women Writers in the Harlem Renaissance Literature.....	13
1.4 Trauma	19
1.4.1 Definition of Trauma.....	19
1.4.2 Types of Trauma.....	21
1.4.3 Effects of Trauma.....	22
1.5 Conclusion.....	24
Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery	
2.1. Introduction.....	26
2.2. Biography.....	26
2.3. Trauma in <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	30
2.3.1 Displacements.....	31

2.3.2 Racism and Social Rejection	34
2.3.3 Sexual Abuse	37
2.4. Recovery from Trauma in <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing</i>	39
2.5. Conclusion.....	47
General Conclusion	48
Bibliography	51

General Introduction

The 20th century period played its role at shaping the American society into different classes and groups. This segregation created a kind of loss of self-esteem inside many black Americans. African Americans were living in many tough situations and circumstances that made their lives a real nightmare and led to their unstable psychological state.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by the African American Maya Angelou is a real example that states all the characteristics and aspects of this period of time. It is Angelou's real childhood story that states the sequential tough events that happened to her as a little girl and the psychological outcomes on her. Little Maya found herself between the love of her grandmother and the segregated American southern society. Literature and books were her refuge and true friends beside her brother Bailey.

The reason for writing this research is to explore a very important theme of trauma that had been subject to many studies and which affected many generations. Its causes and effects differ from one person to another and even the degree of the harm as well as the possibility to overcome it or managing to survive through it.

Following an analytical approach, this work focuses on Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and seeks to answer the following research questions:

What are the cages that can capture a young black girl living in the segregated American South in the 1930's?

To what extent did Maya Angelou manage to overcome her trauma and gain her self-confidence?

How was her love for literature very influential and powerful on her life?

The first chapter of this research describes how African Americans started ejecting what they could not say out loud through their writing, and literature was their refuge from this psychological and mental prison imposed

by the white people. In addition to that, the first chapter sheds light on the period of history which witnessed the rise of many African American writers especially women, creating a new black movement or what is renowned by the Harlem Renaissance movement in the 1920s. It shows how this movement helped to create the change in the American society and led the black Americans gain their position and prove their existence and that they could do great things. Furthermore, this struggle and urgency for change was followed by another important movement that also sought for the change and African Americans' rights which is the Civil Rights Movement 1950s/1960s. Many African American writers stood up to draw their reality throughout literary works, expressing their suffering and humiliation under the segregated white society. The first chapter closes up with an overview about trauma, its types and its effects on the human lives.

The second chapter of this research is basically about the Recovery of Angelou from her terrible trauma. It provides us with a discussion of the trauma experience of one of the most influential author Maya Angelou whose childhood was literally a disaster because of a traumatic sexual abuse, racism and displacements, which were very tough for her to bear. It closes up with her recovery and release.

Chapter One

*Trauma in African-American Literature
and Society*

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

1.1 Introduction

The African Americans suffered from many issues that traumatized their society and lives. Racial discrimination and being under the white domination forced them to search solutions to these problems, and to improve themselves as American first class citizens. They took the defiance through non-violence to demonstrate that they have capacities and competences, and to prove that the color of the skin does not mean to be superior or inferior. The blacks started with the Harlem Renaissance in 1920s, then the Civil Rights Movement that began in 1950s where Black Americans especially writers began to use their pieces of writing and literary works for civil rights to obtain equality.

This chapter aims at giving a comprehension of the link between African American literature and the situation of black Americans in the 20th century society. It indicates the circumstances in which African Americans were living in the 20th century society, and sheds light on their suffering from racism and segregation. As a reaction to this miserable situation and way of life, African Americans awoke and protested against the segregation laws announcing the beginning of a new era which is the Harlem Renaissance. The latter paved the way for the Civil Rights Movements. This chapter also addresses an important subject that had a big impact on most black Americans at that period of time, if not all of them, which is trauma. It offers a definition of trauma, its types, as well as its effects on the person and how one can overcome it through time.

1.2 African Americans in the 20th Century Society

Going back to the 20th century, the African American society was living a difficult period of time. The period between the 1930's and 1940's was marked by many beliefs and events which dominated the black society. The latter was under the depression, prohibition, civil rights movements, and racial

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

discrimination. Racism has been one of the major issues in the United States since the period of colonization and slavery.

1.2.1 Segregation Laws

In the mid-twentieth century, even though the formal racial discrimination was broadly banned, and it was socially not acceptable and/or morally odious, so far, racial politics continued to be a major phenomenon. Historical racism remains reflected in socio-economic inequality, and it has taken on more modern, indirect forms of expression, the most prevailing being symbolic racism. Thus, racial stratification remains in employment, housing, education, lending, and government (Jordan 459). Symbolic racism can be explained as a combination of anti-Black affect, or hatred toward Blacks, and some U.S. traditional values like self-reliance, individualism, and the Protestant work ethic. Symbolic racism was applied to explore the attitudes and behaviors of the White Americans across a range of political issues and public policy debates (Sidanius and Pratto 16).

Professional opportunities were not easy to get for the African Americans. Most of them lived in bad conditions, poverty, and diseases. They were rejected by the white people and treated as animals and even worse. Many black men were hanged for simply looking into the eyes of a white woman or flirting with her, and many black women were raped by the privileged white men. The Murder of Emmett Till on August 24, 1955, was one of the most terrible crimes committed by the white Americans and which symbolized the injustice and the extreme racial cruelty of the South. He was a 14 years old Black American boy who whistled at a white woman in Mississippi, and days later he was lynched. This brutal and terrifying crime was a big tragedy that affected the American society (Bynum 80).

The civil rights bill was not passed until the end of the 1960s. Prior to that there were Jim Crow laws of segregation, blacks could not eat, sleep, or mix in any way with white people. The black Americans lived in very bad

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

racial discrimination under the Jim Crow laws which prohibited any mixture between whites and blacks and kept them separated in all fields and all aspects. Thus, it made Black-Americans more inferior to white and less valued.

Racism was a big part of the southern lifestyle during the 1930's. The segregation prevailed in buses, schools and even in parks. The Jim Crow Laws, which were present in the 1930's, did not allow African Americans in places such as parks, restaurants, hospitals, schools. In addition to that they could not even walk on the same sidewalk as a white person, or drink from the same fountain:

The imposition of the “Jim Crow” system of legal segregation throughout the South stifled black political progress. Nevertheless, African-American leaders continued to build the intellectual and institutional capital that would nourish the successful civil rights movements of the mid to late 20th century (Friedman 8).

Art and politics during the period of the 1960s-1970s played an important role in African Americans' resistance to Jim Crow segregation and racial oppression in the American society. African Americans started perceiving themselves differently and had more confidence in themselves as American citizens and not less than white ones, and it was marked as a shift that happened in their lives.

Another important element that showed the suffering of black Americans from racial discrimination was education.

1.2.1. Education

There has always been a racial and ethnic bias in the division of wealth, in America. The richness of school area was overwhelmingly specified by the racial composition of its inhabitants, in which the richer areas were inhabited largely by white non-Hispanic residents. However, African Americans and Hispanics generally inhabited the poorer areas. In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), blacks were separated from whites at school and the system was officially

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

permitted by the Supreme Court of the United States, until the early 1950s. Thus, this segregation led black Americans to an inferior level of education. As an example, in the 1940's, public spending per pupil in southern black schools was only 45 percent of what was spent on white pupils. The black schools had overcrowded and stumbling down facilities, staffed by less competent teachers with insufficient salaries, and students walk miles/long distances to and from school (Maume 99).

The majority of African American ancestors came as slaves to North America which was a reason to exclude them from various forms of traditional schooling, even if they cultivated their own rich forms of informal education. After obtaining freedom, following the Civil War, African Americans registered in schools on massive scale for the first time in history. These opportunities helped in the expansion of educated elite that could elucidate effective challenges to racism and discrimination in the 20th century, even though their schools were inferior to Whites. Eventually, African Americans made education a defining issue in their struggle for civil rights, with the historic Brown case in 1954 standing as a turning point in the movement for equality. It was uncertain to achieve these changes in such a rapid duration, without the development of education as a fount for the Black community, and an object of struggle as well (Rury 19).

In brief, in the United States the issue of segregation was of the utmost importance since it was linked pretty much to poverty. The latter was important because it disclaimed the equality of life opportunities between individuals. The shortage of equal opportunities, in turn, weakened the establishments of liberalism and democracy. The courts have got an important role as they dealt with the issues that concerned race, poverty, freedom and equality, since the early 1950s. Relying on the ideological mood of the American nation and the composition of the Supreme Court, the decisions of the Court have favored either race and equality, or freedom of choice. The decisions of the Court

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

avored desegregation, the right of the previously oppressed racial groups, and the decrease of inequality for poor schoolchildren, for almost 20 years since 1954 (Maume 99).

Nevertheless, educational access and African American progress knew a remarkable development in the 20th century America. The movement that aimed to disseminate the equal opportunity started at the landmark decision of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas (1954) and reached a climax through the Civil Rights Movement (1955–68). It was proclaimed in the 1954 Supreme Court decision (*Brown v. Board of Education*) that racial segregation was unconstitutional in education. After many years, exactly in the 1962, the first African American student to register at the University of Mississippi was James Meredith (IHEP Editor no page).

