THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF MAYA ANGELOU: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CRIME AND DEVIANCE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

PALLAVI GOGOI

ROLL NO. 126141017

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI

GUWAHATI, INDIA

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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Guwahati 781039

Assam, India

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"The Autobiographies of Maya Angelou: Critical Perspectives on Crime and Deviance"** is the result of investigation carried out by me at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, under the supervision and guidance of Professor Liza Das. The work has not been submitted either in whole or in part to any other university/institution for a research degree.

(Pallavi Gogoi)

June 2018

IIT Guwahati

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Guwahati 781039

Assam, India

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms. Pallavi Gogoi has prepared the thesis entitled **"The Autobiographies of Maya Angelou: Critical Perspectives on Crime and Deviance"** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. The work was carried out under my general supervision and in strict conformity with the rules laid down for the purpose. It is the result of her investigation and has not been submitted either in whole or in part to any other university/institution for a research degree.

(Prof. Liza Das)

Supervisor

June 2018

IIT Guwahati

“Into each life some rain must fall”

-All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes **(952).**

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Preface and Acknowledgements

As an emerging voice of her time, American writer and poet, Maya Angelou had significantly articulated the story of her life in the wider context of the black struggle for freedom and justice, both through her literary works and her socio-political activism. Angelou was also regarded as a leading spokesperson of black culture, owing to her commitment to the black cause as well as her dedication towards her people defined by her contributions to their literary and socio-cultural history together with the celebration of the black experience and their rich cultural heritage. A true humanitarian at heart, Angelou had also worked as a Global Ambassador for Goodwill across borders and cultures.

In broad strokes, the series of her seven autobiographies lend insights into her early Southern upbringing, memories of her grandmother 'Momma', Angelou's traumatic experiences, her dynamic career, the dangers she courted at the fringes of the Underworld, self-transformation, her extensive travels, contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, loss of two great leader-friends, motherhood, her intellectual stirrings, crippling challenges, optimism against all odds, illuminating lessons of her life, the pulse of the times in which she lived and more. Throughout her struggles, she bore an exuberant spirit of optimism towards life, firmly holding onto her Southern roots and her strong belief in humanitarian values.

My interest in Angelou dates back to my student years when I had set happy eyes on a book that was to be given away as a token of appreciation to the best speaker in a seminar on Virginia Woolf. Although, I was not the one to win the coveted prize at the end of the seminar, yet for days on end, I was curious as a child to know what the book with that catchy title was all about. There were many questions weighing heavy in the pockets of my mind, that made me wonder− what did Maya Angelou know about the caged bird that I was yet to find out; could the caged bird be a metaphor for something I hadn't thought of already; was the caged bird more free than a bird in the sky; was the bird already accustomed to a caged existence; and funny thoughts on whether the caged bird could hit the right notes while singing or whether the bird was a high soprano or a soothing alto.

Now, as I look back at the last five and a half years that have passed me by, a sense of wonder fills my heart at the thought of how I have enjoyed the entire journey of tracing Angelou's caged bird and gaining a deeper insight into her life through the process of engaging in her autobiographical volumes, her poetry, personal essays, interviews and her creative performances. This has certainly been an enriching journey for me that I believe has only begun.

On that note, I would like to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to Professor Liza Das, my supervisor who has nurtured me throughout the developing stages of my work and for this enriching learning experience. I thank Ma'am for constantly guiding me through my faltering steps, patiently listening to me read out my writings to her, literally preparing the first power point presentation of my life, for all her time even through her hectic schedules and for providing me a creative space to grow as a scholar. Also, I shall never forget the day Ma'am had given me a call, the morning after Angelou's demise in 2014, when somehow knowing that I would be sad, she had lovingly encouraged me to work hard and contribute something valuable through my research efforts.

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I am sincerely thankful to the Central library, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati (IITG), Central Library, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi (IITD); Central Library, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi; Library of Department of English and Central Library, Jadavpur University (JU), Kolkata; Central Library, North East Hill University (NEHU), Meghalaya and Central Library, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), Guwahati where I found some of the best secondary sources for my area of research. Also, I shall always cherish those walks by the shimmery lake to the Central Library

at IITG which has been one of my favourite haunts, where I have spent countless hours reading, reflecting and preparing research notes for the last few years and I would like to specially thank my young sisters Bhanushree Deka and Parimita Dutta Barooah for not only helping me with the books but most of all for their warmth, kindness and support. Also, I sincerely thank Shri. R. Deka at the Central Library, IITG and Shri. Manoj Das at KKHSOU for helping me patiently with the numerous batches of print outs and photocopies through the course of my work and most of all for their good wishes. I also thank the coffee corner at Core 1, IITG for always lifting my spirits with their coffee and best paranthas.

I am very grateful to Arfan Hussain, my co-research scholar in the HSS department and a dear friend for constantly motivating me, generously sharing his ideas and writings, helping me with my little confusions, offering quick solutions, being there through all my presentations and for sharing such a great rapport. Also, I would like to thank the research scholars of the department, Dipjyoti Malakar, Dibyajyoti Borah, Pankaj Kalita, Ratan Deka, and Vinit Ghosh─ all my seniors for their constant encouragement and good wishes.

Here, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the Hon. Vice Chancellor Dr. Hitesh Deka, KKHSOU for motivating me to work hard and never lose heart in my pursuits along with the entire family of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University and my esteemed colleagues for constantly supporting me and sharing my joys. I also offer my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Arupjyoti Choudhury, Registrar and Former Academic Dean, KKHSOU who has always been a strong support to me not only at work but also in my research pursuits right from the start, always concerned with my progress at IITG and always encouraging me to balance my research work along with my academic responsibilities at the university.

Through these years of growing up, if there is a vibrant source of energy from which a spark of creativity finds its way into my life, it is through my passion for music, poetry, art, craft and dance which has I believe has instilled in me the value of discipline and taught me the gift of goodness -that alone fills and fulfills the work of any artist. I would like to express my humble gratitude to my parents for stirring my imagination through their own creative ways; my music teachers, Guru Shri. Tapan Majumdar Guru Smt. Anita Borgohain, Guru Smt. Papiya Bannerjee, Mrs. V. Nicholas and Ustad Irfan Khan; my art teachers Shri. Debananda Ulup, Shri. K.D. Puri

and Shri. Santosh Kumar; and my dance instructors, Smt. Padma Ganti and Smt. Barsha Goswami; while also saying thank you to life for awakening me into poetry. Also, I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to 'all' my teachers from whom I have imbibed the best lessons of life.

As a granddaughter, I would like to offer my love and prayers for my wonderful grandparents Smt. Binita Gogoi, Smt. Mrinali Gogoi and Shri. Dinesh Gogoi for their constant blessings, their loving ways, for their humorous joy and for always bringing me good cheer in life. Perhaps, there is nothing more humbling and strengthening than the blessing hands of the elderly and one's loved ones. I express my deepest regards and lifelong gratitude to my wonderful parents, Smt. Anita Gogoi and Shri. Kiran Chandra Gogoi for nurturing me into life and their unconditional love, their many sacrifices and endless inspiration, for standing by me at the crossroads and their loving faith in me. I thank you Ma for being such a beautiful soul, filling my life with all your goodness, your sweet-loving ways, for being my strength and always inspiring me towards all that is good. I thank you Deuta for being such a good-hearted person, a resilient soul and a brilliant spark; ever cheerful with your whistling, joyful singing and table-tabla, lifting our spirits even through the storms and always encouraging me to live life in the right spirit. If there is any place where I feel the happiest, most nurtured and carefree, it has to be at home with my loving parents. Thank you Ma-Deuta for being my fairy-friends and always inspiring me to unravel the gifts of life with a true heart.

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with a grateful heart, for filling my life with wonders, for being a true blessing in my life and for literally 'being' the true meaning of friendship itself.

Also, I would like to thank my buddy and study companion Dolly, who would often curl up beside me and wag her tail on my books perhaps to express her delight in watching me through my late night studies while I was writing the final bits of my thesis at home. I also thank our little cats Lucky, Luku, O'bama and our doggy Chotu who have no way of knowing that their names have found a way into my thesis but who continue to fill our lives with joy all the same.

I would like to thank my loving sister, Smt. Devajani Duarah and my Vindeo, Shri. Ananta Kumar Gogoi, and their lovely daughter Minarva Gogoi ('lil' Huntora) and their entire family for always being so warm, loving to me and for making me a part of their family. My life would be so incomplete without the loving support, guidance and blessings of an amazing person like Devajani Baideo, and I thank her from the deepest of my hearts for all her constant support and inspiration in every way. I also thank my wonderful and lovely sisters, Saptarshi Boruah, Anupama Chetia, Tarali Pathak, Mridusmita Duara, Pahari Das, Gitanjali Medhi, Rashmi Rekha Deori, Jyoti Rekha Deori, Suzanne Phaomei, and Sandhya Sikha Sarma who have always stood by me with their endless encouragement, loving care, prayers and good wishes.

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Through these years, I have come to feel the presence of a divine hand that works mysteriously in fulfilling all things good and gracious, and that somehow things always fall into place when one learns to trust the process continuing one's labour of love with patience and fortitude. On this note, I would like to take the humble opportunity to dedicate my work in

memory of ‘Maya Angelou’ who has profoundly inspired my life in more ways than one by truly being what it takes to be- a woman of wonder- a phenomenally phenomenal woman!

Pallavi Gogoi

IIT Guwahati.

June 2018.

Chapter I

Introduction: Maya Angelou and Her Writings

Maya Angelou (Marguerite Ann Johnson, 4 April, 1928- 28 May, 2014) was an African American writer and poet who was born in St. Louis, Missouri. At a tender age, her parents Vivian Baxter and Bailey Henderson Sr. had separated ways after having decided to send both Marguerite and her brother Bailey Johnson to their grandmother all the way to Arkansas in a train journey with address tags tied to their wrists and in the absence of any adult supervision. Their fate was no different from the many other black children who were sent away from the Northern cities to their extended families in the Southern hometowns during the Depression years in America. The siblings were thus, raised by their paternal grandmother Annie Henderson in the Southern home town of Stamps, Arkansas.

Although they grew up in the literal absence of their parents under the strict religious discipline of their grandmother, yet they were very fond of her and their uncle Willie as well. They imbibed the cherished values and ideals of the close-knit black community in Arkansas and also enjoyed the Southern way of life. However, outside this cocooned world stood the realities of racial segregation and oppression that clearly divided the white folks and their society from that of the blacks in the South. As a young woman taking up the challenges to survive in a racially oppressive society with limited opportunities, Angelou began struggling hard for a living with a string of occupations that not only added to her wide experiences but also created numerous anecdotes of her eventful life and career. Apart from being a leading author and poet, the mosaic of her career had encompassed a range of occupations as a black activist and civil rights coordinator, journalist and radio-broadcaster, speaker and educator, playwright and producer, theatre actress and singer, freelance writer and film maker, nightclub chanteuse and dancer, cook and waitress, administrative clerk and market researcher, saleswoman and automobile worker, chaufeurette and as the first streetcar conductorette among a few others, always being ready to test her skills and explore her talents, being on the constant move and taking everything in her stead.

Angelou first began experimenting with the autobiographical form following a friendly challenge to prove herself as an autobiographer by her friend, Robert Loomis, who was also the editor of Random House that extensively published most of her literary works. She had always enjoyed a way with words whether it was the turn of phrases in the day-to-day conversations, the element of wit in black wisdom, dabbling in journalistic writings or simply playing scrabble with her child and a dictionary in tow, though she had never given creative writing a serious thought– given the pressures of her everyday struggle for survival. However, meeting John Oliver Killens in the year 1959, had become a turning point in her life, when for the first time, she had found genuine encouragement from a well-established writer who had noted her talent and inspired her to pursue writing as a full-time career.

Through the transitory nature of her life, Angelou's penchant for writing had resulted in the volumes of her autobiographies, personal essays, poetry, prose writings, children's literature and screenplays. The series of her autobiographies are namely, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), *Gather Together in My Name* (1974), *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (1976), *The Heart of a Woman* (1981), *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* (1986), *A Song Flung up to Heaven* (2002) and the last in her sequence *Mom & Me & Mom* (2013) which closely harp on the experiences of her life and are also considered as significant works reflecting the socio-cultural history of America from the early 1920s to the late 1960s. The series broadly cover the Depression years and her childhood in Arkansas; life after Second World War and her brush with the world of crime and deviance; the Civil Rights Movement and her charged activism; her travels to Africa and the Pan-African Struggle; the assassinations of her leader-friends Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X following her turn towards radicalism; the Watts Riots and also her fresh new start as a writer.

Her autobiographical reflections find further expression in the anthologies of her personal essays that include: *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (1993), *Even the Stars Look Lonesome* (1997), *Hallelujah! The Welcome Table: A Lifetime of Memories with Recipes* (2004), *Mother A Cradle to Hold Me* (2006) and *Letter to My Daughter* (2008) which provide glimpses of her personal meditations filled with her witticisms on life and living. Widely acclaimed as a poet, her volume of poetry and best-seller *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diie*

(1971), was also nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. She had the honour of publicly reciting her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at the inaugural function ceremony of President Bill Clinton in 1993 and "A Brave and Startling Truth" at the commemoration of the United Nations' 50th anniversary in the year 1995. Also her popular anthologies of poetry include: *Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well* (1971), *And Still I Rise* (1978), *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* (1983), *Now Sheba Sings the Song* (1987), *I Shall Not Be Moved* (1990), *Phenomenal Woman: Four Poems for Women* (1995), *Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem* (2005) and *Celebrations: Rituals of Peace and Prayer* (2006).