Blacks' education played an important role in the advancements of the Civil Rights movement, especially the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision which struck down the legality of the Jim Crow 'separate but equal' laws.

1.2.3. The Civil Rights Movement

America was a white supremacist privileged society, that was built on illusion of 'superiority against inferiority' designated by color of skin. The movement for change, from the 1950s-1960s was called the civil rights era, where black people and many other people of all colors stood up and protested for change, and many were killed. In this period of time African Americans strove to obtain equality and rights.

The Civil Rights Movement's definitive aim was integration and consolidation into mainstream United States. But what it actually obtained in its peak was not integrity but rather desegregation, where it represented African Americans in what was segregated before such as neighborhood, schools, and work place. Black Americans classification as second class citizens was kept as the norm for most of them. Therefore, as the white Americans refused integration, blacks started seeking for the control of community as a way for

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

freedom, in which they could take control of the segregated schools and institutions (Ezra 101).

Malcolm X was the prominent personage who came to epitomize the Black Nationalist period of the Civil Rights movement. He was such a privileged figure who ordered a respect and inspired a love at a point that cannot be equaled with anyone else in the nationalist movement. In the whole black history that took place in such awe and admiration, the only exception of a figure that is comparable to Malcolm X was Martin Luther King, his synchronous and former ideological rival. The two men were leaders, symbols, eloquent orators, and martyrs for their cause who stood astride the mid-20th century like giants heroes (Ezra 104).

The civil rights movement was the turning point for African Americans in the 20th century. African Americans gained many achievements in the American society at that time, but to this day racial equality has not been completely achieved.

The change could not have been achieved without the great efforts of the numerous African-American writers of the Harlem Renaissance who struggled to make their dream of getting their human rights as American citizens come true. The Harlem Renaissance literature paved the way to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s-1960s.

1.3 African-American Literature in the 20th Century

African American literature is the body of literature written by Americans of African descent. It has been raised as a dream and desire to challenge the discrimination and white culture that controlled and dominated society for a long time.

Poetry was the first genre that African Americans produced. It remains as the most known means of expression for blacks. There are many poets who started publishing their works in the 1960s, among them Mari Evans, Amiri

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Jayne Cortez, Haki Madhubuti, and Nikki Giovanni, in addition to poets who were first published in the 1970s, such as Maya Angelou, Lucille Clifton, and Yusef Komunyakaa, who continued to publish in the 1990s and beyond. Another group of poets who started publishing in the 1980s joined them such as Rita Dove and Cornelius Eady as well as poets who started publishing in the 1990s, including Kevin Powell, Elizabeth Alexander, and Kevin Young (Gale no page).

Through time African-American literature flourished and knew a variation of subjects and sensitive themes, where black writers started to dare addressing their ideas and thoughts, and expressing themselves, their sufferings and their dreams for equal rights out loud. The period of time that is known as the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement had a big impact on African-Americans lives and changed their situations to the better.

1.3.1 The Harlem Renaissance

Before the blossoming of the Harlem Renaissance, many African Americans had moved from the rural South to big industrial cities of the north like New York. The economic opportunities of this period of time led to a widespread migration, since these cities offered to them new opportunities for intellectual and social freedom. Thus, this great migration had paved the way to the Harlem Renaissance, when jazz, urban blues and a new pride in one's race were flourishing. Literature was affected by the new spirit of the age and a huge body of literary works was shaped.

The date of the Harlem Renaissance was debated pointedly by literary and cultural historians. It is noticed by Huggins that periodization is constantly a fiction of sorts and that the period of the beginning or ending of the movement can never be absolutely specified (Quoted by Wall 10). Huggins indicates that the dates of the Harlem Renaissance are between World War I

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

and the Great Depression, whereas, some of the scholars stratify this phrase precisely to the twentieth century (Quoted by Wall 10). However, Arthur P. Davis and Michael Peplow rejected the Harlem label and date the New Negro Renaissance from 1910, the year in which the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its journal *The Crisis* was founded, to 1940, the year that saw the publication of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and preparation for the World War II (Quoted by Wall 10). Like David Lewis, Bruce Kellner signs that the rise and fall of the Harlem Renaissance in terms of political events: the silent protest march through Harlem 1917 and the Harlem riot of 1935 (10).

During the rise of the civil rights movement which has been made up of many movements, black American literature was in between a second renaissance, subsequent to the Harlem Renaissance era, or what is called the New Negro Movement or the New Negro Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was a flourished and most influential movement in the 1920's literature, culture and arts of African Americans. It was one of the most prosperous and most complex artistic eras in American history in which there was an unprecedented explosion of literature and other different artistic forms created and inspired by African Americans. Many artists, writers, intellectuals and activists; men and women migrated to Harlem from all over America in the first decades of the twentieth century. Black women also migrated to big cities, and although they were full of hope for a better future and a better life, the substance stayed the same. The Harlem Renaissance was a sweeping intellectual and social movement that affected the whole American culture (“Harlem Renaissance” 1).

The African Americans carried on with their strife to prove the validity of their art in the eyes of white America by the 20th century progression. In the African American literary circles, many persistent debates were organized concerning the role of the black artist. *The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain*

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

(1926) is Longston Hughes's original essay that deals with the issue of black artist seeking inside the black race for his work's inspiration. As a result, numerous African American writers included folk and African American folk in their writing. In addition to that, more awareness prevailed among African American writers of this era about catering to a black audience, as it is mentioned in Alain Locke's *Negro Youth Speaks* (1925). In order to promote the black race emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and socially, race pride was very important as well as accurate and favorable representations of folk were of great essential to create a Black Aesthetic. The folk were placed as the principal characters in Writers' books by Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Sterling Brown. While McKay's *Home to Harlem* centered on the role of the folk in the North for instance, there was Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Brown's *Southern Road* which concentrated on the folk of the south, and specifically Brown's *Southern Road* (1932), which is a collection of poetry that calls for African Americans to return to their southern origins (Williams 37-8).

Undoubtedly, many African-American women played a crucial role in the Harlem Renaissance literature. Their literary works which hold different themes and their considerable achievements were of great importance and very influential for Black Americans in particular and for the American society in general.

1.3.2 The Role of Women Writers in the Harlem Renaissance Literature

Many women artists, writers, and hostesses, in Harlem and in other cities helped to define the Renaissance and played major roles in creating, supporting, and enhancing the African American arts and letters. Georgia Douglas Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Nella Larsen, and others' efforts and exertions played very important and influential roles in

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

the Harlem Renaissance (“Harlem Renaissance” 1). Their achievements reflect the struggle of a generation of literary women to portray the lives of Black people and how bad they wanted the change and fought for it.

The works and lives of the African American women playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance reflect the heritage of the black female’s self dependency and common help. Their special support to the tradition can be observed in the self-defined images of black women that these playwrights constructed and in their response and help in shaping the artistic community in which they worked. It was obvious for black women writers of the 1920s and 1930s that it was almost impossible to get job opportunities in the professional American theatre. Thus many were teachers, a few of them were government workers, and others worked different jobs to support themselves (Murphy 101). These women wrote for love and challenge of writing and for their communities. Their dramas were firstly published in black-owned journals like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, and produced as well in black-owned operated community theatres, churches, schools, social club halls, and homes. Their plays were produced at black amateur theatres like the Harlem Experimental Theatre and the Krigwa players (Harlem, Baltimore, and Washington DC), as well as at several Negro Units of Federal Theatre Project (Murphy 101). These female writers were regarded as theatre pioneers due to their period of writing which was an era where the black artists were excited to explore their talents and create their own images through their artistic works as playwrights, directors ...etc. They came with a flourished black art that holds a feminine point of view, which made their role unique (101).

Georgia Douglas Johnson (1877?-1966) was one of the earliest African American women playwrights and one of the most prolific writers of her epoch, with twenty-eight plays (Stephens 1). She helped and gave a share from her home in Washington, D.C to the artistic productivity of the Harlem Renaissance, and also to the early twentieth century African American drama and corresponding national black theatre movement. Even though she was a

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

multitalented woman artist with her writing of poems, music, plays and short stories, she was known and criticized most for her poetry and her renown as “a lady poet” of the Harlem Renaissance (Stephens 1). In theatre history, Johnson was the principal figure with her plays that were the landmark contributions not only for the African American theatre but also for the American theatre in general. She was a pioneer in the national movement “the New Negro theatre of the 1920s and 1930s”, and she is the most productive playwright in the American “lynching-drama” tradition (Stephens 2).

Johnson was a leader and an active participant in the majority of groups and organizations that are concerned with women and minorities (Murphy 104). She used her playwriting skills to interfere against lynching, which was a cruel form of racial violence against black Americans (primarily black men) by white mobs. Johnson was the most productive of all playwrights who wrote dramas protesting the crime of lynching and above all she was an active contributor in the anti-lynching movement in the 1920s (105). Her role was the most important because she performed it outside of Harlem. Thus, she gave a motive force for the intercity connections which made the movement genuinely a national one. Johnson left her own heritage to the theatre of the Harlem Renaissance as well as to black women’s self-help support tradition, as a determined playwright who combined dramatic art with the brutal subjects of lynching, concentrating on female characters while helping the development of many forms of black drama, and enhancing the vital network for the artistic community (106)

Zora Neal Hurston (1891-1960) was a folklorist, ethnographer, novelist, short story writer, story teller, galvanizing personality, and emblematic figure of the ceremonial of black culture by the Harlem Renaissance. She wrote about it and the long journey of the twentieth century to pursue beauty, individuality, and substantiation (Sturgeon no page).