Mary Jane Lupton in her *Critical Companion* (1998) explores the life and works of Angelou in a detailed manner that encompasses critical discussions on six of her autobiographies each with its own significance and credibility. She highlights the fact that some of the "inconsistencies" (2) regarding relevant dates and tiny details of Angelou's life as recorded in her works or as documented in interviews, journals or prefaces, yearbooks etc. such as the dates of her first marriage, the titles of her plays, names of awards received among others, was only too natural explaining that- "…possibly because Angelou in her interviews, [spoke] eloquently but informally about her past, with no time-chart in front of her, and possibly because her interviews [were] so taken by her presence that they [lost] sight of smaller details" (2). In this regard, a close reading of the autobiographies, also reveal a few factual errors or inconsistencies in the narrative such as the date of the Washington March, the names of her maternal uncles, the name of her father's lover etc. as noted in the texts perhaps explain a 'slip' of memory. Further, the *Companion* also includes an informative discussion on the "Icon Interview" also titled as "Talking with an Icon: An Interview with Maya Angelou," that was conducted by Lupton on January 16, 1997 where she significantly noted thus,

> She [Angelou] has expanded the scope of the typical; one-volume book about the self, creating a saga that covers the years 1941 to 1965 – from the beginning of the Second World War to the days preceding the assassination of Malcolm X. She guides the reader through a quarter of a century of American and African American history, revealed through the point of view of a strong and affectionate black woman. By opening up the edges of her narrative, Maya Angelou, like no one before her, transcends the

autobiographical tradition, enriching it with contemporary experience and female sensibility. (1)

Further, Lupton in her article titled "Singing the Black Mother: Maya Angelou and Autobiographical Continuity" (1990) discusses Angelou's artistic and creative sensibilities towards life and its representation in her narratives while examining the changing narratorial voice throughout the autobiographies. She opines that each of the autobiographies both literally and metaphorically "finds its fullest expression" particularly in the third and fourth volumes highlighting the significance of motherhood and the "dialectic of black mother-daughterhood" (260). Lupton also examines Angelou's relation with her paternal grandmother, aspects of role-playing, patterns of parenting and travel among others particularly with regard to *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas*, *Heart of a Woman,* and *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes.*

Neubauer in "Displacement and Autobiographical Style in Maya Angelou's The Heart of a Woman" (1983) begins with a brief overview of the content in Angelou's autobiographies and highlights the occurrence of continual displacement as reflected in the text, discussing the subtleties of the represented mother-son relationship, her child's expectations from her as his mother, as well as, challenges of single parenting. Further, she discusses Angelou's personal style of writing autobiographies through the interesting mix of "ingredients from across diverse modes of writing" (124), her techniques of literary representation, narration of particular anecdotes, her autobiographical accounts that imbibe traditional tales or narratives from African folklore, as well as, her narration of folktales and exemplary black figures like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. The article also explores the historical points in the narration of 'personal story' taking examples from the text, examining the use of fantasy and the various thematic aspects in the autobiographies. Through her creativity as a narrator, Neubaeur opines that Angelou adds "a personalized quality to her recollections of conversations with these individuals and many others" in her work (125).

The bibliographical essay titled "African American Autobiography in the Twentieth Century" (1990) by Weixelmann provides a few of the major writings that discusses some of the thematic concerns which emerge from Angelou's autobiographies as indicated by the titles of the

works namely: George E. Kent's "Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Black Autobiographical Tradition (1975); Myra L. McMurray's "Role-Playing as Art in Maya Angelou's *Caged Bird*" (1976), Liliane K. Arnsberg's "Death as Metaphor of Self in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" (1977); Selwyn R. Cudjoe's "Maya Angelou and the Autobiographical Statement" (1984); Sondra O' Neale's "Reconstruction of the Composite Self: New Images of Black Women in Maya Angelou's Continuing Autobiography (1984); Carol E. Neubauer's "Displacement and Autobiographical Style in Maya Angelou's *The Heart of a Woman*" (1983) and "An Interview with Maya Angelou (1987). The essay also dedicates a few pages to the discussion of Angelou's literary works, as well as, their critical reception. Cudjoe in appreciation of Angelou's writing opines that her first trilogy of autobiographies bear "a powerful, authentic and profound signification of the condition of African American womanhood in her quest for understanding and love" (qtd. in Weixelmann 394).

In yet another significant bibliographical essay titled "Arkansas History" (1998) Bob Razer takes a note of some of the significant research and academic work on Angelou's autobiographies such as doctoral theses listed as: Dolly McPherson's "Order Out of Chaos: The Autobiographical Works of Maya Angelou" (1986) University of Iowa; Francoise Lionnet-Mc Cumber's "Autobiographical Tongues: (Self-) Reading and (Self-) Writing in Augustine, Nietzsche, Maya Angelou, Marie Cardinal, and Mary Therese Humbert" (1986) University of Michigan; Claudine Raymond's "Rites of Coherence: Autobiographical Writings by Hurston, Brooks, Angelou, and Lorde" (1991) University of Michigan; Joyce Graham's "Freeing Maya Angelou's Caged Bird" (1991) Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Kathy Mae Ersick's "The Poetry by Maya Angelou: A Study of Blues Matrix as Force and Code" (1994) Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Leila Angela Walker's "Touch Me, Life, Not Softly: The Poetry of Maya Angelou" (1994) Florida State University. Some of the themes of the other listed significant M.A. dissertations highlight aspects on Angelou's first autobiography *Caged Bird*, themes such as identity and displacement, self-knowledge and masking of identity etc.

K. Balachandran's *Critical Essays on American Literature* (2008) provides significant insights into the writings of Angelou in the essays titled "Black Autobiography: Maya Angelou Tells Her Tale", "Can a Caged Bird Sing? The Motif of Motherhood in Maya Angelou's Serial

Autobiographies" and "Journey as Metaphor in Black American Women's Autobiography" which are relevant to the present study. The essay "Black Autobiography" discusses the emergence and development of black autobiography as a literary form and focuses on the representation of Angelou's eventful life as reflected in her autobiographical series.

In the context of the significant role of literature as a reflection of complex social realities, mirroring human society, Lamarque and Olsen in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature* (1994) notes how literature acts as an "eye opener" (386) owing to its ethical and intellectual insights on the significance of 'moral reasoning' presented through moral crises, dilemmas or ambiguities which are examined, confronted, sometimes resolved and at times left unanswered. Further, they cite Putnam who suggests that literature in reflecting "the human predicament" (387) in rich and minute details does open up endless possibilities to and multiple perspectives of such predicaments that further complicates the problems of "imagin[ing] *any* way of life which is both at all ideal and feasible" (387). Thus, in discussing the importance of literature as moral philosophy, they write,

> What literature supplies in moral reasoning is the working-out of a moral choice from a subjective point of view. That is important, according to these theorists, since a significant proportion of moral choices do not consist in the application of general rules, but in the exercise of moral judgement in given circumstances. Many moral judgements cannot in other words, be made if one adopts the 'view from nowhere' because they need to take into account the individual, subjective perspective on a situation. (387)

Although in her initial brush with the world Angelou finds her life spiraling out of control, yet she manages to survive through these unnerving and erratic experiences and learns to take control of her life. With Angelou moving ahead in search of better opportunities and brighter prospects, developing as a person, Hagen notes thus,

> In this raffish milieu, Angelou serves what some critics have called a picaresque literary figure--a carefree, fun-loving individual—who moves through a sleazy world with good intentioned determination and emerges stronger for the exposure. The existence of evil does not imply all things are evil not that it must triumph. (75)

Further, in Cudjoe's opinion Angelou's search for her African roots as reflected in her autobiographies has been widely appreciated as she writes, "Her [Angelou's] search for roots, her involvement with the politics of her people in the United States and Africa, gives her work a depth that is absent in many similar works" (qtd, in Lupton 9). Joanne Braxton also notes that Angelou "took the genre of autobiography to the heights" that is comparable to Hurston's contribution to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), with *Caged Bird* as "perhaps the most aesthetically satisfying autobiography written by a black woman" owing to its strong narration, depth and lyrical quality (qtd. in Weixelmann 385).

To cite a significant moment in Angelou's childhood from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* it describes how as a child she had once created a design of 'hearts-within-a-heart' with fallen tree leaves that seemed like it was pierced together by a common arrow. McMurray aptly suggests that this innocent act of an introverted child expressive of her thoughts that she could not otherwise articulate to her grandmother was supposedly "to organize feelings she could not otherwise order to express" (107). It is a metaphor of her innermost feelings as a little girl that she had somehow begun to secretly tuck away or rather suppress in the deepest of her hearts. However, with the passing of time and the layering of experiences that she had encountered, the same timid and sensitive child had emerged as one of the leading voices of her time.

All through her struggling years, it was the values of her grandmother, the worldly wisdom of her mother and the practical advice of her brother that had enabled her to reshape her subjectivity, regain her sense of dignity and redefine the course of her life following her vulnerable years as an adolescent. Instead of being humiliated by her family, she was always taken into their fold every time she pushed herself to the edge of her limits, often falling into trouble or facing difficult situations. Somehow, Angelou had not only overlooked the unpleasant experiences in the underworld that she had survived, but had also taken into account the saving graces of the people she had met at the fringes of the criminal world. Having made a choice to draw herself out of the trappings of the dangerous life into which she had been entangled she thus wrote, "[m]y escapades were the fumblings of youth and to be forgiven as such" (*Gather Together* 302).

Her narratives thus provide a deeper insight into the world of crime from her perspective revealing the networks of crime in the underworld that operates like a silent killer through various categories of crime that not only permeates human relationships but also threatens the moral fabric of the larger society. Her first hand experiences of the underworld as well as her own brush with the world of crime and deviance had certainly left an impact on her sense of self through these tense and crucial years when she found herself compelled to learn a few lessons of life in the hardest of ways. Thus, she held the firm belief that she had inherited the quality of forbearance from her ancestors saying,

> A kind of stoicism had to have been in my inheritance. My inability to feel enough self-pity to break down and cry did not come from an insensitivity to the situation but rather, from the knowledge that as bad as things are now, they could have been worse and might become worser and even worserer. (*A Song Flung up to Heaven* 1081)

Cudjoe thus notes that following her tussle with the organized networks of crime and the law, Angelou "moves back into and defines herself more centrally within the mainstream of the Black experience" (qtd. in Weixelmann 394).

The characters represented in the autobiographies represent the disadvantaged in a society clearly affected by long term experiences of racism and multiple oppression and are thus, shown in terms of how they either position themselves as powerful or accept their sense of powerlessness thereby exposing themselves to the dangers of crime and deviance. The incidents of crime and deviance in the autobiographies also reveal a blurring of circumstances and situations, restlessness of life and ennui, choice and compulsion, motivation and opportunity, innocence and experience, deviance and defined crime. Thus, there is more than meets the eye; where for an instance there is more to understanding the factors that result in black men and women leading shady lives; to addressing the multiple factors owing to which society continuously finds criminals and outlaws on the road or deviant women out in the streets; to figuring out what leads to their split consciousness, dualistic personalities, juggling multiple jobs that are both straight and illegal; struggling with the dip in the balance with regard to equal opportunities among other such concerns which need to be addressed in the context of the American society as Angelou asserts in one of her poems:

The gold of her promise

has never been mined

Her borders of justice

not clearly defined

("America" 79)

Most of Angelou's literary works delve into some of the characteristic aspects of American socio-cultural and political history, black experiences and individuality, race and identity, class and gender, roots and family, freedom and subversion, wit and wisdom, motherhood and sorority, strength and solidarity, optimism and opportunity, struggles of life and its lessons, goodness and humanity–all woven into her writings that in its entirety celebrate life in its myriad reflections. While delving into such illuminating experiences of Angelou's life, intricately woven into the body of her autobiographical writings, Harold Bloom notes that the development of Angelou's personality is shaped by her strong will to survive through the challenges of life, to discover her true self, celebrate the gift of life to its fullest and inspire others towards the same. In an interview with Neubauer, Angelou while discussing the creative process of experimenting with the autobiographical form had cheerfully stated that despite her vulnerable moments as a writer she had accepted the challenges that came with it saying, "[b]ut I've chosen it, and I've chosen this mode as my mode" (291).

The autobiographical form itself came to receive its due importance and recognition only in the eighteenth century being widely considered as one of the oldest literary practices in America, long before it came to be formalized as a literary genre. Stephen Shapiro in "The Dark Continent of Literature: Autobiography" (1968) illustrates the significance of autobiographies as a literary form through an interesting example of a cartographer's world map, in which if a continent is intentionally wiped out, it will undoubtedly result in a global rage. Shapiro thus drives his point that autobiographies as a major form of life writing has undeniable contributions to our literary treasures and the brilliant capacity to both educate and enrich the lives of people across cultures, geographical borders and even time- owing to which these can never be

obliterated or devalued. On this note, Shapiro highlights the significant role of autobiographical works thus,

> The value of the autobiographical tradition, its relevance to our lives, lies in its capacity to furnish us with models and mirrors that can help us to accept, celebrate, and transform our lives as individuals and as participants in the cyclical drama of incarnation and the dialectical drama of historical evolution. (421- 422)

Thus, the various forms of reflective writings such as autobiography, autobiographical novels, biography, memoirs and diaries which invariably contain components of the other are all encompassed in the umbrella term of Life Writing. The very fluidity of these literary forms explain the difficulty of defining each of these genres individually but what is common in them is that they contain reflections and deeper insights on various aspects of life, experience and the larger human condition. In mirroring life through its multiple reflections and unraveling varied subjective experiences, the autobiographical form serves both an aesthetic and educational function. True life experiences are aesthetically 'transformed' into works of art which we define as 'autobiography' and Shapiro in this regard opines that "transformation is one voice in the choir of art: celebration, incarnation, negation, and education also have voices" (427).

Significantly, Lamb and Thompson in *A Companion to American Fiction* (2009) consider the years 1865-1914 as one of the most important periods in the history of African American literature that had brought about a major change in the perspectives and perceptions of the American people from what they describe as a "culture of character" to "culture of personality" (9). Taylor in "Voices from the Veil: Black American Autobiography" (1981) too mentions that "[t]he making of personal memory into the collective myth and the initiation of personality through articulation of collective history [were] indeed among the central concerns of black writers in America" (361).