Hurston was an exceptional woman writer who felt free to display outspoken black heroines, unlike the majority of female Renaissance writers

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

who feared the stereotypes. Janie Crawford was the major character of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), who looked for sexual satisfaction with men across class and age boundaries. Another example in *Prove It on Me Blues* (1928), where Ma Rainey asserted that she must hang out with women as friends rather than men, simply because she did not like men, which was a bold statement that the women writers of the Renaissance did not dare to write (Hutchinson 143). As many single black women migrated to the north, the black bourgeoisie did their best to control Women's sexual image. Black women were supposed to hold their positions as responsible mothers of the race and that the black American future depended on them. Therefore, lesbians were considered as a catastrophe since they weakened the objective of racial advancement and because of their rejection of their reproductive role, they created a risk for the future of black Americans, and were also blamed for black youth corruption. Hence, with this sensitive reaction concerning black female sexual image, it is not a surprise that transgressive sexuality in particular played a minor role in literary works of the Renaissance female writers (143).

Jessie Fauset (1882-1961) was an editor and author. 'Behind every famous man is a woman' is a saying that can be applied on men of Harlem. Jessie Redmon Fauset was a woman behind scenes who enhanced the careers of some renowned men of the Harlem Renaissance (Wintz and Paul 1014). Fauset became a French and Latin teacher in Washington, Dc, in October 1906 despite of all the discrimination she faced (McKissack 15). After the death of her father and mentor, she started writing to W.E.B DuBois. The latter admired and published her articles in the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which is called *The Crisis*, its role aimed for the equal treatment of African-Americans. Fauset is considered as the most significant contributor to black literary history with her role of literary editor and the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine as well as a mentor to younger male writers such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, and her works were

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

perceived in the Harlem Renaissance canon as ‘minor’ texts (Ogbar 93). Fauset moved to Harlem after her employment by DuBois as the literary editor of the magazine, in the 1919 (McKissack 16). DuBois, One year later, she became an editor again for a monthly publication for children entitled *The Brownies’ Book*. Thanks to this work which she held until 1926, she obtained an international stage to promote her ideas about both race and the importance of literature for black Americans to overcome their oppression (McKissack 17).

Fauset continued her active roles giving lectures and hosting cultural events which supported the progress of black writers until she passed away in April 1961. She realized that not only men were able to shape the Harlem Renaissance but also women were capable too; the thing that made her unique (18). The significant accomplishments of Fauset did not stop only on her having hosted social meeting and encouraged fledgling writers but also she had a willingness to teach black children how to be proud of their heritage and support their creativity (Andrews 138). In addition to that, Fauset wrote poetry, many essays, and short fiction and wrote four novels that were published over a nine-year span: *There is Confusion* (1924), *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *The Comedy: American Style* (1933) which made her the most prolific novelist during that period (138). Fauset helped give birth to the Renaissance, and was more than a midwife to many writers’ careers (McKissack 18). She led the emergence of several key ideas as well as the careers of writers, including Langston Huges and Nella Larsen of *The Crisis* (NAACP). Her novels including *There is Confusion* which was considered the first Harlem novel are classified with the work of Nella Larsen and Zora Neale Hurston, as claimed in *The Encyclopedia of Harlem Renaissance* (Sturgeon no page).

Nella Larsen (1891-1964) What made Nella Larsen one of the Renaissance leading lights was her desire of taking creative and intellectual challenges. *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929) are her two novels which depict the struggle of Talented Tenth light-skinned black women to stabilize

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

their fidelity for their race, in addition to a desire for sexual fulfillment (Parini 152). Nella Larsen did not deal with race issues in the common sense, nor did she glorify blackness, as she did not utilize the race to expostulate or create propaganda. Hence, as Mr. Robert Bone stated, she was a rearguard of the Harlem Renaissance (Quoted by Wintz 287). Larsen had the ability to display her subject with a vast perspective where a personal issue can be developed to a race issue, and then to a global one, which is what made her a very sophisticated writer. She was the first writer among the black ones to fulfill this artistic achievement (Wintz 287).

The role of Larsen, at the beginning was mainly informing people of the evening assembling about executive committee. To announce the display or to encourage the spreading of the word, Larsen sent cards during summer. Besides that, she assisted to establish a group of hostesses to welcome and guide people during the display (Hutchinson 137). Furthermore, she did her best to support the promotion of the event, in mid-July, by sending letters written by Williams to preachers and pastors demanding support for the event, in soliciting hostesses from their congregation, and in encouraging parishioners to exhibit their work. In addition to her contacts with ministers of church assembly as well as the Seventh-Day Adventists to attract more attention, while more recognized, churchgoing female contacted the more reputable congregation to which they belonged (137).

Different creative works in literature in the 1920s and 1930s were explored in New York City's community of Harlem. At the time when the culture and literature were flourished, many talented black women worked hard and created successful careers as writers, artists ...etc. Their typical roles in the Harlem Renaissance literature were of great importance in which they helped in shaping thoughts and changing lives. These black women's legacy and imprint that demonstrate their resistance against all the obstacles and the terrible discrimination they faced seeking for freedom and a better life will always be remarkable and inspiring to many generations all over the world.

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

Women writers of this period were more likely obliged to stay home with the family by means of social mores and traditions, or economic dependence. Thus they were often unable to find their way to Harlem, but despite that they were very important in constructing centers of the Harlem Renaissance Movement outside of Harlem and New York City.

Many black Americans suffered from trauma in a society that tended to praise the whites and many of these blacks were shocked by the crimes that were committed against them by white Americans for banal reasons and when their only mistake was their black color.

1.4 Trauma

Trauma theorists and witness narratives have often emphasized the corrosive nature of trauma on the experiencing subject, the culpability and self-doubt that dominate survivors of traumatic events, the agonistic consciousness that attend their efforts to recall their experiences, specifically in narrative form. Some writers such as Primo Levi, Raymond Federman, Toni Morrison, and Elie Wiesel have emphasized on both necessity and impossibility of representing in writing the deeply alienating experience of traumatic events (Quoted by Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 461). Several trauma writers have resorted to strategies that postponed and detour the narrative, fearing that if the narrative settles too soon in an identifiable plot, it will replace truth with cultural stereotypes and narrative agreement (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 461).

1.4.1 Definition of Trauma

Trauma is a psychological, physical and mental damage which leaves on the person a deep and sometimes a permanent effect. It can be defined as:

Contemporary theories seem to agree on a definition of trauma in terms of overwhelming life experiences that shatter the social and psychological sense of self and precipitate existential crisis, characterized by ‘flashbacks, nightmares and other re-experiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

arousal, explosive violence or a tendency to hypervigilance’ (Linett 160).

This means that the term trauma usually signifies a psychological state of the person who suffers from past bad experiences for example; Family problems, poverty, accidents, war, rape...etc. It causes a change in the behavior of the person due to an extreme anxiety, sorrow, or shock after a negative event or a distress. Linett adds:

The Greek word trauma literally refers to a physical wound and, until the last century, alluded strictly to bodily injury. As Jill Matus reminds us, both trauma and its iteration as combat fatigue syndrome, described in the twentieth century as post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD, are historically produced categories whose foundations pre-date Freudian psychoanalysis in hypotheses formulated by nineteenth century writers. (160).

Trauma occurs when the person is exposed to a shocking experience that affects his psychological, mental and spiritual state. The child’s trauma that occurs as a result of a sexual abuse is a very delicate one. A traumatized person’s behaviors start changing; he starts doing something new that is unusual; start getting flashbacks of what happened to him/her, and having difficulty in sleeping having nightmares.

Furthermore, it may be considered that trauma is a kind of grievous or overwhelming event that happens to a person, as it may be seen as a process where the mind of an individual is set up in a particular way in order to deal with this event. That process consists of traumatic induction, the pre-traumatic phase, and the acute phase of the traumatic state itself. It is followed by a post-traumatic period of either recovery or decline (Arnold and Ralph 7).

The twentieth century writers focused on plots of childhood trauma from sexual abuse especially by closest people like the father...etc: “Still, the more readily detectable central trauma of the twentieth-century plot is of the common childhood variety, and resides in the --- apparently sexual---abuse the

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

twentieth-century narrator was subjected to by father” (Ganteau and Onega 235).

Trauma differs from one person to another, from a case to another and from a circumstance to another as well. Thus, it has different types which vary depending on the situation or the event that causes the trauma.

1.4.2 Types of Trauma

The unexpected shattering of the person’s internal world is the core of trauma. The prolonged effect of this inner disintegration is affected by many causes involving whether the trauma is random or malicious and if it is resulted from a natural catastrophe, accident or individual intent; the person’s stage of development and who is experiencing the trauma, in addition to that, the quality of the relationship; whether the trauma is caused by someone else and if it happens only once or more. It is affected by one’s unique personality features and past conflicts (Arnold and Ralph 5).

There are two different types of trauma; acute or type I trauma and complex or type II trauma. Type I trauma can be defined as a single shattering event that has an impact on the person, for example; an airplane crash, and physical or sexual abuse. Type II trauma usually occurs in the cases of repeated victimization or abuse when the overwhelming experiences are at the same time chronic and unpredictable. Complex trauma has its outcomes which have a developing pervasion, and perpetrated interpersonally are the most harmful kinds of complex trauma (6).

After World War II, there was another interesting research that treated once more the psychological state of the persons who survived a natural catastrophe like tornadoes, earthquake and mudslides, or industrial ones like nuclear accident and explosions. The period after the war is over, knew a huge interest in these types of trauma, and the research investment given by the National Academy of Science, can be demonstrated as well by the idea that the

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

information corresponding to the results of disasters would be able to expect the psychiatric outcomes of events which happened during war time (as an example during nuclear explosions) (Vees-Gulani 17). Another branch of trauma literature began to have a look at the impacts of rape on women, which led to what is called “rape trauma syndrome” in 1974. Once more, the symptoms shown by the victims of sexual assault, such as nightmares and flashbacks that have a connection to the rape, avoidance behavior, panic, and rage (17).

1.4.3 Effects of Trauma

The outcome of traumatic events on human functioning has been a subject of study for many years. Plenty of research has studied traumatic events starting from individual events such as car crashes and sexual violations to community-wide events such as natural disasters, airplane crashes, and society violence, in addition global events such as war (Butler, Alisson and Lewis 35). The individual generally considers traumatic events as life-threatening, unpredictable, and rare, and with high severity as well. However, in a given society, traumatic events can be repeated, thus, the existence of fear can turn into the norm. Evidence indicates that the type and intensity of effects often differ according to the kind of event (35).

The effect of exposure to a traumatic event is liable to change and specific to the person; both psychological and physiological response can vastly differ. Social environment, biological and genetic structure, past experiences, and future expectations will interact with characteristics of the traumatic experience to result the individual’s psychological response. In general, the individuals who are exposed to a traumatic event show increased rates of intense stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorder. Even though psychiatric illnesses such as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) are the most acute effects of traumatic events, they are the best examined as well (35). PTSD is characterized by chronic and debilitating

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

difficulties in many areas of emotional and interpersonal functioning, exemplifying the overall complexity of the PTSD diagnosis (Johnson 15).

A large part of the research literature has emphasized particularly on events. However, PTSD is only one effect in a countless consequences caused by traumatic events. Experiencing a traumatic event does not necessarily cause serious psychological problems. There are series of outcomes resulting from distress responses such as mild anxiety, to behavioral changes such as mild difficulty sleeping, to the beginning of a diagnosable psychiatric illness. The severity of these outcomes can be put into three categories that may correspond to strategies for intervention: Most people can experience mild distress and/or behavioral change, such as the inability to sleep, feeling irritated and worried, as well as the increased smoking or alcohol use (Butler, Alisson and Lewis 35).

These individuals will probably recover without any treatment, but may benefit from education and society-wide encouraging interventions. A smaller group may have more moderate symptoms such as continued insomnia and anxiety and will probably benefit from psychological and medical supportive interventions. A small subgroup will require specialized therapy (37).

Traumas which stick on active memory leave both children and adult imprisoned in the past, and make them sink in the trauma somatic sensation and in terrible feelings of anxiety and severe anger which distort their present perception. Until these sensations are overcome, the traumatic events continue to appear as symptoms in forms that are ambiguous and not understood neither by the traumatized person nor by his close ones (Arnold and Ralph 129).

Furthermore, children who survive after a sexual trauma always hold in their memories a sorrowful feeling and flashbacks of what happened to them. This terrible incident of rape will remain as big loss of their childhood innocence and can even lead them to lose trust in others:

Chapter One: Trauma in African-American Literature and Society

Survivors of childhood sexual trauma, Herman explains, ‘face the task of grieving not only for what was lost but also for what was never theirs to lose. The childhood that was stolen from them is irreplaceable. They must mourn the loss of the foundation of basic trust (quoted by Bloom 112).

Experiencing trauma does not signify that the person’s life is destroyed forever; instead, one can get something positive out of it. This does not mean to make the experience less serious. Trauma is defined as terrible, complex, and distressing. However, by not giving reasonable grounds about the offensiveness of any type of trauma, it can be discussed how to get a positive outcome from it, which is a kind of alchemical transmutation of past trauma into present freedom, compassion, and wisdom (Volkman 265).

1.5 Conclusion

During the 20th century, African Americans in particular those who were living in the south, were literally suffering from a segregated society. Most of them were traumatized and psychologically very sick. African Americans at that period were unfairly treated, tortured, and murdered without any pity. Nevertheless, these people did not give up their dream of being free, and struggled challenging all the suffering and the ache of discrimination that traumatized most of them, to impose their existence and to have the position that they deserve. Many of them gave birth to the Harlem Renaissance by using literature as a means of dealing with their trauma, as Maya Angelou attempted in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Chapter Two

When Literature Becomes a Recovery

2.1 Introduction

African American literature is the fruit of black Americans' hard work and struggles to prove their position in the American society among the white Americans. The 20th century knew the occurrence of many African American writers whose literature helped at shaping thoughts and whose roles in the society reflected their determination to get their rights and strive for freedom. Maya Angelou was one of the most powerful black women who challenged themselves and challenged both the white and the black society that oppressed them and made them feel inferior and ashamed of their black color even though it was not their fault. Her first autobiographical book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* portrays her childhood incidents that hold many traumatic experiences among them her rape which led to her muteness.

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss trauma in Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* that overshadowed her childhood, and her struggles to cope with hard situations. It concentrates on the psychological state of Maya Angelou as going through her terrible trauma and how literature, studies and graduation played an important role at giving a glimmer of hope to Maya the little black girl who suffered a terrible childhood trauma in a segregated American society.

2.2 Biography

Maya Angelou was a poet, dancer, singer, actress, producer, director, and scriptwriter. She is renowned for her six autobiographies, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986), *Gather Together in My Name* (1974), *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (1976), *The Heart of a Woman* (1981), and *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002) (Akyampong and Gates231). These autobiographies hold the themes of resisting against racism, identity, sexuality, self-esteem, family and travel. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was the first autobiography that she

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

wrote and her most notable one that millions of copies were sold and made her known throughout different countries of the world (poeticous 2016).

Maya was born in St Louis, Missouri, on April 4, 1928. Marguerite Johnson was her real name, but her brother Bailey called her “My sister”. He gave her the nickname 'My' and then 'Maya', which is her current name (Jones 6).

After her parents’ divorce and at the age of three, she was sent with her brother Bailey to live with their parental grandmother ‘Momma’. The later owned a general store in the small town of Stamps, Arkansas, where Maya, Bailey and Uncle Willie who lived with Momma too, helped her managing it. (Robinson 11)

Maya was very close to Bailey and trusted him a lot, to tell him all her secrets. Even though she was well treated by both Momma and Uncle Willie, she always felt the absence of her parents, especially in the annual occasions where all the families used to gather. Bailey was the person to whom she confessed her pain; they cried together and had fun together as well. (Angelou 57)

At the age of seven, Maya Angelou was sexually abused by Mr. Freeman who was her mother’s lover. After her family knew about the rape, Mr. Freeman was found killed. Maya then, was shocked and blamed herself about what happened and thought that her words were so powerful that they would kill. Consequently, she stopped talking for nearly five years (Cunningham 130)

When she went back with her brother to live with their grandmother again, in the south, she was lucky to know Mrs. Flowers; a very educated woman. The lady had a look on Maya and sowed the seeds of love for literature and reading inside that infant’s feeble, injured, sorrowed heart and lost mind. This helped her get out of her cocoon and regained her voice so long jailed deep inside her body. (Angelou 104)

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

Maya Angelou read many books in her childhood with much passion for the African American poets such as Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson. These poets inspired her at a point that there was a strong link between her poetry and theirs. The title of her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was taken from the poem "Sympathy" of Paul Lawrence Dunbar who influenced and inspired Maya Angelou:

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings
I know why the caged bird sings! (Bloom 1-2)

Literature played a big part in Angelou's life; she studied a wide range of books that inspired her to write her own ones. Upon Maya's Graduation at the top of her class from the Lafayette Training School, in 1940, she was sent and her brother Bailey again to live with their mother in San Francisco. As Maya advanced in her studies and she was granted a scholarship to study drama and music at California Labor School. Hence, Angelou started to participate in the art forms which she soon used to launch her first professional career (Hawthorne no page).

After her pregnancy at the age of sixteen with her young neighbor, she felt alone because he quitted her in the fourth month. Bailey advised her not to tell their parents until her graduation (Braxton 70).

At the age of seventeen, Angelou became the first black woman conductor in San Francisco. After she received her high school diploma and she gave birth to a son, Guy Bailey Johnson. ("Maya Angelou" The Poetry Foundation no page)

She started a career as a professional entertainer as a singer-dancer, in the 1950's at the Purple Onion a cabaret in California. ("Maya Angelou - Biography" no page)

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

In 1952, Angelou married a white ex sailor, whose name was Tosh Angelos. Their marriage failed because of Angelou's fear that her son's pride in his black ancestry might be compromised with a white stepfather. Her husband's atheism was also one of the causes of the failure of their marriage. The church was very important to Angelou, as she considered it a part that defines her black heritage that is impossible to waive. Nevertheless, Angelou's dance career was very successful during her marriage. She first used her stage name of Maya Angelou in 1953, when she performed at a cabaret called the Purple Onion, in San Francisco (Nelson 13).