Further, Robert F. Sayre in "Autobiography and the Making of America" (1978) describes the autobiographical genre as "a common form of American expression" (1). American Autobiography encompasses within its form, the nation's socio-cultural and politico-historical dialectics through the ages. The autobiographical form which received its due importance and recognition only in the eighteenth century is one of the finest and oldest practices of writing in

America, much before it was formally defined as a genre. It can be traced to the slave and the former-slave narratives, Indian chiefs or Indian captivity narratives, settler or pioneering narratives, success stories, personal accounts, spiritual autobiographies, journals and diaries. Albert E. Stone highlights the contributions of many women autobiographical writers and also suggests that the American Indian autobiographical form needs to be explored further. Also, Stone refers to James Olney's discussion of the changing trends of criticism with regard to the autobiographical form that is considered to have "shifted from *bios* (life as the past acts and thoughts available for recreation)" to "*graphein* (strategies of self-composition)" (6).

Black autobiography had its origins in the antebellum slave narratives and spiritual narratives that were considered to mark its literal "preeminence among the narratives of Black America" (Andrews 197). Thus, the significance of breaking silences through the power of words, of translating lived experiences into exemplary writings and the importance of celebrating the human spirit together with the continuous challenges of life had given rise to the black autobiographical tradition. Bassard discusses the emergence of black writers from their long silence under oppression opining that their "coming-to-text [was] a sign of social and political struggle which involve[d] the recognition of a continuum of relationships among, writer, text" as well as black writer's definition or "redefinition of the writerly self" (128). With regard to autobiography, while Stephen Shapiro examines the genre as "an art of juxtaposed perspectives" (437) that provides an insight into both the uniqueness as well as the universality of human condition, William L. Andrews in tracing the development of black autobiography notably highlights the interdisciplinary exchanges between black American and modern African autobiography.

Chapman in *Black Voices* (1968) points to the Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin's metaphors of "the invisible man" or "nobody knows my name" (29) that referred to a negation of the 'black presence' or 'black identity' which mostly remained unacknowledged, marginalized and undiscovered, given the silence of their own oppressed selves. Further, when black voices particularly find an outpouring through various forms of literature, it again places the black writer in a conscious position of facing what James Weldon Johnson had termed as "double audience" (30) in his article titled "The Dilemma of the Negro Author" (1928) where at once the

author becomes conscious of having two distinct set of American readers- the blacks and the whites.

Again, Chapman discusses another factor that affects the black consciousness i.e., the 'anti-amalgamation' doctrine which was suggested by Gunnar Myrdal's study on the American Blacks in 1944 that stood in contrast to American's assimilation or "melting-pot theory" (36) according to which black people found it unsettling and uncomfortable to assimilate in the widely oppressive American society. On the one hand, the oppressive structures were manipulated "to blot out the blackness" (43) of blacks and on the other hand, these were designed or constructed in order to impose black conformity to white standards and notions. Therefore, it was considered important and necessary for blacks to realize the significance of their own self-awareness, self-definition as well as self-assertion in order to bring their presence to the fore and also to celebrate their identities.

Thus, apart from considering black autobiographies as texts of self-expression, sites of protest as well as texts of resistance these could well be read as celebrations of unique life experiences and distinct subjectivities as well. Trudier Harris in her discussion of some of the defining works of black autobiography highlights the work of Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin (for autobiographical essays), Malcolm X and Elridge Cleaver. As William L. Andrews notes, Douglas had taught himself to read and write before he succeeded on setting a precedent for black writers with the publication of his autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, An American Slave* (1845) where he had described his constant anticipation of freedom and frustration in the thoughts:

> I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear one speak of slavery. (Douglas 242)

This was followed by two other autobiographies namely *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas* (1881). Similarly, having survived the difficult experiences of slavery and sexual oppression, Harriet Jacobs had chronicled the challenges of her

life, her escape from slavery and her seven long years of "hiding in a tiny attic crawlspace" (Yellin 394) at her grandmother's place. Another emerging figure– James Weldon Johnson came to be widely known for the composition of the Black National Anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (composed with his brother) who being raised in relative comfort had led a fulfilling life, pressing for racial equality and "amalgamation" (Johnson 286) while expressing his concerns of the prevalent white hypocrisies and prejudices that he had described in his autobiography *Along the Way* (1933) opining that racial practices in America were worse than the rigid practices of the Indian caste system.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965) which was collaborated with Alex Haley is replete with anecdotes of crime and terror often recalling Angelou's descriptions particularly in her second volume *Gather Together*. Malcolm's narrative opens on a violent note titled "Nightmare" that reads:

> When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house, brandishing their shotguns and rifles, they shouted for my father to come out. My mother went to the front door and opened it. Standing where they could see her pregnant condition, she told them she was alone with her three small children, and that my father was away, preaching, in Milwaukee. The Klansman shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because "the good Christian white people" were not going to stand for my father's "spreading trouble" among the "good" Negroes [sic] of Omaha with the "back to Africa" preachings of Marcus Garvey. ("Malcolm X" 333)

Further, as noted by Harris it took a great deal of courage for a public leader like Malcolm X to represent the criminal life that he had once lived, through his autobiography opining thus, "Malcolm X's narrative and others of this period invite serious as well as voyeuristic readers into worlds of robbing, stealing, hustling, prostitution, shooting, doping, steering (leading white men to black women for sex), and just about every kind of violence imaginable (187). The trajectory of Malcolm X's right from his early exposure to what racial violence meant having suffered his father's death in the hands of the Ku Klux Klan to his eventual turn towards crime and time in prison, his conversion to being a member of the Nation of Islam followed by his rise as a leader

in the black struggle for freedom. Harris also opines that Elridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968) was had "more shock value" (190) than any other black autobiography that opens with the unfiltered statements of justification of sexual violence. The range of discourse apparent in these autobiographies which unravel the complexities of the black experience with regard to crime, deviance and violence also highlight the scope and significance of discussing the underlying concerns, issues and factors that define the same.

Blassigne in noting how black writers reflect a sense of gratitude to their community while also considering their own writings as a contribution to the journey of future generations, opines that the literary works of black writers or the "tradition that they bequeathed to future black writers" (9) stands more significant than the increasing crop of black authors. With regard to autobiographical writings, some of the important characteristics that Stephen Butterfield highlights are such as:

> [P]olitical awareness, their empathy for suffering, their ability to break down the division between "I" and "you", their knowledge of oppression and discovery of ways to cope with that experience and their sense of shared life, shared triumph, and communal responsibility". (qtd. in Hodges 427)

Charles H. Nichols in "Who Read the Slave Narratives" (1959) broadly examines the slave narratives that recorded the lives of the slaves and former-slaves, their experiences of servitude and helplessness, endless toil and torturous pain, rampant exploitation and inhumane treatment that they had suffered and later poured into their narratives as well as their survival stories. Nichols also mentions the significant contribution of the Abolitionists with regard to their role in the wide publication and circulation of the slave narratives, so much so, that by 1840, a total of twelve journals published these works that invited a growing readership. Thus, these heartrending stories and articulations of the long oppressed voices of black slaves revealed how they were mercilessly torn apart from their families, compelled into the organized slave trade, chained and physically abused, treated as beasts of burden for most of their lives, weakened by their sense of victimhood, helplessness, misfortune and endless grief. These narratives received an emotional response from its readers and owing to its wide appeal, slave narratives came to be

established as major autobiographical texts that not only represented the personal stories of slave writers but also served as significant documents of slave history.

Slave narratives, were also considered as 'iconoclastic' in terms of its content, power of expression and its subtle yet significant 'spark' of a retaliatory spirit. The earliest slave narrative was written by Olaudah Equiano with a long title− *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vasa the African Written by Himself* (1789). Some of the classic narratives of the period were penned by former slaves, who also worked as Abolitionists and engaged in their own capacities towards freeing enslaved people such as Solomon Northrop (*Twelve Years a Slave* 1853), William Wells Brown (*Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave*. 1847), Booker T. Washington (*Up from Slavery,* 1901), Harriet Jacobs (*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* 1861), Frederick Douglass (*My Bondage and My Freedom* 1855); *The Narratives of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave,* 1845) and the joint efforts of Ellen and William Craft (*Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom,* 1860) among others. Moreover, the notable lives of the former slaves like Nathaniel 'Nat' Turner, a leader of a slave rebellion in 1831 as well as the major activist and abolitionist Harriet Tubman were shaped into a Pulitzer-prize winning novel by William Styron (*The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 1967) and into a biography by Earl Conrad (*Harriet Tubman: Negro Soldier and Abolitionist*, 1886) respectively.

John Hodges in "The Divided Self and the Quest for Wholeness in Black American Autobiography" (1990) mentions that the slave narratives clearly reflected the process of "internal fragmentation" (424) that was further addressed by the black autobiographers like W.E. B. Du Bois who defined it as the experience of 'dual consciousness' in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) or authors like Richard Wright who termed this internal split as 'double vision' (see Hodges 425). Dual consciousness in the words of Du Bois was described thus, "[o]ne ever feels his twoness− an American, Negro [sic]; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (qtd. in Barnes 1866).

Significantly, in its description of the 'Depression years' and the early 1940s, the volume titled *American Literature in Context After 1929* (2009) takes into account the flourishing growth

of various literary forms ranging from− literature on the southern past and black rural life, communist literature and autobiographical novels, literary works on juvenile delinquency and mental instability, literature on black experiences and conditions of black ghettos, ethnic writing and literature by a new crop of immigrant writers. Also, with regard to some of the major changes in the American society, an introduction to *A Companion to American Fiction* (2009) highlights the impact of both the Slave emancipation and Reconstruction from the period of 1865 to 1877 that had brought about a new surge of change in the intellectual ferment of the period and influenced the black writers of the twentieth century "in complex and far reaching ways" (279). The volume in its description of the socio-political and economic conditions of the period also delves into the growing concerns of black people who had met with disillusionment and hopelessness of the times with the violation of their basic human rights, as well as, the multiple social inequalities that they came to confront in their day-to-day lives.

From Angelou's initial fear of 'writing' which she considered similar to "jump[ing] into a frozen lake" (*Heart of a Woman* 661), to her process of self-discovery as a writer, she took on the challenge of not only experimenting with the nuances of the autobiographical form but also took the genre to an entirely new level by literally weaving her own life into a series of autobiographies with her creative ways of storytelling thereby holding her readers' interest captive. Angelou had not only paved a way for other black women writers to positively channelize their experiences into inspiring stories but also to present themselves as the protagonist of their own narratives. They were not only encouraged to voice themselves and bring their experiences to the fore but also to establish their presence in the literary canons as well. In this regard, one of the significant aspects of Henry Dumas' writings that impressed Angelou the most was the glimmer of hope and optimism in his small, yet, significant representation of women characters in his writings, together with his progressive outlook towards women representing them "as equal beings, partners, friends, adversaries" (Redmond 157). Some of the contemporary black women writers of the time in which Angelou wrote were: Anne Moody, Gwendolyn Brooks, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Itaberi Njeri, Jarena Lee and Zilpha Elaw among others.

Further, Farah Jasmine Griffin discusses the institutionalization, diversification and formalization in the field of 'Black literary studies', along with the emergence of several new trends and developments that spearheaded the progress of the field. She also records the influences of the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power and Black Feminist Movements in shaping the area of Black Literary Studies. Griffin discusses the scholarship of Barbara Christian, the first black woman to formalize Black feminist theory and criticism, together with the contributions of Deborah Mc Dowell Dubey, Valerie Smith, Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, Ann Du Cille, Hazel Carby and Hortense Spillers towards theorizing race and gender.

During the Black Renaissance of the 1920s, Black literature began to focus on retracing its origins as well as searching for literary inspiration in the early slave narratives. In the late 1930s and 1940s, significant autobiographers such as Claude McKay (*A Long Way from Home* 1937), W.E.B Du Bois (*Dusk of Dawn* 1940), Langston Hughes (*The Big Sea* 1940) and Zora Neale Hurston (*Dust Tracks on a Road* 1942) among a few others highlighted the concerns of black experience, struggle for self definition and socio-political issues through a self-formulated style of expression through their literary works.

Angelou reveals how the black experience was saturated with the prevalent issues of racial discrimination and injustice, segregation and racial hatred, exploitation and violence, psychological alienation and marginalization at multiple levels that often found a vent through various forms of crime and deviance. Thus, her autobiographical narratives provide a broad scope of study on the black condition at length which takes into account the factors of neglect, deprivation, helplessness and frustration that tend to shape the psyche of the younger generations. Moreover, Angelou had expressed the firm belief that equal or rather balanced opportunities and freedom in the true sense of the word were crucial to the progress of black American citizens and specially the black youth who held tremendous potential and talent that often remained short of being tapped to its brilliance.

With regard to the present study that delves into the socio-political contexts of America in which Angelou's autobiographies are situated− the volume *The United States Since 1945: A Documentary Reader* (2009) by Ingalls and Johnson almost like a "window into the past" (7) provides a systematic and significant insight into documents of socio-political events, cultural

developments, policies of the American government, changing economic conditions and the debated issues and discourses highlighting the factors of race, gender and sexuality. It presents a detailed idea on some of the major historical events since 1945 that ushered in transformation and shaped the modern American society of the twenty first century through the course of several decades. Another significant volume of *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) serves as a resourceful collection in its detailed inclusion of cultural and historical contexts, various literary texts and genres, arts and customs, cultural ideals and experiences apart from highlighting a significant entry on Angelou as well.

Some of the pertinent aspects relevant to the study were also found in *A Companion to Post-1945 America* (2006) with significant themes of African American kinship or family life, black working class, migration patterns of southern blacks, economic restructuring of post-war America, formation of ghettoes, emergence of black politics, identity creation and formation of the "American Creed" (32). Further, the volume *Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (2006) lends a critical insight into the experiences of black modernity, social transformation, consciousness, black diaspora and the intellectual currents of the time− that awakened radical activism focused on the achievement of cultural and political freedom− starting from the leading Pan African leader and Trinidian activist, George Padmore to Ghana's first President− Kwame Nkrumah, whose contributions to the African struggles find an acknowledgement in the autobiographies of Angelou as well.

Jeanette Covington in "Racial Classification in Criminology: The Reproduction of Racialized Crime" (1995) discusses racial prejudices, racialized crime and criminology at length by further highlighting the American black experience, the ghetto working classes, structural conditions, subcultures of violence and internecine violence- arising out of self-hatred and various other complexities where black violence is seen to turn inward, thereby harming their own community. It is striking to note Covington's opinion on how race-cultural theories had in reality "imposed criminal propensities on all Blacks" (563) by asserting that a long history of racial oppression had given rise to black crime. Tracing some of the major contributions of sociologists and criminologists in the area of 'crime' and 'deviance', which is at the core of the

present study as also found in the autobiographies of Angelou, some of the major sociological theories and studies pertaining to these areas have been taken up as well.