In order to join the Harlem Writer's Guild, Maya Angelou moved to Brooklyn, New York, in the 1959. She co-wrote with actor Godfrey Cambridge a play that she directed and performed in *Cabaret for Freedom*. In addition to that, she also became active in the Civil Rights Movement (Cullum 25).

Moreover, in 1959, at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Maya Angelou became the Northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This was an organization that aimed at using nonviolent resistance so that the African Americans get their equal rights (Abel 40). The death of Martin Luther on her birthday in 1968 was a big shock for Angelou, and since his death she stopped celebrating it. Another Shock for Maya Angelou was the death of her other friend Malcolm X in 1965.

Angelou established her literary reputation in the 1970's despite her desperate early years, and she progressively succeeded to be a singer, dancer, and actor. She wrote more than 30 books, including poetry, essays, and six autobiographies.

Maya Angelou has creative achievements in numerous genres and disciplines. Thanks to her poetry and prose she has earned National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize nominations. In addition to that, Angelou received an Emmy nomination in 1977 for her role in the television adaptation of Alex Haley's *Roots*. She won three Grammy Awards for spoken-word recordings of

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

her poetry and prose and was invited by President-elect Bill Clinton. Angelou recited the poem 'On the Pulse of Morning', that she had written for the occasion of the inauguration of President Bill Clinton, on 20 January 1993. This stood as one of the unforgettable moments for many Americans. Angelou passed away after declining health on May 28, 2014 at her home in Winston-Salem, N.C. at the age of 86 (Brown 2014).

Robert Loomis told her that it was impossible to write an autobiography as literature, and to forget about it. This is what made her challenge him and strongly decide to do it. She had flash backs to the days she stopped talking and remembered a poem that starts with “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, alas.”(Quoted by Agins 76) so it was the title of her book.

In her first autobiography and memoir *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) she portrays everything about racism and trauma of the sexual abuse that she went through during her childhood and also about her love for literature and books.

2.3.Trauma in *I know why the Caged Bird Sings*

Life is full of ups and downs and one can be exposed to many failures and frustrations. However, s/he should never give up, but instead hold on and face these failures and defeats in order to succeed and overcome them:

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it. Maya Angelou. (Quoted by Baker, & Val 49)

Maya Angelou’s autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is full of traumatic experiences that she portrayed starting from her childhood when she was abandoned by her parents and sent with her brother to live with their grandmother in Stamps, Arkansas at an early age. Her life was not stable and she suffered from the repeated displacement. Angelou describes also her suffering from being a black girl, living in the south, in a harsh and racist

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

society, where she was mistreated and rejected by society, just because of her black color. In addition to this, little Maya experienced a sexual assault from her mother's lover. This horrible experience had such a strong psychological impact on her, that she stopped talking and felt guilty and culprit. Here are some of these traumatic events or factors that made little Maya psychologically sick:

2.3.1 Displacements

The crucial period for a person's self-image is her/his childhood. A child starts questioning her/himself and her/his entourage about many things. If one just tried to imagine the feeling of a child that is rejected and abandoned by her/his parents who send her/him to live away from them, and the questions that can come to her/his small mind, then s/he might figure out what Maya endured in her childhood. In this autobiography Angelou provides us with a description of all what she went through during her childhood and her suffering from repeated displacements.

Maya's first displacement can be detected when she was sent at the age of three with her brother Bailey who was one year older than her, to Arkansas, Southern America, to live with their parental grandmother 'Momma'. She wrote: "When I was three and Bailey four, we had arrived in the musty little town, [...] we were Marguerite and Bailey Johnson Jr. from Long Beach, California, en route to Stamps, Arkansas, c/o Mrs. Annie Henderson." (7)

Hence, Maya was too little to live away from her parents, and experience the displacements. As a child, she dealt with difficult realities both in the American south with the cruelty of its people, and the lack of her parents' tenderness. Maya felt abandoned and rejected by her parents, especially for the note that was written on her wrist and that of her brother. Furthermore, her parents' indifference is shown when they addressed the note to any person that is concerned, instead of addressing it directly to Momma,

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

“...wearing tags on our wrists which instructed—‘To Whom It May Concern’ ”
(7)

Until the day when she and her brother received some Christmas presents, Maya was completely convinced that her parents were dead, since she never thought that they can be alive and leave her for that long period without asking about her or visiting her: “Until that Christmas when we received the gifts, I had been confident that they were both dead” (56). Maya expressed her deepest pain for not having her mother by her side and how she dreamed of her and how she may look like. It is clear that Maya was crying for not being able to feel what other children who share and enjoy the tenderness of their parents did. It caught her like a knife the fact that she could not even know how her mother looked like. This lack of parents’ presence made her dive in her own imagination and draw in her little mind a picture of her mother:

I could cry anytime I wanted by picturing my mother (I didn’t quite know what she looked like) lying in her coffin. Her hair, which was black, was spread out on a tiny little white pillow and her body was covered with a sheet. The face was brown, like a big O, and since I couldn’t fill in the features I printed M O T H E R across the O, and tears would fall down my cheeks like warm milk (56).

Furthermore, Maya felt a kind of betrayal from the closest persons in her life; her parents, especially after receiving from her mother the gifts, Maya was shocked and could not believe that her mother is alive, living in good conditions and despite what she did to her kids. What was in the boxes surprised Maya and made her even sadder than before. She preferred to isolate herself in the backyard behind a tree, and then her brother Bailey came after her with the same amount of grief. Receiving such gifts made their little minds think about many things and questioning themselves about their faults and about their guilt which made their parents leave them at an early age. They did not have anything to do but crying themselves again:

...but after I opened my boxes I went out to the backyard behind the chinaberry tree. [...] I looked up and Bailey was coming from the outhouse, wiping his eyes. He had been crying too. The gifts opened the door to questions that neither of us wanted to ask. Why did they send us away? And what did we do so wrong? So wrong? Why, at three and four, did we have tags put on our arms to be sent by train alone from Long Beach, California, to Stamps, Arkansas, with only the porter to look after us? (57)

This part shows how Maya and her brother chose to keep silence after what happened expressing their anger and sadness. Even though there was Momma who tried her best to cheer them up, she did not succeed, because what they really lacked was their parents' tenderness. Maya's anger and deep sadness is clearly portrayed when her grandmother asked her and her brother if they wanted to give back the gifts to Santa:

When we still didn't force ourselves to answer, she asked, 'You want me to tell Santa Claus to take these things back?' A wretched feeling of being torn engulfed me. I wanted to scream, 'yes. Tell him to take them back.' But I didn't move (57)

This part indicates that Maya had not enough courage to speak what she wanted to say as many times before. Instead, she kept everything inside herself. This made her psychological state even worse.

Moreover, another displacement scene is described when Maya was only eight and her father came to Stamps unexpectedly to take her and her brother with him to live with their mother in California. Once there, Maya's life was turned upside down, when she experienced a terrible sexual abuse and became mute and traumatized. Her displacement continued, and again she was sent back to her grandmother's house in the South. There, she dealt with many racist and cruel situations that dominated the southern American society at that time.

2.3.2. Racism and Social Rejection

Maya Angelou's resistance against racism and her insistence to survive and succeed was a kind of recompense/reward for her ancestors who struggled against slavery and who dreamed of freedom and success:

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

Maya Angelou from her poem 'Still I Rise' ("The World's Poetry Archive" 23)

To be a Black American girl and live in the south, where society praises the white beauty, was very difficult for Maya. She felt unattractive, and considered herself as an ugly girl, comparing to the white beauty. Thus, the feeling of inferiority played a role at shaping her psychological state and defined her in a way that is completely different from whom she is in the inside. Maya had imaginations and dreams that one day she could wake up from the ugly blackness to a white reality. It is obvious that Maya suffered from a problem of identity when she considered herself a white girl:

Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream, and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass that Momma wouldn't let me straighten? My light blue eyes were going to hypnotize them [...] Then they would understand why I had never picked up a Southern accent, or spoke the common slang, and why I had to be forced to eat pigs'tails and snouts. Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number-two pencil. (4-5)

These lines only reveal how the southern racist society affected Maya's little mind and let her think that beauty equaled the white skin, fair hair and blue eyes. And even worse, these beliefs made Maya lose her identity trying to

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

imitate the way white people speak and eat and led her to feel ashamed being a black ugly girl.

Another image of the racism and discrimination that Black Americans were living in Stamp, Arkansas, of the 1930's 1940's, when Angelou stated: "In Stamps the segregation was so complete that most of Black children didn't really, absolutely know what whites looked like." (27) Black Americans were badly treated, humiliated, and under the political, economic and social white power. Hence, they were not given much importance and were segregated and isolated in everything (schools, restrooms...etc).

Furthermore, this autobiographical book describes how Maya endured the pain of the prejudice of the "powhitetrash" who lived on her grandmother's land, and who were very annoying and encroached Momma's privacy in the store that even Maya didn't dare to do:

Some families of powhitetrash lived on Momma's farm land behind the school. Sometimes a gaggle of them came to the store, filling the whole room, chasing out the air and even changing the well-known scents. The children crawled over the shelves and into the potato and onion bins, twanging all the time in their sharp voices like cigar-box guitars. They took liberties in my Store that I would never dare (30).

Angelou then showed what was even worse about these powhitetrash girls who treated Maya's grandmother rudely just because of her color and race, as many African Americans who lived in the South at that time, and who were seen as a second class citizen. However, their rudeness did not affect Maya's grandmother with anything since the latter was a strong and wise lady who thought for the consequences before any reaction and avoided being in troubles, and did not want to return back the bad treatment of the powhitetrash girls. Maya had the feeling of frustration and anger, not being able to speak or react against what the rude white girls did to her dear grandmother, because the latter ordered her not to do and to stay inside the store. As a result, Maya inside herself died of rage and pain. This scene, especially when she could not

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

interfere, swallowed her words and watched them mocking at her grandmother, frustrated her even more:

When I was around ten years old, those scruffy children caused me the most painful and confusing experience I had ever had with my grandmother [...] I wanted to throw a handful of black pepper in their faces, to throw lye on them, to scream that they were dirty, scummy peckerwoods, but I knew I was as clearly imprisoned behind the scene as the actors outside were confined to their roles (31-33).

One of the important parts that show excessive racism in Stamps is the dentist scene. There was no Black doctor in Stamps, which made black people like Momma try to manage their pain and aches by themselves. She wrote “Since there was no Negro dentist in Stamps, nor doctor either, for that matter, Momma had dealt with previous toothaches by pulling them out.” (199). The only dentist was a racist white who refused to treat Maya when she suffered from a terrible toothache. He did not like black Americans and found them disgusting and he was offensive to the extreme when he said that he would touch a dog rather than Maya’s mouth: “He let go of the door and step nearer Momma. The three of us were crowded on the small landing. ‘Annie, my policy is I’d rather stick my hand in a dog’s mouth than in a nigger’s’.” (203)

As a child who cannot wait to get rid of the pain, it was not easy for Maya to hear such a thing from a racist white dentist, and it was another terrible feeling of racial discrimination that little Maya felt, swallowed and endangered even worse her inner world.

Furthermore, the part of the book when Maya worked at Mrs. Cullinan’s house who was a white racist woman shows another scene of racism against Maya. Even though she called her Margaret instead of Marguerite, Maya did accept it and gave her an excuse that she could not pronounce well. However, when a friend of Mrs. Cullinan suggested to her to call Maya Mary instead of Margaret to shorten it, “That’s too long. She is Mary from now on” (118), Maya became irritated and felt insulted because:

Every person I knew had a hellish of being ‘called out of his name.’ It was a dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of their having been called niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots and spook (118).

Mrs. Cullinan’s scene is one of the parts that show how white Americans did not lose the opportunity to insult blacks. Maya who felt affronted when Mrs. Cullinan tried to call her by another name rather than her own took a reaction and broke her favorite dishes. As Mrs. Cullinan was extremely racist, she exploded all the hatred that she had inside herself toward blacks when she said: “That clumsy nigger. Clumsy little black nigger.” (120)

Another scene that reveal the racist attitude of white Americans is when Mr. Edward Donleavy, a white speaker in the graduation ceremony, insulted the black audience by telling them that the White school had received new science lab equipment and famous artist to teach them art, however, the Black school had graduated many fine and promising athletes and a prospect for the Agricultural and Mechanical school. Maya then felt inferior and incapable to do anything or to defend her black race:

Donleavy had exposed us [...] It was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my color with no chance of defense. She wrote (194)

But in fact what really was going to ruin her child life and grew in her the most heinous feeling she ever experienced is still to come; her sexual abuse.

2.3.3. Sexual Abuse

The worst thing that can happen to a child is rape, especially if this rape was committed by someone inside home. When Maya was in a visit to her mother’s home, she had nightmares and found difficulties to sleep. Thus, she used to sleep with both her mother and Mr. Freeman. The latter, took the advantage of the absence of Vivian, and was molesting the little girl many

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

times, until he sexually abused her. She wrote that “The act of rape on an eight years old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can’t” (84). As a child of 8 years old, Maya was not aware of what Mr. Freeman was really doing. She was confused and puzzled. Later on, Mr. Freeman threatened little Maya that he would kill her brother Bailey, if she tells anyone what happened: “If you ever tell anybody what we did, I’ll have to kill Bailey” (80).

In this part, Angelou stated how Bailey was so very close to her that he succeeded to make her finally disclose the truth to him and how he couldn’t keep the secret that enraged him and killed him deeply inside: “Bailey cried at the side of my bed until I started to cry too [...] he gave his information to Grandmother” (89). After he told Momma about what happened, Mr. Freeman was arrested and went to trial. Furthermore, the part when Maya was questioned in the Court if there was a prior abuse before he raped her, showed how she was afraid and ashamed. This fear and distress led her to keep silence instead of telling the truth about what really happened to her and that Mr. Freeman attacked her many time before the rape. She was wondering about their reactions if she confesses the truth:

I couldn’t say yes and tell them how he had loved me once for few minutes and how he had held me close before he thought I had peed in the bed. My uncles would kill me and Grandmother Baxter would stop speaking, as she often did when she was angry. And all those people in the court would stone me as they had stoned the harlot in the bible. And mother, who thought I was such a good girl, would be disappointed. But most important, there was Bailey. I had kept a big secret from him. (91).

After that, Mr. Freeman was released from prison the same day of the trial, and Maya’s enraged uncles beat him to death. Believing that it was her fault of lying in the court, Maya was traumatized and blamed herself for the death of Mr. Freeman: “He was gone, and a man was dead because I lied” (93). She stopped talking for five years, except with Bailey; “The only thing I could do was to stop talking to people other than Bailey” (93).

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

Therefore, Angelou and her brother Bailey were sent back to live with their grandmother in Stamps (94). Once there, Momma made her best to help Maya overcome her trauma. In this part of the book, she introduced Maya to a lovely and very educated woman called Mrs. Flowers who changed Maya's outlook on life.

2.4. Recovery from Trauma in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Anyone who goes through tough situations needs someone or something to lean on and a refuge to feel safe. Maya Angelou found her safety and home in literature and reading books by which she could gain her self-identity:

When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young. Maya Angelou (quoted in Phillips 182)

Maya Angelou's life was not that easy to live. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, her best known and most influential memoir, portrays how she experienced many tough and traumatic events that psychologically affected her, and shaped her personality. These incidents and experiences that she faced at an early age and continued till her teenage years led her to think about her identity and to expand herself-awareness and to shift from her psychological trauma and insecurity, to self-esteem, recovery and free her imprisoned words.

Maya's imagination and her desire to escape from her frustrating and gloomy reality in Stamps drove her to classic literature, in particular white writers; Shakespeare, Kipling, Poe, Thackeray, and James Weldon Butler, and also black authors like; Paul Dunbar, Langston Hughes, W E. B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson. Maya studied hard and dived in reading books of those authors that she fell in love with their pieces of writings:

During these years in Stamps, I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare. He was my first white love. Although I enjoyed and respected Kipling, Poe, Butler, Thackeray and Henley, I saved my young and loyal passion for Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Langston

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

Hughes, James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. Du Bois' 'Litany at Atlanta' (16).

Literature was Maya's salvation especially where it is portrayed how she was interested by white stories and living with white characters inside books especially when she said: "...a sensation that made poets gush out rhyme after rhyme, that made Richard Arlen brave the Arctic wastes and Veronica Lake betray the entire free world?" (303). It was very important for her to read and without any racist thoughts she read both black writer's books and whites' ones.

Maya Angelou the African-American poet, writer and activist portrayed in a lecture in 1990 her love for Shakespeare. She stated that living in poverty in the southern American society and experiencing racism, she felt Shakespeare spoke to her at a point that she knew 'William Shakespeare was a black woman' (Eaglestone11).

The part of the book when Angelou returned back to Stamps, Arkansas, recounts how her grandmother Momma introduced her to Mrs. Bertha Flowers, who was an elegant educated and respectful Black woman that was an idol for Maya, "She was one of the few gentlewomen I have ever known, and has remained throughout my life the measure of what a human being can be [...] she made me proud to be a Negro, just by being herself" (102-103).

Mrs. Flowers created in little Maya the power and feelings of Black pride and self-esteem when she helped her to regain her voice very wisely and convinced her with gentle words; "Now no one is going to make you talk—possibly no one can. But bear in mind, language is man's way of communicating with his fellow man and it is language alone which separates him from the lower animals." (104). It was a new idea to Maya which needed time to think about, and most importantly made Maya feel that need to express herself.

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

Another part shows how Mrs. Flowers' words motivated Maya to speak again, when she said "Your grandmother says you read a lot. Every chance you get. That's good, but not good enough. Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with the shades of deeper meaning." (104). Mrs. Flowers' words seemed very poetic and valid to little Maya that she memorized a part of them. In addition to that, the fact that Mrs. Flowers provided Maya with some books and asked her to read them aloud created inside her a love and passion of poetry and books. This passion increased and expanded her imagination and fantasy.