In this context, Downes and Rock in *Understanding Crime and Deviance* (2011) make an interesting foray into some of the major sociological perspectives forwarded by Émile Durkheim, Robert Merton, Edwin Sutherland and several other major sociologists who forwarded the major theories of anomie, culture and sub culture theories, symbolic interactionism and control theories, radical and feminist criminology with regard to crime, deviance and violence, while also providing theoretical perspectives on deviance and social policies at length. Significantly, Ulmer and Ulmer in their study take up a discussion on the sociological theories of crime and deviance highlighting Merton's three important task of sociological investigation viz. clarity in theoretical concept, combination of different theoretical strands and identification of theoretical problems to arrive at newer concepts (316). Thus, Ulmer and Ulmer in their article "Commitment, Deviance, and Social Control" (2000) focuses on examining three types of commitment and their sources namely: structural commitment (external constraint), personal commitment (internal choice) and moral commitment (internal constraint) that have a considerable bearing on determining crime and deviance- which are considered to have been overlooked in research.

Both Shover and Shover in their article explore how sociological theories are also subject to change with regard to time and context. The authors cite the example of crime in England in the late 1800s, a time when a certain class or section of people were ill-reputed for criminal or deviant activities but gradually, these social perceptions had also undergone a considerable change with the social transformation that occurred. They suggest that "…in time, theories of criminality and deviance can influence the objective and subjective parameters of the very problems they are said, originally, to explain" (97). While the objective parameters refer to the type and intensity of deviance, subjective parameters refer to the meanings and identities that deviants subjectively internalize. Also, they mention Robert A. Scott's observations in "The Construction of Conceptions of Stigma by Professional Experts" (1970) on the existent differences in European and Soviet theories from that of American criminological theories.

Again, Humphries and Wallace in "Capitalist Accumulation and Urban Crime, 1950-1971" (1980) discuss how economic expansion and capitalist accumulation result in generating and determining patterns of crime, as can be explained in the context of rising trends of crime after the Second World War that witnessed a leap in the various categories of criminal and unlawful activities. While suggesting that the "relative economic development of a city" results in or determines "a city's crime pattern" (191), the authors also take into account the factors of marginalization, racial segregation and exploitation of the working classes in the black ghettos that often account for the rising levels of crime in the cities. Moreover, Steffensmeier and Allan in "Gender and Crime: Toward a Gendered Theory of Female Offending" (1996) also discuss the "overwhelming" male dominant world of organized crime that operates in both the "underworld" as well as the "upperworld" (446).

While analyzing the increasing and fluctuating patterns of crime committed by women Klien and Kress in "Any Woman's Blues: A Critical Overview of Women in Crime and the Criminal Justice System" (1976), also mention the possibility of such crime patterns being possibly stirred by a sense of resistance, often resulting from their involvement in political movements, similar to Chesney-Lind's suggestion of the possibility of rise in female criminality owing to the influence of the 'women liberation movement' in the article "Women and Crime: The Female Offender"(1986). Further, Lanctot and Blanc while examining the reasons that characterize the occurrence of a persistent gender gap in 'crime' and 'deviance'− also a consistent finding across empirical research, also discuss the factors of deviance syndrome, survival strategies, trajectories and desistance with regard to female offenders and deviants providing a detailed insight into the relevance of feminist theoretical perspectives that contribute sufficiently towards understanding the area of women, crime and deviance in their article "Explaining Deviance by Adolescent Females" (2002).

Uggen and Kruttschnitt in "Crime in the Breaking: Gender Difference in Desistance" (1999) discuss how in its early stage, 'desistance' from crime was considered to have developed due to age and maturity, fulfillment of deprivation and social integration, biophysical and psychological changes, marriage and employment etc. while suggesting that the behavioural patterns of peer groups as well as available opportunities in the crime market, determine the

participation of both males and females in criminal offenses. Significantly, Dalton Couley (2002) discusses the ways in which Critical Race Theory with methods employed by "racecrits" (Carrasco 1997) (as the critical race theorists are referred to) had evolved out of the historical Civil Rights Movement itself, and highlights the importance of a critical examination of race politics, multiple intersections, "debilitating effects of institutional racism" (Barnes 1866), systemic racism, discrimination-within-discrimination, socio-political hierarchies and other relevant aspects. Also, this highlights the necessity of a critical study on both the white and black consciousness in this regard. Further, Couley opines that "privileging any experience" rooted in the matrix of social structures may run the danger of leading towards unequal considerations of the larger experience that encapsulates the aspects of "gender, culture, socio economic class, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation" among others (2034).

While taking up the major discourses pertaining to identity, identity-politics and intersectionality, Hernandez-Truyol examines various reasons for the failure of the Civil Rights Movement that had apparently led to the development of Critical Race Theories which had not only addressed the "*intersectionality of identity*" (409), but also had taken into account "multiple consciousness" (409) and the issues of the "multiply-marginalized" (Bose 68). Intersectionality, was therefore a partial offshoot of both Critical Race Studies and the Critical Black Feminism during the early 1970s that held the belief that black women experiences were informed by multiple intersections and further aimed at examining "the interconnected mechanism of oppression" (Lee 468) with contributions by Kimberlie Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins together with several other black feminists and activists in America.

Belkhir and Barnett discuss the emergence of a strong network of both scholars and activists who are well-versed in the area of RGC research with its focus on three paradigms of race, gender and class which have long been embedded in the social systems of society, particularly with reference to American society which further necessitates the shifting of peripheral or marginal discourses to the center. While identifying the apparent gap in the study of race and gender Simien and Handcock (2005) discusses the ways in which leading black women activists such as Kimberley Crenshaw, Michelle Wallace, Angela Davis, Alice Walker and Ntozake Shange had received severe criticism from within their own black community for

having voiced their protests against widespread discrimination and marginalization in society. The tenets of black feminism not only informed the consciousness and experiences of black women but also led to a body of critical theory that critiqued and examined social problems (Woodard 2005). Further, while highlighting the non-uniformity within feminist scholarship and similar discourses related to race and class, Joan Acker suggests the importance of taking intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and class for further study and research.

Therefore, the aspects of 'crime' and 'deviance' highlight the fact that these cannot be studied in isolation and significantly necessitates a critical insight into the context of black experiences, social inequalities, concerns of race, class and gender as well as intersections that inform the prevalence and practice of crime and deviance in the American society. The review of literature thus, reveals the socio-political and socio-cultural aspects, power structures and legalities, critical race discourses and matrices of intersections that determine the recurrent pathologies of crime and deviance in the American social context. Thereby, the core aspects of crime and deviance that informs both Angelou's individual and the larger black experience broaden the scope and canvas of exploring and examining the autobiographies in a more comprehensive and holistic manner. The relevant insights and key perspectives offered by Cultural Studies, Literary Theory, Socio-cultural History, Critical Race Theories, Intersectional Studies, Race, Gender and Class Studies together with Sociology of Crime and Deviance which further illuminates as well as facilitates a fuller understanding of these core aspects that significantly emerge from Angelou's autobiographical series. Apart from the primary texts comprising Angelou's autobiographies, her personal essays, poetry, articles and interviews the secondary sources comprise relevant books, journals, compiled critical volumes, magazine articles, documented videos and web sources that lend a comprehensive insight into the study.

Thus, the present study aims to explore and examine the aspects of 'crime' and 'deviance' that are found evident in the textual representations of Maya Angelou's autobiographies. Through a close reading of the seven autobiographies, it aims to examine the nature, types and implications of crime and deviance; the factors that give rise to crime and deviance; the psyche and experiences of the criminals and deviants; the criminal propensities and deviant impulses in the protagonist and other characters; the shaping influences of crime and

deviance on individual subjectivity; social stigma and intervention; the trappings of the underworld and poverty; and aspects of women and crime as represented in the narratives. It also attempts to gain an insight into the experiences and attitudes of the blacks towards crime and deviance while taking a closer look at the factors of rampant crime in the black ghettos and deviant subcultures apart from examining the occurrence of political crimes and violence.

In this context, the study also seeks to explore the various interrelated discourses and intersections of identity in order to uncover the factors that determine the black experience (at both the individual and social level) which often lead towards these subversive paths that further leads to rampant criminal or deviant practices in society. Much of the available literature on Angelou's autobiographies have not considered or even delved into the significant aspects of 'crime' and 'deviance' sufficiently. The available literature on her autobiographies mostly take up discussions on Angelou's style of writing, her role as an autobiographer, her personal journey highlighting relevant themes such as memory, identity, childhood, motherhood, displacement etc. that emerge from her narratives apart from highlighting the nuances of her poetry or highlighting comparative studies with the works of other writers to mention a few. The autobiographies unravel serious concerns of moral degeneration through the aspects of crime, deviance and violence in the black community and the larger American society. It provides the scope of further examining the underlying historical, socio-cultural, political, economical, psychological aspects etc. that form a complex pattern or network of black experiences that largely determine their alternative means of resorting to crime and deviance. Thus, the near absence of attempts at exploring 'crime' and 'deviance' in the autobiographies of Maya Angelou establishes it as worthy of a comprehensive study and the proposed work takes up a critical study on the core aspects of 'crime' and 'deviance' as represented in the autobiographical texts thereby addressing the apparent research gap.

As the first volume of her autobiographical series, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) unravels Angelou's childhood years of growing up in the times of economic recession and covers the period from 1928 to 1944. The narrative unravels the story of Marguerite (Angelou's real name) that traces her early life from the age of three to seventeen, during which her grandmother Henderson's General Store thrives miraculously, even through the Depression

years. The traditional country life strengthens her rooted sense of belonging and brings her into close proximity with the Black community in Stamps, a town which was clearly demarcated by racial segregation and the constant threats of white oppression. These growing years are crucial in shaping her sense of self and questions of identity as it marks her adolescent stage with the rites of passage, her experience of sexual abuse, a period of trauma and silence, followed by her gradual return to her old self, her school graduation, acceptance of responsibility for her newborn son and ultimately finding a new voice and a sense of direction yet again.

The second volume titled *Gather Together in My Name* (1974) describes Angelou's adolescent years from 1944 to 1948, tracing her challenges of survival as a black woman and a young mother raising a child single-handedly, through a string of jobs and cities, away from her cocooned years of childhood in Stamps. The post-war booming economy in the major cities of America, also unveils the world of crime. These difficult years transform her into a juvenile delinquent where she finds herself helplessly drawn towards her deviant impulses that further leads to her being introduced to the world of crime, from which she eventually manages a narrow escape. The third volume with a celebratory ring to its title *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (1976) covers Angelou's early twenties which is set between the years 1949 and 1955 in the post-war booming economy. Moving on from her struggling years as a nineteen years old single mother, constantly struggling under the pressures of performance and survival, Marguerite Johnson (taking up the professional name of 'Maya Angelou') finds new doors of opportunities that opens up for her with promises of a secured future as a successful performer in San Francisco.

The fourth volume *The Heart of a Woman* (1981) which is set between the years 1957 and 1962 recounts her travels to California, New York, Cairo and Ghana that captures her gradually metamorphosing persona as a responsible mother, a 'prodigal' daughter and a coordinator for SCLC and radical activist, advocating against racial inequality and injustice. Most significantly, she discovers her gift for writing through her membership and association with the Harlem Writers' Guild which sharpens her intellectual acumen, political awareness and artistic sensibilities. During this phase, she begins to experiment with her writing and her friend John Oliver Killens encourages her to join the Harlem Writers Guild in New York, where she

meets several African American writers and artists which serves as a turning point of her life and enriches her experience as a writer.

Angelou's fifth volume *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986) which covers the years 1962 to 1965 traces her interesting travels to West Africa in search of a new home which would enable her to explore her ancestral roots and rediscover her African connection. Thus, her personal experiences are intricately woven into the socio-cultural, as well as, the political contexts of Africa in the volume as she notes, "[t]here was much to cry for, much to mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live" (*All God's Children* 1050-1051). Her sixth volume *A Song Flung up to Heaven* (2002) recounts the years between 1965 to 1968, starting with her description of her departure from Ghana to return home to the United States. During this phase of her life, she rather feels accomplished with the range of experiences that she gathers. But as she heads back home, she also experiences a momentary feeling of discomfort or rather a feeling of disorientation to find herself amidst white people after having spent four years in Africa. The volume is also structured around the assassinations of both her close acquaintances Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X which leaves her emotionally devastated.

Thus, from shifting base to be near her brother in Hawaii, working as a night club performer to resuming her writing career in Los Angeles and later becoming a market researcher in Watts to witnessing the 1965 Watts Riots, Angelou constantly proves her adaptability to any shape-shifting condition or circumstance. Also, an introduction to cartoonist, Jules Feiffer in the presence of her friend and mentor James Baldwin leads to her being discovered by editor Robert Loomis, who challenges her into writing her autobiography as literature. After she accepts that challenge, Angelou not only becomes a published writer but also wins the National Book Award for her first autobiography in 1970. Angelou in the acknowledgement of *The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou* (2004) thus, extends her gratitude to both her editor Robert Loomis "who gently prodded [her] back into the lost years" and writer John Oliver Killens "who told [her she] could write".

Finally, written more than a decade after her sixth autobiography, Angelou's *Mom & Me & Mom* (2013) completes the autobiographical series recapturing and detailing some of her

memorable moments and anecdotes that already finds a place in her earlier autobiographies. She recalls the events in her life that had eventually brought her closer to her mother Vivian Baxter who was largely absent through her childhood years. Interestingly, the first section of this autobiography is titled 'Mom & Me' and the second section is titled 'Me & Mom.' Most of her recollections are centered on her family and her own personal experiences. In the first section, she pieces together her memories of the tough Baxter family, the unconditional love of her grandmother Henderson, gradual changes in her bonding with Bailey, the practicalities of Vivian Baxter's "big-city ways" (33), how her mother had eventually won her heart, strange circumstances with her estranged father, her struggles with work, being assaulted by her lover, her sexual curiosity in her teens and observations of life around her.

In the second section, she recounts the vivid memories of her marriage with Tosh Angelos, her first memorable dance performance on stage in a club, her challenges of single parenting, the daily frustrations that often made her suicidal, Bailey drifting away from her owing to his drug addiction, Angelou's experiences in Ghana as a teacher, Vivian Baxter's benevolence and the final moments of her mother's life. The final autobiography fills in some of the little gaps left in her earlier personal narratives while being centered on the special bond with her mother who had a lasting influence on her life. Towards the end of her autobiography, she looks back at her long eventful life and in loving memory of her mother writes,

> My mother's gifts of courage to me were both large and small. The latter are woven so subtly into the fabric of my psyche that I can hardly distinguish where she stops and I begin.
>
> The large lessons are highlighted in my memory like Technicolor stars in a midnight sky. (*Mom & Me & Mom* 173)

According to Lyman Hagen, Angelou in her narratives applies "the standard underlying plot patterns commonly found in all autobiographies: anticipation, recognition and fulfillment" (1). In an interview with Neubaeur, Angelou who preferred experimenting with autobiographical writings had discussed the ways in which 'memory' as well as both its loss and fragmentation played a key role in the way her narratives had shaped up and transformed. She shared her

musings on how she consciously tried to write her autobiographies without being too 'melodramatic', an element that she had found quite difficult to avoid from seeping into her writings. Angelou also held the conviction that owing to a period of muteness during her childhood years, followed by the anguish and trauma of being raped by her mother's partner, "[her] memory was developed in queer way, because [she] remember[ed] having total recall or having none at all" (289).

She often acknowledged and admired the bubbling creativity of black artists which mostly remained undiscovered due to an internalized psyche of self-doubt and owing to lack of precedence in their family history (interview with Black Scholar 1977). With little openings for black women in her time and as an adolescent mother with a child to fend for, Angelou had dared to step out of her comfort zone, to risk everything in the hope of a better life, experimenting with art forms to establish herself as a performer, literally struggling to make ends meet every day, narrowly escaping from the underworld of crime and deviance protesting socio-political injustice, discovering new cultural identities and affinities, learning from first hand experiences of life and moving along new directions of life in sheer optimism. Dolly McPherson who had also known the writer closely opines that Angelou's vision for the black community and for herself was the celebration of the black experience through the challenges of life. Significantly, Hagen considers Angelou's writing and narration as a "reflection of the folklore of her race" (2) and much influenced by Langston Hughes' literary vision- "[t]o explain and illuminate the negro [sic] condition in America" (4).

The 'Harlem Writers Guild' had a major role in inspiring new intellectual stirrings in her and literally grooming her into a confident writer. Her first meeting as a new member of the loosely formed Writers Guild was held among a circle of published writers like Sarah Wright, Sylvester Leeks, John Clarke, Paule Marshall, Mary Delaney and Millie Jordan who took turns to read out their latest drafts of writing. They were together in the group in order to remind each other that talent alone would not work its magic in the literary circles and if at all−only writing to perfection could yield best results for black writers. While Paul Marshall had encouraged her to work on her writing, John Clarke had reminded her that if publishers did not care much for white writers, it was needless to say that the fate of black writers was all the more unpredictable.

Angelou maintained a secluded as well as a regular writing regimen and while in the process of writing her autobiographies, she met surprising coincidences of coming across or running into many of people whom she had known and who were represented in her narratives by virtue of their being associated with some phase of her personal or professional life. These happy coincidences often brought back old memories to her in a rush and also propelled her work. As she admits, the most difficult and challenging aspect that she had faced as an autobiographer was the fact that she had to be careful towards avoiding the superimposition or letting the 'present' voice take over the voice of the autobiographical 'past'. Thus, while being conscious through the process of writing and faithful to her representations of the past that she had lived, Angelou also discovered 'creative' ways of expressing herself as an autobiographer.

A recurrent motif in the autobiographies is the element of 'fantasy' that is blended into representations of real-life descriptions, as a means of altering reality or truth according to her own interpretation or convenience as well as to avoid painful memories and possibly to invite multiple interpretations of truth which explains her constant play with words. In this regard, Siphokazi Koyana in "The Heart of the Matter: Motherhood and Marriage in the Autobiographies of Maya Angelou" (2002) suggests a relevant example citing Angelou's "oscillation between her intrinsic Afro-American and her imposed Euro-American cultural identities, in literary terms" which she represents "by contrasting reality with fantasy" (39). Neubauer in her article "Displacement and Autobiographical Style in Maya Angelou's The Heart of a Woman" (1983) divides fantasy into two types described as 'fantasy that ends in illusion' in which the narrator suffers an "ironic stance" (127) in analyzing past events and 'fantasy that ends in reality' often revealing the narrator's helplessness in the truth of certain moments or situations. Angelou constantly presents her fantasies and romanticisms through her narrations for an instance, she continuously fancies a happy home, often finding consolation or comfort through her fantasies of a better life than the one she led, struggling with fantasy of the perfect man for her which often led to her disillusionment in love or her fantasies of an ideal marriage that would last forever among several others.

As William L. Andrews aptly quotes St. Augustine who regarded memory "as a sort of stomach for the mind" (423), the role of memory too plays a vital part in Angelou's painstaking

efforts of reconstructing her past to the best of her abilities and recapturing her memories just as she had experienced it all in real life. Neubaeur thus, highlights the role of 'memory' in the autobiographies where owing to the fragmented nature of recollected memories, the elements of 'fictionalization' naturally tend to enter the narrative which considerably adds "a sense of history larger than the story of her own life" (125). Moreover, she also mentions the problems of using 'real names' in her autobiographies and acquiring permission from the concerned individuals who were still alive, while suffering a sense of vulnerability in letting down all defenses of narrating herself through her autobiographies.

It is interesting to find that the entire series of her autobiographies are interspersed with various forms of texts such as telegrams, lists, song lyrics, letters, refrains, lines of call-and-response, the Black Anthem, folk-tales, proverbs, spirituals, bits of creative stories, advertisements, captions for placards, newspaper classifieds, food menu, short messages and signboard writings among others. Neubauer notes that as an autobiographer, Angelou assimilates or rather "integrates ingredients" (124) from a range of literary forms in order to capture and provide an enriching narrative that creatively captures her story.

As she narrates herself, Angelou covers the transforming phases of her life and defining moments of her personal history through a detailed presentation. Another interesting aspect of her narration is that while she maintains a linearity of her narration i.e., from her childhood to her adolescent phase to adulthood, she also continuously refers back to the past or inserts anecdotes from her past in order to dispel the monotony of a step-by-step pattern of narration. Also, some of the relevant bits of information are found scattered in the texts of her autobiographies and lends a fuller picture when they are pieced together after a complete reading of the entire series. Further, the mode of 'repetition' or providing recapitulated highlights of previously described events in her autobiographies not only reiterates the narrator's point-of-view but also functions in bringing her narration full circle and connecting the chronology of events in a systematic manner, thereby, also making it easy to read her autobiographies in any random order.

In the present work, the titles of the autobiographies shall be referred to in 'short' due to the frequent cross references and citations from the texts and in order to ensure that it does not break into the flow of narration. Also, the entire body of the work largely employs the popular

term ‘Black’ to refer to the African American people and various aspects of their life and experiences, although terms such as ‘Afro-American’ or ‘African American’ are some of the common and equally preferred terminologies in the American context.

Thus, the structural framework of the thesis is designed and as presented below:

Preface and Acknowledgements

Chapter I: Introduction: Maya Angelou and Her Writings

Chapter II: Critical Perspectives on Crime and Deviance

Chapter III: Black Experiences in the Autobiographies of Maya Angelou

Chapter IV: Intersectionality, Crime and Deviance

Chapter V: Tracing Crime and Deviance at the Intersections of Race, Class and Gender

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Selected Bibliography

Linda Anderson in *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom* (2007) lends critical insights into the literary genre of autobiographical writing and the ways in which it is implicitly bound up with aspects of gender, selfhood and authenticity with David Huddart taking into account the post colonial theories of autobiography, autobiographical practices, identity, dialectical thought, authorship, narration, textual elements, Western subjectivity and universality in the autobiographical form among others. Huddart in *Post Colonial Theory and Autobiography* (2008) examines Leigh Gilmore’s idea of every autobiographical form as “the fragment of a theory” in the opinion that, “[i]f the fictive qualities of autobiography have been blurred ever more productively, its theoretical qualities have also come in for increased exploration” (5).

Much inspired from the social reality of crime, crime writing came to develop as a thriving form of literature from its earlier marginalized position with various genres and subgenres starting from the confessionals, testimonies and newgate novels that found a growing readership and popularity as well. W.H Auden in the essay “The Guilty Vicarage” (1948) had

opined that all the greatest works of literature were centered on the "theme of crime- the modern equivalent of sin" that "force[d] the reader, at least temporarily, to share this preoccupation rather than to repress or ignore it" (Black 82).

Rzepka and Horsley in *A Companion to Crime Fiction* (2010) in tracing the evolution of crime fiction notes the changing fear and perceptions towards sin and crime, the religious tenets of Ten Commandments and the law. Interestingly, Meda Chesney-Lind notes that there have been many 'autobiographical works' authored by women considered as social deviants such as *The Autobiography* (1937) by Box Car Bertha, a runaway living on the streets and frequenting jails; autobiography *I Must Not Rock* (1977) by Linda Marie, a delinquent; and the compiled letters titled *The Maimie Papers* (1997) by Maimie Pinzer, a sex worker. Rosemary Herbert in her work titled *Whodunit?* (2003) also notes the contributions of many women writers of 'crime fiction' along with the works of both old and new crime fiction writers as well.

Tony Hilfer in *The Crime Novel: A Deviant Genre* (1990) identifies four types of protagonists in the crime novel viz. the 'murderer', the 'guilty onlooker', the 'falsely suspected individual' and the 'victim' and some of the motifs which emerged in crime novels were that of the split-self, substitution and the "motifs of doubling, repetition and revenge" (82). Hilfer opines that "the central and defining feature of the crime novel is that in itself and world, guilt and innocence are problematic" (82). Crime Fiction that came to be regarded seriously only around the 1900s had always been perceived as "problematic" by critics and scholars alike in both finding and sustaining a place in the established literary canons. As a result of this, authors of this genre wrote under pseudonyms, for an instance, poet Cecil Day Lewis wrote under the name of Nicholas Blake, novelist Julian Barnes wrote as Dan Kavanagh and novelist John Banville as Benjamin Black among others.

In this regard, Joel Black in a chapter titled "Crime Fiction and the Literary Canon" in *A Companion to Crime Fiction* (2010) states that despite the favourable reception of crime and popular literature in academic circles and regardless of the fact that many "revered masterpieces of world literature" are centered on the theme of crime, "practitioners and proponents of the genre continue to find themselves on the defensive regarding its artistic status" (76). Black argues that even if the acceptance of crime fiction into that of mainstream literature is considered

by a set of the intelligentsia, what shall continue to be debated is "crime fiction's status as high literature or literary art- an honor customarily bestowed on books that appeal, at least in the short run, to a limited rather than to a mass readership" (76).

Black notes that the evolution of crime literature can be seen in its drawing from actual crime reports and news articles around which writers created "imaginative literary narratives" (80) and fictionalized accounts as seen in the works of the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and French writer Marie-Henri Beyle (known by the pseudonym of Stendhal). For an instance, in Dostoevsky's novel *Demons* (1871-72), the death of Sharov is drawn from the real incident that took place in 1869 surrounding the murder of a student by a group of fellow revolutionaries or Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1831) was inspired from a real account of a "crime of passion" (80) that was reported in the newspapers.

While tracing the gradual development of the 'true crime' sub-genre, Black also mentions literary works such as Truman Capote's non-fiction *In Cold Blood* (1965) or Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* (1979) that came to define "the nineteenth century formula of finding raw material for literary narratives in crime reporting" that found an expression "in hybrid works of literary journalism" (80). Simon Joyce in "Resisting Arrest/Arresting Resistance" (1995) notes that the English essayist Thomas De Quincey's fictional essay "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts" (1827) had initiated a new "aesthetics of crime" (312). Similarly, Black opines that De Quincey can be credited with "having legitimized this sub-genre as an art form" (80).

The panopticon and its 'strategies' of oppression which were developed into a social theory known as 'Panopticism' by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his "Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison" (1975) was subverted by what the American historian Peter Linebaugh termed as 'Excarceration' which came to be represented in the modes of "escapes, flights, desertions, migrations and refusals" (Joyce 318). As noted by Terry Eagleton, the panopticon as an emblem "finds its perfect expression" in the genre of the classical detective fiction (Joyce 313) the literary progenitor of which happened to be the American author, Edgar Allen Poe. According to Black, while "the artistry of criminal-centered crime fiction tends to lie in Gothic sensationalism and psychological analysis" in the case of detective fiction it has

"traditionally been attributed" to Poe's striking use of 'ratiocination' and Arthur Conan Doyle's 'intellectual acuteness' (80).

In a review on Ian A. Bell's *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (1991), J.A. Downie discusses how the author traced a relation between crime and Augustan satire by Dryden, Swift and Pope who wrote and used satire "as a kind of alternative legal system" (574) against the judicial malpractices in England. Downie notes that Bell had also elaborated on Henry Fielding's works as representations of the eighteenth century legal practices in which "the opposing forces of order and disorder, fight it silently out on the page" (574). Lauren Gillingham in a chapter titled "The Newgate Novel and Police Casebook" in the *Companion to Crime Fiction* (2010) discusses on how the short-lived English 'Newgate' novel (also known as the rogue novel) had significantly "turned on the potential for identification with criminal heroes" (94) by representing the crime scenarios of the "urban underworld and prisons" (93) in works like Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) or William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794).

Thus, the Newgate novels depicted the circumstances of crime and criminality in the characters while also dealing with the common fascination with crime, thereby drawing their subjects from the real accounts of eighteenth century crimes and criminals. For an instance, Simon Joyce mentions the representation of the 1780 Gordon Riots in Charles Dickens *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), while Gillingham notes how William Harrison Ainsworth featured the legendary eighteenth century highwayman Dick Turpin in his novel *Rookwood* (1834) and another eighteenth-century criminal and jail breaker in his novel *Jack Sheppard* (published in *Bentley's Miscellany* 1839-1840).