Hence, Mrs. Flowers created inside Maya a kind of passion for poetry throughout her special and wonderful reciting of poems, and thanks to her intelligent and gentle trials with Maya to make her speak, Maya finally did:

She opened the first pages and I heard poetry for the first time of my life [...] 'How do you like it?' It occurred to me that she expected a response. The sweet vanilla flavor was still on my tongue and her reading was a wonder in my ears. I had to speak. I said, 'Yes, Ma'am.' It was the least I could do, but it was the most also (108-109).

Consequently, Angelou showed in this part how the act of reciting poetry became a way for her to speak aloud, which was very helpful for her to start speaking again with other persons. In fact, books, poetry, and conversations with Mrs. Flowers had a positive impact on Maya. Over many months, Maya became more confident, and began writing her own poems at the age of nine (Agins 15).

The part that holds how Maya described Mrs. Flowers and how she likened her to the women of the English novels shows that Maya was very influenced by the women characters of these English books which she read:

She appealed to me because she was like people I had never met personally. Like women in English novels who walked the moors (whatever they were) with their loyal dogs racing at a respectful distance. Like the women who sat in front of roaring fireplaces,

drinking tea incessantly from silver trays full of scones and crumpets. Women who walked over the 'heath' and read morocco-bound books and had two last names divided by a hyphen (103).

Moreover, Angelou stated the way Mrs. Flowers instilled in her the love of education and gave her a lesson to remember for her whole life, about illiterate people. She encouraged her to be intelligent enough to understand wise people's sayings and that from their mouths one can learn wisdom and maturity rather than from some educated ones:

As I ate she began the first of what we later called 'my lesson in living.' She said that I must always be intolerant of ignorance but understanding of illiteracy. That some people, unable to go to school, were more educated and even more intelligent than college professors. She encouraged me to listen carefully to what country people called mother wit. That in those homely sayings was couched the collective wisdom of generation (108).

Later on, Maya showed how she employed Mrs. Flowers' lesson about the power of the word in her real life in Mrs. Cullinan's chapter when she broke her favorite dishes because the latter ignored an important word which is Maya's name and which represents her identity and thus Maya could not handle it anymore and decided to get herself fired by breaking her favorite dishes, which was her brother's idea: "Then Bailey solved my dilemma [...] I kept his instruction in mind, so on the next day [...] I dropped the empty serving tray" (119).

Her graduation in Stamps was an important part of the book and was a kind of shifting from her trauma, shyness and feeling of inferiority into a great power of self-confidence and resisting against racial oppression. Especially when Maya showed at the end how proud she was being from the black race "I was a proud member of the wonderful beautiful Negro race" (198).

Maya studied at the Lafayette Country Training School, and was a good student. After four years, in 1940, Maya graduated from eight grades at top of

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

her class at the age of twelve. Eight-grade graduating class of Maya joined the high school seniors for the commencement ceremony (Akins 16).

The day of Maya's graduation had a very special trace on her, in which she was extremely happy and excited: "Amazingly the great day finally dawned and I was out of bed before I knew it [...] I hope the memory of that morning would never leave me" (188).

She received gifts and encouragements before her graduation, as it is portrayed in her book:

Uncle Willie and Momma had sent away for a Mickey Mouse watch like Bailey's. Louise gave me four embroidered handkerchiefs. (I gave her three crocheted doilies.) Mrs. Sneed, the minister's wife, made me an under skirt to wear for graduation, and nearly every customer gave me a nickel or maybe even a dime with the instruction 'keep on moving to higher ground,' or some such encouragement (187-188).

Throughout the second half of the book Maya recognized how the imagination can help the power of words to great ends. The end of the graduation scene can explain her awareness exactly after the racist speaker insulted the black audience. The class valedictorian Henry Reed proudly gave a speech that lifted Maya and the others' spirits and then singing James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" which was the Negro national anthem:

Lift ev'ry voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty...(196)

Maya and her brother later went to live in San Francisco with her mother Vivian and her new husband Daddy Clidell, where she felt comfortable unlike with her real father and his wife Dolores. She wanted to make a change in her life and getting a job that suited her:

But the need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind. [...] I would go to work. [...] Once I had settled on getting a job, all that remained was to decide which kind of job I was most fitted for. (283)

In this part of the book Maya stated how proud she was about her level of studies, and how she did not accept any work, but instead, she chose the one that attracted her most: “My intellectual pride had kept me from selecting typing, shorthand or filing as subjects in school, so office work was ruled out.” (283). Maya decided to be a streetcar conductor and challenged the rules that refused colored women to do such work:

Women had replaced men on the streetcars as conductors and motormen, and the thought of sailing up down the hills of San Francisco in a dark-blue uniform, with a money changer at my belt, caught my fancy. [...] Mother was as easy as I had anticipated. [...] To her question of what I planned to do, I replied that I would get a job on the streetcars. She rejected the proposal with: ‘They don’t accept colored people on the streetcars.’ I would like to claim an immediate fury which was followed by the noble determination to break the restricting tradition. (284)

Even though at first she was disappointed of such rule, but her determination to achieve her dream made her insist to do it and break the rule for once. Besides that, her mother encouraged her to do it if she really wanted to: “Mother gave me support with one of her usual terse asides, ‘That’s what you want to do? Then nothing beats a trial but failure. Give it everything you’ve got.’” (284) Thus, this encouragement made Maya eager to make her dream come true. The part written in capital letters clearly showed her insistence to become a streetcar conductor no matter what it took: “I WOULD HAVE THE JOB. I WOULD BE A CONDUCTORETTE AND SLING A FULL MONEY CHANGER FROM MY BELT. I WOULD.” (287). Indeed, after a huge struggle she made her dream come true and became the first black woman car conductress: She wrote “I was hired as the first Negro on the San Francisco streetcars” (289).

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

As a high school teenager, Maya wanted to go out of her shell and break her chains of ugliness and blackness that made her feel less feminine and less beautiful. Thus, for her the solution was having a boyfriend who accepts her and who changes her life into a better one in terms of beauty and femininity. “What I needed was a boyfriend. A boyfriend would clarify my position to the world and, even more important, to myself. A boyfriend’s acceptance of me would guide me into that strange and exotic land of frills and femininity.” (300).

Maya had the feeling of an unattractive girl who cannot please any boy and that it was impossible for her to love and be loved back: “If the pretties were expected to make sacrifice in order to ‘belong’, what could the unattractive female do?”(300). Thus, she found that the best way to have a relationship is to seduce the most handsome boy. One night, Maya who was walking alone met her crush; the latter saluted her and continued his way. In this part of the story, it is portrayed how Maya did something unusual that differed from her shy hesitating character; she asked him without any shyness to have a sexual relationship somewhere with her: “‘Hello Marguerite’. He nearly passed me. I put the plan into action. ‘Hey’. I plunged, ‘Would you like to have a sexual intercourse with me?’[...] I had the advantage and so I pressed it. ‘Take me somewhere’” (301)

This relationship that Maya had with the boy led to pregnancy. Nevertheless, Maya did not give up this time, and instead she decided to bear the responsibility of what she did: “...but this time I had to face the fact that I had brought my new catastrophe upon myself” (304). She added: “I had neither element in my personality, so I hefted the burden of pregnancy at sixteen onto my own shoulders where it belonged.” (305). As it can be seen in this part, Maya admitted that it was her fault and she did not have any right to put the blame on the boy who only did what she asked him for. Here, Maya reached a kind of maturity and self-responsibility.

Chapter Two: When Literature Becomes a Recovery

It is portrayed that Maya trusted her brother Bailey a lot, when once again she confessed everything to him, about her pregnancy and the latter advised her not to tell their mother for she can order her to stop her studies: “I finally sent a letter to Bailey, [...] he cautioned me against telling Mother of my condition. We both knew her to be violently opposed to abortions, and she would very likely order me to quit school” (305). Consequently, this was a reasonable decision she took, because thanks to her studies and graduation, she could make her life a better one. Indeed, before she graduated, she did not let anyone know about her pregnancy except Bailey who kept her secret, supported her and stood by her side. Even though her relationship with her crush did not last for so long which was only for one night and which led to her pregnancy, Maya did not abort it and instead she decided to keep it and took responsibility. This incident made her run to her favorite refuge which is studies, books and graduation again; to forget all the pain she went through as a single teenage future mother.

Consequently, Maya succeeded to graduate from San Francisco high school with high degrees and despite all what she went through she did not let her situation drive her to another trauma once again. Many teenagers who experience pregnancy may be subject to trauma, abortion or what can be even worse. However, Maya decided to keep the baby and could eventually make her mother accept the situation. The birth of her son gave her more strength and maturity and a huge willingness to increase her struggle, and made her also feel needed and loved which was a special feeling that she felt for the first time.

By the end of her autobiography Maya tried to show how courageous and brave she was when she could study and graduate despite her pregnancy, as well as her responsibility as a single mother which gave her a huge insistence to carry on her life and put an end to her trauma and weakness.