The nineteenth century saw the publication of the *Memoirs of Vidocq* (1828) an autobiography by Eugène François Vidocq, the head of the French police force and a renowned private detective who was previously a criminal. Vidocq came to be considered as the 'father of modern criminology' for his contributions towards systematic crime detection through maintenance of extensive records on criminals with his networks and insider's knowledge on crime (102). Moreover, Vidocq also had a significant influence on the nineteenth century writers like Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Dickens among others. This

was followed by the trend of the 'penny dreadful' and 'shilling shocker' in which criminals were glorified and represented in a favourable light by writers (108).

Christopher Pittard in his essay "From Sensation to the Strand" notes that the *Strand* magazine was the primary publisher of crime and detective fiction that moved away from its sensationalist mode and the success of which was attributed to Arthur Conan Doyle's "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" that first appeared in 1891 in two series of twelve stories closing with detective Holmes' apparent death in "The Final Problem" (1894) (see *Companion to Crime Fiction*). Susan Rowland in her essay 'The "Classical mode" of the Golden Age' refers to the thriving golden era of crime writing from the period of 1918 to 1945 that could be considered as the "peculiarly blessed era of crime-writing" (117) in which the golden age crime writers represented the 'detective' as the classic figure that dominated the plot of the detective novel.

As Alexander Moudrov notes in "Early American Crime Fiction: Origins to Urban Gothic" the development of American crime literature can be traced from Peleg Whitman Chandler's significant volume titled *American Criminal Trials* (1841) which unraveled the fact that "crime was not a mere object of curiosity; it was right at the center of the discourse about American culture" (129). Thus, the woven discourses on social issues like urban crime, prostitution, and poverty added to the popularity of American crime literature. Significantly, the rise of the 'Urban Gothic' novel of the 1840s also portrayed "the negative aspects of city life-such as rampant crime and prostitution" (136) and derived its stylistic influences from the gothic novel itself.

Raymond Chandler, also one of the leading practitioners of the American school of 'Hard-boiled Detective' fiction, famously noted that "the focus of the new hard-boiled school was on a "world where gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities," and this genre had a "transatlantic circuit" that included United States, Great Britain and France (Higginson 162). Hard-boiled fiction, pioneered by Carroll John Daly and Dashiell Hammett also represented the American socio-political contexts of the 1920s and referred to a form of crime fiction which had a cynical attitude towards emotions of terror and in which the detective was projected with hard-boiled or tough masculinity. Joanne Andrews Padderud in a review of Hilfer's work notes that

this was later countered by the figure of the American *femme fatale* as portrayed in works such as James M. Cain's *The Post Man Rings Twice* (1934) and *Double Indemnity* (1943).

With reference to African American Crime Fiction, Frankie Bailey in "African-American Detection and Crime Fiction" notes that in its initial stages of development, the genre accounted the presence of more white writers than black that was raised by Earnie Young in a write up for *Black Issues Book Review*. Just as the Abolitionists had played a major role in highlighting the slave narratives, black journalists too had initiated the anti-lynching moments by widely circulating their writings on the issue. Further, Bailey also notes that black writers came to increasingly 'challenge' the modes of white oppression through their writings, even as Southern whites justified their position on violence against African Americans. The earliest practitioners of African American Crime Fiction were Pauline E. Hopkins and John Edward Bruce who raised social concerns through their crime fiction, followed by other significant writers such as Rudolph Fisher, Richard Wright, Chester Himes, Ann Petry, Ishmael Reed and Clarence Major among others.

Thus, Crime Fiction includes a range of forms and sub genres such as the gothic novel, historical crime novel, police casebook, police procedural, legal thriller, spy novel, caper stories, psychological suspense, true crime novels, graphic novel, gangster novel, feminist crime fiction, children's crime fiction, war novel, post colonial crime novel and post modern crime novel among others. Further, Susan Rowland in a review of Stephen Knight's *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* notes that "in the twenty-first century, Knight advances an intriguing argument that post modern crime writing, with all its ambivalence about truth and justice, may have worked itself back to the condition of great pre-detective eighteenth century" (1077).

Mary Jane Lupton in her *Critical Companion* (1998) opines that the major aspect that distinguishes Angelou's autobiographical style from other black autobiographers is that through the 'series' of her autobiographies, "she guides the reader through a quarter of a century of American and African history" (1) with her own personal touch to it, given her remarkable style of writing. While focusing on the story of her life, her autobiographies also reflect a 'universal significance' as also noted in the use of first person plural pronouns that not only extends to the

"racial we" (Stamant 119) or the black community but also to the larger humankind engaged in similar struggles for freedom and justice. Also, in this regard, she admits to have been influenced by Frederick Douglass' use of the 'first person singular' voice that was intended to reach out as the 'third person plural' voice of narration (interview with Neubaeur 1987).

Significantly Angelou was conferred around fifty-eight honorary degrees in her lifetime and had written more than thirty bestsellers through her literary career. Also apart from having served in two presidential committees, she was also awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2000, the Lincoln Medal in 2008 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011. As the first recipient of the Lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American studies in 1991, she taught and offered lectures on several areas of her interest at the Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Her remarkable writing reflects the depth of an insider's view on the black condition, apart from her being more vocal about the complexities of the American society and also boldly striking out against racism, oppression and all forms of social inequalities that finds a strong expression in her autobiographies.

In fact, Elizabeth Fox Genovese in her comparison of Angelou's first autobiography with that of Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) states that even with a similar trajectory in both the narratives, Hurston who belonged to the North did not really have the kind of rooted understanding of the South thereby lacking an insider's view of the Southern experience owing to which she had to heavily rely on imagination. Further, Lupton credits Angelou's characteristic "denial of closure" in her writings as the method that distinctively sets apart her autobiographies from that of other writers by "creating from each end a new beginning" (258).

The present introductory chapter entitled "Maya Angelou and Her Writings" thus, in its discussion of the life and literary contributions of Angelou also traces the development of the autobiographical form in America, and explores the history of the Black autobiographical tradition. As the selected texts of study comprise all the seven autobiographies of Maya Angelou, a comprehensive idea of the narratives highlighting the core aspects of study i.e., 'Crime' and 'Deviance' as well as, the gist of all the chapters is presented along with the structural framework of the thesis. The chapter also provides insights into the theoretical perspectives on crime literature towards the end, a glimpse of Angelou's representations of crime and deviance

together with a critical reception of her autobiographies and her literary contributions as a writer and poet.

The second chapter entitled "Critical Perspectives on Crime and Deviance" focuses primarily on providing a detailed insight into the core aspects of crime and deviance, with an attempt to examine the textual representations of the underworld, contexts of crime in America post World War II, Angelou's tussle with criminal and deviant activities, characters involved in crime and deviance, mentioning the occurrence of political crimes in the 1960s, aspects of morality and sin, strain and social goals, poverty and low life, black ghettos and subcultures following the transition of Angelou's subjective experiences and the larger social picture, as some of the identified areas of study. It also highlights some of the major sociological perspectives on the aspects of crime, deviance, delinquency, subcultures etc. The serious concerns of 'Crime' and 'Deviance' that are clearly evident in the narratives of Angelou's autobiographical texts are symptoms of a time in the history of America that saw a period of severe conflict, segregation and systemic disadvantaging of the black people with their lives subject to severe oppression at multiple levels owing to the widely prevalent racial prejudices, established hierarchies, psychological alienation, physical segregation, unequal rights, socio-political conflicts, as well as, denied opportunities for the black community to excel in life.

While delving into Angelou's literary representation of the larger black experience with insights into the socio-political and socio-cultural contexts, the third chapter entitled "Black Experiences in the Autobiographies of Maya Angelou" highlights her personal experiences rooted in these contexts. It takes up a discussion on both the issues and aspects concerning black identity and rights, black psyche and vulnerability, black struggles and socio-economic needs, black women and their challenges, both African American and African cultures, black aesthetics and Black Renaissance while taking up her subjective position with regard to these significant aspects. Thus, it examines Angelou's role as a writer and a socio-political activist while also providing an insight into a range of thematic aspects such as cultural roots, family, identity, displacement, travel exposure, motherhood, sorority, cultural exchanges, individuality etc. that are evident in these autobiographical texts. It presents how complex processes of socialization, difficulties of black life, hostility of the social environment and other such complex processes

combine to shape the black social consciousness while also highlighting her personal consciousness in the same context. Therefore, by delving into these aspects that largely shape the black psyche, the chapter attempts to gain a better insight into some of the aspects that define black experiences and black life while maintaining the central thread of discourse on crime and deviance.

The fourth chapter entitled "Intersectionality, Crime and Deviance" explores various critical insights that emerge from Intersectional Studies and Critical Race Theories addressing the roots of unresolved conflicts that are found evident in the practices of racialized systems and race relations, socio-political structures and institutional hierarchies, systemic exploitation and inequality regimes, oppression and marginalization in America. The multiple social inequalities resulting from the ways in which these social structures operate, both marginalizes and jeopardizes the lives and experiences of the black community at the receiving end. Further, it also explains the compelling circumstances and lack of 'choice' that often lead black men and women towards the subversive paths of crime and deviance particularly owing to their experience with unjust social systems.

The fifth chapter entitled "Tracing Crime and Deviance at the Intersections of Race, Class and Gender" discusses the ways in which Angelou's autobiographies are saturated with the pressing concerns of race, class and gender in particular, each defining and leaving a deep imprint on the black consciousness and their qualitative experiences of life. Arguably, these factors tend to 'simultaneously' combine and form more complex patterns of the black psyche which further creates an extensive influence on the categories of 'crime' and 'deviance.' Thus, it highlights textual representations from the autobiographies to illustrate how the factors of race, class and gender distinctly shapes both the personal and the larger black experience at the intersections, in general, as well as, the categories of crime and deviance in particular.

In the concluding chapter, some of the findings of its study, a few highlights of its relevance, as well as, suggestions regarding further scope of study have been presented. The relevant sociological insights discussed in the chapter not only highlights the importance of addressing these serious discourses pertaining to black life but also practically applying critical theories, activism and justice towards solving the problems of crime and deviance in the

American context. It thus, advocates the importance of bringing the social realities of crime and deviance to the fore instead of relegating it to the margins.

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Chapter II

Critical Perspectives on Crime and Deviance

"Without willing it, I had gone from being ignorant of being ignorant to being aware of being aware. And the worst part of my awareness was that I didn't know what I was aware of."

(*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 208)

Taken from a sociological perspective, 'crime' is the severe violation of a written law and the government, police and judicial authorities are vested with the powers to act against crime and criminal offenses. While highlighting the conventional definition of crime, Sutherland et al. in *Principles of Criminology* (1992) note that "[n]o matter how immoral, reprehensible or indecent an act may be, it is not a criminal act unless it is outlawed by the state" (4). On the other hand, 'deviance' in the traditional sense is considered to be a milder form of violation of the social norms that differ with regard to time, place and socio-cultural contexts. Kai T. Erikson in "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance" (1962) defines the term deviance as a "vagrant form of human activity, moving outside the more orderly currents of life" (307). Significantly, all types of crime may be termed as deviance but all types of deviance do not necessarily amount to crime or criminality.

Further, Darnell F. Hawkins in the introduction to *Violent Crime: Assessing Race and Ethnic Differences* (2003) discusses how the definition of 'crime' tends to vary from the socio-political, economic and cultural structures of one society to the other, extending across time and geographical space. On the other hand, separated by only a thin margin, deviance often results from conflicting situations and disorder which leads to various forms of subversion or defiance of social norms, social mores and based on its severity even the criminal law. While the law or legal systems have a clearly defined set of rules and regulations in the written form, social norms as James J. Chriss notes in *Social Control* (2007) particularly "those operating in the realm of everyday life" (33) are understood and practiced in the form of social conduct. Thus, Chriss defines social norm as "a rule for behavior, a guide to conduct" (33) the study of which was first taken up by William Graham Sumner in his work *Folkways* (1906).

While clearly highlighting the differences between the terms 'discipline' and 'field' with regard to Sociology and Criminology, Ronald Ackers in "Linking Sociology and its Specialties" (1992) mentions that while a 'discipline' is centered around its own distinct perspective(s) that seeks to identify and gain an insight into various problems; a specialized 'field' of study examines the nature of problems by taking into account, object(s) of study that encompasses a range of determining variables. Thus, he states that specialized studies in the field of crime, deviance and criminal justice, "…are problems, concrete areas of study and practice" (4) that necessitates an inter-disciplinary exchange. In this regard, Edward J. Clarke in *Deviant Behavior* (2007) writes thus,

> …[O]f all the social sciences there is perhaps no better clear-cut illustration of the importance of conceptions than in the field identified as criminology and the study of deviant behavior. As we shall see, the history of the field can be described best in terms of changing conceptions of crime, criminals, deviants and deviation. (1)

Ackers notes that Edwin H. Sutherland with his theory of crime (i.e., differential association theory) is credited to have first integrated Criminology as a special field of Sociology in the 1930s even as sociologists at the University of Chicago had produced considerable work in the area before (5). The significant theoretical contributions such as Robert Merton's anomie theory in the late 1930s; Walter Reckless' containment (constraint) theory and Thornsten Sellin's culture conflict theory; theories of subculture by Albert Cohen, Richard Cloward and Llyod Ohlin in the 1950s; Donald Cressey's perspectives on the 'nature' of crime and organized crime in the 1950s, had significantly established and enriched the stature of Criminology as a field of Sociology (6). In fact, Ackers writes that Criminology has long been "closely tied" (4) to Sociology as an important field than to any other discipline quoting Marshall Clinard thus, "[s]ince the bulk of the literature in American criminology is by sociologists it goes without saying that American criminology and sociology have developed together" (7). Therefore, while maintaining Sociology as the core discipline that is integral to Criminology, he suggests that both these areas continue to enrich the other.

Moreover, Bonny Berry discusses the ways in which the discipline of Sociology is studied through the lens or perspectives of global and specialized theory, research methodology

(both quantitative and qualitative), social organization and social psychology (5). Again, the branching sub areas of the discipline provide specialized understanding, reliable data, theoretical development and insight, as well as, a clearer conception of the related social phenomena. Berry mentions that the subareas that contribute to the core discipline of Sociology in magnifying social phenomena are the significant aspects of crime, deviance, law, social stratification, gender, family, race, ethnicity, aging, mental health, education among others (5).

Maya Angelou in her autobiographies presents an insider's view of the black community, narrating the realities of black experiences that determine their approaches or perspectives on living with the realities of crime, criminal offenses and deviance. The narratives represent life and experiences in the black ghettos where both crime and deviance are seen to be accepted as an inevitable part of their survival. Also, it highlights the sense of tolerance towards criminal offenders, outlaws and deviants in the community who consider it better to be unlawful in the eyes of the law or even morally sinful than to suffer injustice and to serve under the oppression of white supremacists. On a similar note, Linda Myrsiades in "Introduction: Writing Race and Politics" (1998) opines that the general approach of Black community towards crime is not regarded essentially as a process of 'acculturation' or 'degeneration' of their socio-cultural values but rather as a 'consequential' part of black experiences.

The autobiographical texts represent the socio-economic condition of the Black American ghettos during the late 1940s that were easily given to criminal, deviant or such underhand activities in the neighbourhood, while a small section of the black community found themselves struggling with odd jobs and the challenges of survival. Post World War II, the black marketeers, pimps, prostitutes and gamblers were all too busy making their fortunes while opportunities favoured and instead of investing in banks they had also ensured that the money circulated within their own community. Angelou had described the festive mood that had prevailed in the post-war scenario with its restructured economy thus:

> The gamblers and prostitutes, black marketeers and boosters, all those suckerfish who had gotten fat living on the underbelly of the war, were the last to feel the pinch. They had accumulated large masses of money, which never went into a bank, but circulated among their tribe like promiscuous women, and by the nature of their professions, they

were accustomed to the infidelity of Lady Luck and the capriciousness of life. (*Gather Together in My Name* 230)

Such a change had swept through the black ghettos that most people had little time to sit back while there was money to be made everywhere, for an instance, the black marketeers were busy moving around the city to keep the ration flowing in the community or black prostitutes were so quick in their services that they hardly had the time to take off their "seventy-five dollar shoes when they turned twenty-dollar tricks" (*Gather Together* 227) while shipyard workers looked for a chance to enjoy their services and the rich pimps awkwardly stepped out of their limousines. Although, an end to the war had assured the black community of a new beginning in terms of the increasing job opportunities, material affluence and fortunes, yet after a few months these promises had left them disillusioned with an economic downslide and thus, a crash in the job market resulting in joblessness. In fact, both the factors of 'economic expansion' and 'capitalist accumulation' as also identified by Humphries and Wallace apart from the economic downslide had resulted in generating, as well as, determining patterns of crime post World War II.

The shifting patterns of migration during this time saw black men migrate from their Southern hometowns to the economically flourishing Northern cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit and Stockton in order to seek better prospects leaving their traditional occupations of agriculture. At the same time, even Southern black women left their traditional work as maids and mammies and migrated along with their families to the Northern cities in search of new employments at the manufacturing units, dry docks, shipyards, and defense plants where both Southern black men and women learnt to adapt themselves in handling modern machineries and new technologies.

Donna Brown Agin in *Maya Angelou: Diversity Makes for a Rich Tapestry* (2006) mentions Angelou's description of the late 1930s and the 1940s when the "African American section of St. Louis was a new and wild place" (13) with easily available drugs such as opium, cocaine, marijuana and bootleg whiskey. Angelou thus wrote, "The Negro [sic] section of St. Louis in the mid-thirties had all the finesse of a gold-rush town. Prohibition, gambling and their related vocations were so obviously practiced that it was hard for me believe that they were against the law" (*Caged Bird* 51). During her younger days, it was an everyday occurrence for

Angelou to meet gamblers, smugglers and con men in her mother's kitchen and grandmother Baxter's living room where these interesting men taught her card games and narrated their tall-stories. In fact, these men became a regular feature in her life much as the familiar faces of the underworld, with whom she interacted freely without ever judging them by the nature of their work. Notwithstanding the power relations that existed even in the underworld, she had even worked for a living on the fringes of organized networks of crime that engaged conmen, gamblers, pimps, prostitutes, fences, thieves, smugglers, drug peddlers, bootleg whiskey sellers among others.

In the South, the "worldly" were known to spend their time socializing on Saturday nights and those who considered themselves as the "godly" would spend their time at home in their parlours like grandmother Henderson (*Gather Together* 260). However, in the glowing cities of St. Louis, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego everyday seemed like a party for those who wanted to ease the strain, find influential connections, make quick money and entertain themselves given the numerous partying circuits in the popular bars, nightclubs, gambling joints, pool halls, lounges or drug joints among others. These places of entertainment and relaxation went about their routine work of catering to their potential clients of which many were associated with the underworld. These men were a common presence and frequented these circuits not only to rid themselves of their regular pressures, to socialize, and keep their minds occupied but also to make profitable deals, settle good bargains and even conduct their underhand activities. In fact, Angelou's presence in these circuits and her insider's view reveal the lifestyles of pimps and gamblers, experiences of prostitutes and drug addicts, criminal offenses of con-men and smugglers together with her own personal experiences in their midst.

While narrating the lives of the oppressed minorities, struggling in segregated spaces and living in the deprived margins of the society, Angelou felt that the unaddressed needs of their community and their impoverished lives at the lower rungs of the oppressive society demanded survival at all costs. Thus, in the American black ghettos, the ideal black man was reckoned as the person "who [was] offered only the crumbs from his country's table but by ingenuity and courage [was] able to take for himself a Lucullan feast" (*Caged Bird* 173). Through this metaphor of the welcome table, Angelou referred to the way the nation was considered to serve and value only its highly privileged citizens in the most prejudiced and unjust manner, hardly

addressing the needs of its underprivileged or in other words, the disadvantaged citizens. Black people were not even considered as proper citizens of the country which explained the dividing policies, laws of segregation, segregated spaces and prevalent injustice in their society and their social systems. They were long denied their fundamental rights, their desires of fulfilling their dreams of a decent life and those who long survived at the margins of the dominant white society did not know any better than to either accept their realities in silence or live in denial of the realities that were decided by their oppressors. Angelou described this adopted approach to everyday survival in the Black ghettos thus,

> [T]he maids and doorman, factory workers and janitors who were able to leave their ghetto homes and rub the cold-shouldered white world, told themselves that things were not as bad as they seemed. They smiled dishonest acceptance at their mean servitude and on Saturday night bought the most expensive liquor to drown their lie. (*Gather Together in My Name* 371)

While many black men and women in the pursuit of their livelihood toiled hard with the scraps of work that were available to them in the cities, there were countless others in the black ghettos or neighbourhoods who jeopardized their lives making an entry into the world of crime that provided them easier means of earning money while also avenging themselves against those who stood as their oppressors.

In this context, Glenn Loury who discusses factors of social inequalities in "Crime, Inequality and Social Injustice" (2010) considers crime in the Black ghettos as rooted in the experiences of "social deprivation" and "spatial isolation" where the racial disparity in the process of incarceration makes it even worse (137). Also, Shihadeh and Flynn in "Segregation and Crime: The Effect of Black Social Isolation on the Rates of Urban Violence" (1996) suggest that even as it happens to be just "one dimension of a racially stratified system" (1328), the effects of 'black-white segregation' is considered to have several social repercussions. For an instance, social segregation inevitably leads to social isolation and formation of black ghettos, social immobility leads to injustice and economic inequalities, thereby, often resulting in rising criminal activities. However, irrespective of the lives they chose for themselves, the Black ghettos were the most conservative when it came to their religious observances, so much so, that

even the criminals and outlaws despite their unlawful activities and sinful indulgences would always make it a point to be "free for church on Sunday" (*Gather Together* 269). In fact, Angelou noted that 'tolerance' defined the spirit of the black ghettos where it was understood that everyone in the community or neighbourhood was engaged in some form of struggle or the other.

The autobiographical texts reveal some of the representative characters that are involved in criminal and unlawful activities such as the man who rapes Angelou in her childhood Mr. Freeman (also her mother's lover); pimp, conmen and gambler L.D. Tolbrook, the man who manipulates Angelou into prostitution; prostitutes Clara and Bea at Clara's brothel who work for Tolbrook; part time prostitutes Beatrice and Johnnie Mae; prostitutes Dimples and Helen in Merced; prostitutes Jackie and Lil in Mendota and Firebaugh; Two Fingers Mark, the man who batters and assaults Angelou; smuggler and gambler Troubadour Martin; Mendinah an infamous prostitute who runs sexual favours in the diplomatic circles; Hercules, a Rhodesian political leader who rapes and impregnates his housekeeper's daughters; Angelou's brother Bailey who deals in stolen goods and serves his time in jail; the conmen Stonewall Jimmy, Just Black, Cool Clyde, Tight Coat and Red Leg; baby-sitter Big Mary who abducts Angelou's son; Angelou's maternal uncles named Tootie, Cladwell, Tommy and Billy who indulge in physical assault and violence; Angelou's mother Vivian Baxter for assaulting men and women alike; and Angelou herself involved as an 'absentee manager' for Mae and Beatrice and later in prostitution.

Further, some of the representative characters who are seen to indulge in deviant activities and living in sheer defiance of the social norms across the autobiographical texts are namely: Angelou's father Bailey Henderson Sr. with his sexual and promiscuous indulgences as well as his careless way of life; his jealous partner Dolores who assaults Angelou out of anger and jealousy; Angelou's dance rival Cotton Candy who suffers from drug-abuse; singer Billie Holiday who is dependent on hard drugs; Johnnie Mae and Beatrice for their drug addiction and sexual perversion; Hank, a night club bouncer and a drunkard who also doubles up as a cab driver (an accomplice in a deal) bringing in customers for Mae and Beatrice; Angelou's African partner Vusumzi Make for indulging in sexual promiscuity; young Bailey who indulges with a prostitute and suffers drug addiction; Vivian Baxter known for venting her wild tempers, her

frequent assaults, flouting social norms or even the law; and Angelou's heavy drinking and drug abuse.

Moreover, the autobiographies also feature the presence of several other nameless criminals and deviants who straddle between the world of crime and deviance, such as the white men in the South who brutally avenge themselves by lynching black men; the presence of the much feared Ku Klux Klan; black men sexually violating white women; crime in the name of racial hatred in the south; the Pullman car porters and dining car waiters kidnapping young children off trains; the subcultural gangs like the Savages, Roughnecks and Rednecks who were murderous and feared even by the police; the juvenile gangs who devised their own way of life; young children as thieves or adult women pilfering things from stores; bootleg whiskey salesmen and black marketeers making quick money; nightclub owners allowing their dancers to hustle under cover; con men cheating white men of their money, pimps and prostitutes fleecing men in the small towns; prostitutes serving field workers in allotted cabins; pimps engaging their wives in prostitution to repay their gambling losses; gangsters threatening pimps who owed them money; professional fences selling stolen goods to pimps in the clubs; entanglement and exploitation in the brothels; illicit sexual favours in the diplomatic circles; recurrent (and anonymous) death threats to political leaders and their wives over phone; political protesters turning violent in split seconds; the assassinators of both African and American political leaders; mob violence during the Watts Riots involving children and the youngsters; the nameless arsonists and robbers literally fuelling the riots (possibly for media coverage); instances of internecine crime; professional burglars turning into a menace in the urban neighbourhoods; countless drug addicts at the crowded drug joints, as well as, underhand drug dealings.

To Angelou, the chequered world of crime and deviance brought about her inner conflicts between the good and bad, virtue and sin, morality and immorality, right and wrong. She admitted to suffering a sense of "textured guilt" (229) that had almost always veiled her existence and also reasoned that these were the telling signs of her Christian ideals which "would not be quieted by the big-city noise" (*Gather Together* 229) and which easily resulted in feelings of guilt that gnawed into her conscience every time she went against the values that grandmother Henderson had ingrained in her. However, having stepped into the world of crime and being

involved in deviant activities, she found herself trapped and entangled with worries about finding a dignified job, her responsibility as a mother, the need to address her personal liabilities and the fear of being arrested by the police which would result in her being separated from her child. At times, when her mind sent her the signal to literally runaway from the mess and difficult circumstances of her life, she felt confused and suffered indecision as "…the need for change bulldozed a road down the center of [her] mind" (*Caged Bird* 202) wiping out the traces of her escapist thoughts from clouding her mind.

At sixteen, Bailey Johnson, Angelou's brother seemed desperate for his mother's love and attention which Angelou considered as his unconscious "entangle[ment] in the Oedipal skein" (*Caged Bird* 197) while naively trying to emulate his mother's suitors in order to win her attention. Gradually, Bailey began to fill up his sense of void with his expensive purchases and a relationship with a white prostitute. By the time he was eighteen, he began experimenting with drugs without paying any heed to his sister, thinking he could handle his heroin addiction as well. In one such incident, when she had followed him to a "shoot-up house" (*Mom & Me* 181) in Oakland, Angelou recounts her shocking experience of finding her brother in a dark, dilapidated house guarded by two men, that stood in sharp contrast to his earlier settling down in a newfound home and the promising life with his wife Eunice until her untimely demise. Despite Angelou's repeated requests to her brother, almost pleading him to give up on his drug addiction, she realizes that he had already gone too far, not only insisting to be left alone in his condition but also being unrepentant of his deeds in the belief that he harmed himself and not others. Even Vivian Baxter found herself helpless regarding her son's condition, being left with no other option other than accepting his choices in life, while also blaming herself for being absent through his shaping years to be able to guide him when he needed her the most. Ironically, Bailey whom she had always considered as her "savior" through her childhood had become the cause of his own destruction (*Gather Together* 245).