2.5. Conclusion

During the 1930s and 1940s Maya was only a poor Black little girl living in the racism and segregation of the American South. Her unfair society, the cruel and judgmental people and the bitterness and pain she handled for a long time from the persons she trusted affected her psychologically and made her think of something that made her live in her own world. Literature was that refuge that Maya was seeking for. She made from books her best friends beside Bailey. This love for literature and her teacher's support created a huge insistence to break the silence and unfair restrictions she lived in, and led her to bring out all her buried capacities and talents. Hopefully, Maya Angelou succeeded to gain her own identity, self-consideration, and to have a look on life from another perspective and with more maturity. All these achievements were reached thanks to her determination to succeed and through her love for literature.

General conclusion

America has constantly been a nation of racial diversity, where the role of African Americans in shaping and being shaped in such a segregated society was stated and reflected in their literary works and pieces of art.

Trauma was a major phenomenon that had an impact on the lives of many black Americans, and which resulted from all the suffering and pain they endured, and the hidden rage and desire to break the silence and stand up for the change and cope with the hard situation. Yet, this change was seen as a dream that was not easy to obtain and which demanded a lot of sacrifices and determination in order to achieve it and overcome their blunt trauma which affected their lives for so long. Thus, many writers dealt with this sensitive subject of trauma and how it affected their ordinary lives and shaped their personal and inner states.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is Angelou's most known autobiography which holds the story of her own life from the age of 3 years old to 16 where she treated many important themes and traumatic incidents that marked her childhood.

Maya Angelou was influenced by many writers especially Shakespeare. From her childhood, she made from books her special and dreaming world, where she met and discovered many authors and characters that influenced her and her personal character. Living with her grandmother in the American segregated South of the 1930's was not easy for her. As a black girl, she handled many painful events and drank from the cup of bitterness in that period of time. Nevertheless, she could gain the power after her terrible suffering and learned how to dance in the rain.

Her love for literature and reading books made her pure soul fly with her wide imagination and big dreams that one day she will attend her goals, break the chains and free herself from everything that prevented her from what she wanted to be. Despite all what Maya Angelou suffered from, she did not accept

the situation and the life she was tortured in, and instead she stood up for the change.

It was a miracle that after all what Maya Angelou endured, she survived, struggled, graduated from college, found the job she dreamt of, and continued on her way toward success. The birth of her son Guy had a positive effect on her when she discovered the meaning of motherhood and the feeling of being needed. Above all, Maya learned about the power of love and hope for a better life. Finally, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is Angelou's memoir and autobiography in which she made the readers feel how literature helped her to overcome her trauma and break her silence, and how literature can make miracles in their lives. And the best lesson one can take from a traumatic experience is not to give up on life but instead making it as a rock to step on and rise up higher.

Bibliography

Primary Source

-Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York: Random House Inc, 1969.

Secondary Sources

-Abel, Sondra, *Practice Makes Perfect Level 8: Preparation for State Reading Assessments*. Clayton, Delaware: Prestwick House, Inc, 2006.

-Akins, Donna Brown. *Maya Angelou: A Biography of an Award-winning Poet and Civil Rights Activist*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, 2012. Print.

-Akyampong, Emmanuel Kwaku., and Henry Louis Gates. *Dictionary of African Biography*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

-Andrews, William L. "African American Literature". *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. November 17, 2014. Web accessed: 17 May 2016.

<<http://www.britannica.com/art/African-American-literature>>

-Andrews, William L., Frances Smith. Foster, and Trudier Harris. *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.

-Arnold, Cheryl, and Ralph Fisch. *The Impact of Complex Trauma on Development*. Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 2011. Print.

- Baker, Ken & Val. *The God of More than Enough*. Roscrea, Ireland: Elim Ministries Publishing, 2015.

-Bloom, Harold, *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* New Edition: A Casebook. New York: InfoBase Publishing, 2009.

- Braxton, Joanne, *Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: A Casebook*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

-Brown, Emma. "Maya Angelou, writer and poet, dies at age 86". *The Washington Post*. May 28, 2014. Web, accessed:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/maya-angelou-writer-and-poet-dies-at-age-86/2014/05/28/2948ef5e-c5da-11df-94e1-c5afa35a9e59_story.html>

-Butler, Adrienne Stith., Allison M. Panzer, and Lewis R. Goldfrank. *Preparing for the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism: A Public Health Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies, 2003. Print.

-Bynum, Thomas L. *NAACP Youth and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1936-1965*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013. Print.

-Cornis-Pope, Marcel, and John Neubauer. *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub., 2004. Print.

-Cullum, Linda E. *Contemporary American Ethnic Poets: Lives, Works, Sources*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. Print.

-Cunningham, Donna. *How to Read Your Astrological Chart: Aspects of the Cosmic Puzzle*. York Beach, Me.: S. Weiser, 1999. Print.

-Eaglestone, Robert. *Doing English: A guide for Literature Students*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

-Ezra, Michael. *Civil Rights Movement: People and Perspectives*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009. Print.

-Friedman, Michael Jay. *Free at Last: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Dept. of State, Bureau of International Information Programs, 2008. Print.

-Gale. "African American Literature of the Late Twentieth Century and Early Twenty-First Century." *African American Almanac*. Ed. Brigham Narins. 10th

ed. Detroit: Gale, 2009. *Student Resources in Context*. Web. 16 May 2016.

Wed accessed:

<<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/ReferenceDetailsPage/DocumentToolsPortletWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&u=artemis&p=SUIC&action=2&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CEJ2135010086&zid=ff5d07c670e7559361ebb8bd1be4b6f6>>

-Ganteau, Jean-Michel, and Susana Onega Jaén . *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

- Hawthorne, Tasha M. "Maya Angelou". *Black Women in America*. Oxford University Press 2016. Web, accessed date 16 March, 2016:

<http://blog.oup.com/2006/09/women_in_litera/>

-Hutchinson, George. *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard UP, 2006. Print.

-Hutchinson, George. *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.

-IHEP Editor. "A Snapshot of African Americans in Higher Education" February 25, 2010. Web. Accessed April 17, 2016.

<<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521322.pdf>>

-Jones, Brenn. *Learning about Achievement from the Life of Maya Angelou*. New York: PowerKids, 2002. Print.

-Johnson, Sharon L. *Therapist's Guide to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Intervention*. Amsterdam: B Elsevier/Academic, 2009. Print.

-Jordan, John H. *Black Americans 17th Century to 21st Century: Black Struggles and Successes*. Bloomington, IN: Trafford, 2013. Print.

-Linett, Maren Tova. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2010. Print.

- Maume, David J.(Ed.). *Child Poverty in America Today: Children and the State, Volume 4*. Westport and London: Praeger, 2007.
- McKissack, Lisa Beringer. *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*. Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point, 2007. Print.
- Murphy, Brenda. *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- "Maya Angelou - Biography" *History of the World: The 20th Century*. Ed. Christina J. Moose. *eNotes.com*, Inc. 1999. Web, accessed date 20 Mai, 2016
<<http://www.enotes.com/topics/maya-angelou>>
- “Maya Angelou”. *Poetry Foundation*. Web, accessed date 17 March, 2016:
<<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/maya-angelou>>
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. *African American Autobiographers: A Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002. Print.
- Ogbar, Jeffrey Ogbonna Green. *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited: Politics, Arts, and Letters*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010. Print.
- Parini, Jay. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. Print.
- Phillips, Susan P. *Displays!: Dynamic Design Ideas for Your Library Step by Step*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland &, 2011. Print.
- Poeticos. “Maya Angelou”.2016. Web, accessed date 15 Mai, 2016:
<<https://www.poeticous.com/maya-angelou>>
- Robinson, Mary, and M. Robinson. *CliffsNotes on Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. N.P.: John Wiley & Sons, 1992. Print.
- Rury, John L. *Education and Social Change: Contours in the History of American Schooling*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

Bibliography

- Sidanius, Jim, and Felicia Pratto. *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- Stephens, Judith Louise (Ed.). *The Plays of Georgia Douglas Johnson: From the Negro Renaissance to the Civil Rights Movement*. Urbana and Chicago: the University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Sturgeon, Jonathan. "20 Female Harlem Renaissance Writers You Should Know." *Flavorwire 20 Female Harlem Renaissance Writers You Should Know Comments*. N.p., 23 Feb. 2015. Web, accessed: 17 May 2016.
<<http://flavorwire.com/506177/20-female-harlem-renaissance-writers-you-should-know>>
- "The World's Poetry Archive". *PoemHunter.com*. 2012. Web, accessed 17 March, 2016:
<http://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/maya_angelou_2012_6.pdf>
- Unnamed. "Harlem Renaissance". *Intimate Circles: American Women in the Arts*. Beinecke Library exhibition. Yale University, 2003.
- Vees-Gulani, Susanne. *Trauma and Guilt: Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*. Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 2003. Print.
- Volkman, Victor R. *Beyond Trauma: Conversations on Traumatic Incident Reduction*. Ann Arbor, MI: Loving Healing, 2005. Print.
- Wall, Cheryl A. *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Print.
- Williams Yolanda. *Icons of African American Literature: The Black Literary World*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011. Print.
- Wintz, Cary D., and Paul Finkelman. *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Bibliography

-Wintz, Cary D. *Remembering the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Garland Pub., 1996. Print.