On the other hand, Angelou as a young girl longed to be her father's pride whom she had hardly known as a person and in whose absence she had literally grown up. When he had invited her for a holiday to the outskirts of Southern California where he resided with his young partner, named Dolores in a trailer park, Angelou had decided to accept the opportunity of knowing him

better. There in the little home, she tried hard to fit in like a jigsaw puzzle, only to find that her expectations were completely mismatched with their ways of being. In a short trip to Mexico with her father, things had turned out all the more disappointing, where her father had disappeared from a fiesta party at a Mexican bar to indulge in his pleasures with a woman while Angelou waited in the car all alone at night for him to return.

A stranger who was supposedly her father's friend had eventually appeared on the scene, helping her drunken father into the car. The man spoke to her in Spanish hardly realizing that she was not able to understand what had been spoken to her or that she hardly had any idea on how to drive a car (that too at night through the mountain roads). Finally, when the man had steered their car towards the highway and left the motor running for her to drive, Angelou impulsively took on the steering wheel and drove the car down the mountain sides without knowing how she had got it right and without even giving into her fear. While her father had been extremely irresponsible in the way he had conducted himself in the Mexican party, in her case, it was a momentary decision and her recklessness that had stemmed both from her inexperience as well as her inherent sense of courage. Even as she had managed to steer the car to safety, this act of deviance could have cost both their lives. However, she did not know what force or energy had taken over her that night and led her to act in such a way but it also gave her a new sense of self-confidence as she wrote:

> The challenge was exhilarating. It was me, Marguerite, against the elemental opposition. As I twisted the steering wheel and forced the accelerator to the floor I was controlling Mexico, and might and aloneness and inexperienced youth and Bailey Johnson, Sr., and death and insecurity, and even gravity. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 183)

This was Angelou at fifteen years of age, handling situations and working her way around problems with the early realization in life, "that surrender, in its place, was as honorable as resistance, especially if one had no choice" (*Gather Together* 192). In one moment she was the naïve girl from the South who had little experience of handling difficult situations; and in the next moment, she was transformed into this brave young girl taking control of a situation with her courage and sheer presence of mind. In fact, this incident itself translates as a metaphor for

her own life that hurtles and spirals out of control, often compelling her to 'act' according to the demands of a situation instead of suffering passivity or inaction.

However, a grave sense of loneliness seemed to envelope her existence at this age when she wished to be loved and accepted, but found no anchor to draw her into the security of a home and the warmth of a family. Dolores haunted by her jealousies and left alone to deal with her emotional anxieties by her partner, found it difficult to get along with both Bailey and Angelou despite trying hard. Moreover, Angelou had slapped Dolores for having insulted Vivian Baxter in an argument that Dolores had started, following which the latter in all her fury had not only ended up slashing Angelou's waist but also chasing her out of the house with a hammer in a fit of rage. In this situation, all that her father managed to do in order to keep her safe was to send her away to his friend's place which again meant living in someone else's home "[a]t another strange trailer, in yet another mobile park…" (*Caged Bird* 192) and thus, Angelou had simply made up her mind to walk away from their lives and disappear without ever bothering anyone.

In one of these touching moments of her narrative, Angelou had runaway (with Bailey's permission) into a junkyard in the city, a yard for discarded old cars where she found shelter in a broken car sitting on its fenders with seats intact, for a night's sleep, imagining the car to be her "island" and the junkyard her "sea" (*Caged Bird* 193). The next morning, she woke up to surprisingly find curious faces at her car window of the abandoned junk car without wheels that held her like a cradle. These were the faces of young black, white and Mexican children who lived together in that junkyard as a small community with their own set of rules. After having enquired about her whereabouts, they had readily welcomed her into their fold and spelled out some of their common rules for their new member in the gang.

As per their rules, the abandoned cars were to serve as single shelters for all of them unless it rained and made some of the cars leaky; boys and girls were to sleep separately; none of them were to 'steal' in order to avoid trouble from the police who would otherwise find out about their secret yard; and the strict avoidance of any form of criminal activity as it could possibly lead to their being tried in juvenile courts and being kept in the confines of foster homes. They were there together to help each other in their struggles and to live a life of freedom. Thus, these young children engaged themselves in whatever productive work they

could find and their earnings were looked after by a leader among them, who commonly utilized the money and looked after their needs.

Most of them were probably orphans or runaways who had taken up their own troubles of living and surviving as a small group, except a boy named Lee Arthur who moved with the gang while also living with his mother. While the girls collected bottles for scrap and did washing, the boys engaged themselves in sweeping pool halls, grass cutting and running favours for black store-owners; in all their innocence, they even entered dancing contests at the Silver Slipper to try their luck at winning the coveted prize money. Angelou cherished these little moments that she had lived with the society's poor and forgotten, "community of teenagers" (Agin 22) which not only taught her a few lessons for life but also lent her an insight into the plight of those who struggled at the fringes of society as she thought,

> After a month my thinking processes had so changed that I was hardly recognizable to myself. The unquestioning acceptance by my peers had dislodged the familiar insecurity. Odd that the homeless children, the silt of war frenzy, could initiate me into the brotherhood of man. After hunting down unbroken bottles and selling them with a white girl from Missouri, a Mexican girl from Los Angeles and a Black girl from Oklahoma, I was never again to sense myself so solidly outside the pale of the human race. The lack of criticism evidenced by our ad hoc community influenced me, and set a tone of tolerance for my life. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 195)

When Angelou had eventually started out on her own, as an adolescent with little qualifications and opportunities, with an infant to provide for and pressing concerns of survival, she had to struggle hard to make ends meet through a string of professions. She first began working as a bus girl in a cafeteria, a cook at a Creole Café and a string of other jobs; followed by a downslide in the graph of her career as an 'absentee-manager' for two prostitutes (while simultaneously working as a waitress at a posh club), buying luxuries such as her dream vintage car off their earnings, working as a prostitute for her debt-ridden lover, finding employment as a salesperson of stolen goods while also battling her drug and alcohol dependency through her delinquent phase. At some point of her switching careers from restaurants to show-business, she even

wondered how she had ended up trying her luck in so many things at once and failing in many others.

At a certain point she had also found herself reflecting on the socio-political inequalities that had directly or indirectly influenced black experiences like her own, admitting her own moral compromises, practical needs and an acute sense of guilt given the ways in which her life had come to be "hinged melodramatically on intrigue and deceit" (*Gather Together* 274) even before she could make sense of the ways in which things had turned up for her. As far as her experiences were concerned, life to her had begun to appear like "a series of opposites" (*Gather Together* 274) and during this phase of her life, she had also arrived at the realization that life in all its fairness also held out its reserved set of punishments as much as its rewards.

Thus, she had traced a similarity of her world of crime and deviance to the representations of the Russian writers whom she read during these years gaining an insight into- "Maxim Gorki and his unjust world" and the consequential binary of "crime/punishment" (*Gather Together* 274) that Dostoevsky elaborated in his writings. Significantly, Lyman B. Hagen talks of how "forces beyond control dictate actions determined to be anti-social" (73) which in a way explains why Angelou's unintentional, unsuspecting ways with regard to the scrupulous world outside had often led her into trouble because many a times, owing to her inexperience, it had never occurred to her that certain actions were unpardonable in the eyes of law or according to the established social norms for an instance, while applying in the army she had no idea that she had unknowingly committed 'perjury'. Thus, while she narrated her tussles with crime and deviance, she also left a 'trail' of descriptions that would lead the reader to unravel the 'circumstances' or 'situations' that had determined her actions.

Significantly, Birbeck and LaFree in "The Situational Analysis of Crime and Deviance" (1993) highlight the centrality of Edwin Sutherland's proposition in the late 1940s that crime and deviance were either 'situational' or 'dispositional' with the former being considered more relevant despite the fact that for several decades, sociologists had focused on theories of disposition. The term 'situation' refers to the immediate context that influences or determines behaviour. While noting how 'environments' are linked to crime, they also note that the literature on situational analysis is divided into two research areas i.e., 'experimental research' on crime

conducted by psychologists and 'non-experimental research' carried out by sociologists. Some researchers have also studied various situational aspects of deviance such as "journey of crime" and "offense planning" (115).

Through their discussion they highlight how experimental studies examine 'situational factors' of crime and deviance such as frustration, threat and reward and also highlight similarities in various forms of deviance. On the other hand, the Symbolic Interactionists examine the meaning, opportunity and motivation in situations that lead to various criminal and deviant situations such as murder, rape, robbery, pornography, extramarital affairs, drug abuse, minor property crimes and gang involvements; while in general, the theories of Opportunity such as 'situational selection' and 'victimization' examine why certain situations are more favourable for crime than others.

Smith in "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others" (2000) notes that the nineteenth century witnessed the imagined notion of black criminality that was internalized by the whites, evoking 'images of black men' engaged in killing, lynching, raping and rioting. Also, during this period, many white supremacists held the opinion or rather presumed that such 'criminality' among the black Americans stemmed from the slavery era, who indulged in criminality all the more in the absence of the type of discipline that their white masters had assumed earlier. Smith notes that, W. E. B. Du Bois as one of the leading black intellectuals stood against any such extreme and insensitive perceptions of the whites, arguing that criminality was not 'inherent' among blacks but was rather 'situational' which equally accounted for the crimes during the slavery period.

Angelou's maternal uncles Tootie, Cladwell, Tommy and Billy were known as the gun-toting bullies who would beat up any man whether black or white without a care in the world when it came to settling scores. In fact, such was the "binding quality of the Baxter blood" (*Caged Bird* 55) that in one such incident when Angelou's mother Vivian Baxter was verbally abused by a man named Pat Patterson who was known to enjoy the protection of an influential network of people, the Baxter brothers cornered him and had their sister Vivian teach him a lesson. As she was given the freedom to deal with the situation, Vivian Baxter chose to assault the man, by striking his head with a policeman's baton and leaving him severely injured, neither

with any kind of "police investigation nor social reprobation" (*Caged Bird* 55). However, even as the Baxter siblings were widely feared for their mean ways, yet they also enjoyed social acceptance in their community.

The Baxter siblings were supported by both their parents, who encouraged their mean ways for which the family was infamous for, firstly owing to their mother's influential connection with the police given her light skin (her being an octoroon) and also their father who supported them with the assurance that if they were ever arrested for fighting, he would stake everything to gain their freedom. Perhaps, he believed that his sons would defy the law only for reasons that they considered valid or when situations demanded the same. However, in contrast to the way they projected themselves as mean and violent, there was also another side to their professional and personal lives- where they had city jobs to keep and their family to look after, always moving within their own circle, singing gospels together, cracking jokes, respecting each other's freedom and standing up for each other at all times.

Another significant person in Angelou's life was Daddy Clidell who she knew was yet another name in her "Mother's roster of conquests" (*Caged Bird* 169). Clidell proved to be the fatherly figure that she never had, whom she admired for his good nature and loving ways, for he not only took pride in her as a daughter but often devoted his time for her. Thus, apart from her own mother this was the first time that she had come to share a good rapport with a guardian whom she had grown very fond of, admiring him for his humble nature, his down-to-earth personality as well as the struggles that he had narrated to her. He was also considered as a "man of honor" (169) by those who knew him well which she opined was an unusual quality and almost a "rarity" (*Caged Bird* 169) among black men.

Angelou felt comfortable in his presence and also enjoyed the company of his friends whom she considered as some of the "most colourful characters that she had met in the Black underground" (*Caged Bird* 170) with interesting street names Stonewall Jimmy, Just Black, Cool Clyde, Tight Coat and Red Leg who were introduced to her as the most successful con men in the world by Clidell. It is from their true stories that she had learnt how these men succeeded in cheating and duping white men whom they referred to as their 'mark' by using their own prejudice against them, thereby tricking them into parting with their wealth. Among the tales that

she had been entertained with, she enjoyed Red Leg's story the most where he had mentioned how both Just Black and he, after having heard of a man who "bilked" (170) countless black men in Tulsa, had decided to observe him before finalizing on whether the white man was a suitable target. The white man had revealed himself as desperate and greedy for wealth and property while expressing a subtle hatred for blacks. Therefore, the conmen in all their professionalism began to chalk down ideas in order to trick the white man into their plans. They had invested a few dollars to hire a con artist and a white boy from New York to pose as an agent of a supposed real-estate office in Tulsa.

After they had inspected a piece of land in Oklahoma which was owned by the state, Black decided to act as the 'decoy' and to present Red Leg as the 'mark' to the white man in order to trick him into confidence as per their plans. Thus, Black had approached the white man convincing him that there was a piece of land solely owned by a friend he knew (Red Leg) which the Northern estate expressed an interest in buying. However, it was only after a few meetings that Black pretended to have given away the name of the office that they had set up in Tulsa. The white man who had fallen into the trap, even contacted the office and made an effort to befriend the white agent so that they could make a fortune with this property together. In fact, he had turned so desperate for the property that when Black and Red Leg had approached him to settle a deal, he had readily agreed to close it in for a sum of forty thousand dollars. At first Red Leg who posed as the 'mark' pretended to refuse selling his land to a white man, given the fact that white Northerners were known to be so prejudiced against the blacks that made the poor blacks sleep on the streets, clean toilets with their bare hands and torture their people in innumerable ways. However, the desperate man assured him that he was much progressive in his thoughts and would also undoubtedly honour his word by paying him the settled amount. At the same time, the man had also gently reminded Red Leg that no black man was safe with heavy sums of money as the whites would not spare him if they were to somehow find out about their fortunes. Thus, after they had signed the deed and had received their money, the two men had casually checked out of their hotel in Arkansas and declared their eventual triumph over an arrogant white man who had looted black people for years. After having heard all their real life accounts, Angelou did not seem to despise or hold any form of contempt towards these criminals or rather erring con men in her opinion as she held thus,

> By all accounts these story tellers, born Black and male before the turn of the twentieth century, should have been ground to useless dust. Instead they used their intelligence to pry open the door of rejection and not only became wealthy but get some revenge in the bargain.
>
> It wasn't possible for me to regard them as criminals or be anything but proud of their achievements. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 173)

In her moments of speculation, Angelou often engaged in the mode of 'self denial' where after having bluntly described some of the most regrettable moments of her life, she would again revise or alter her earlier confessions with a new version, thereby revisiting and confronting the undeniable truth on the one hand as well as enjoying the freedom of interpreting the truths of her life on the other. Thus, only when she 'revisited' the memories of those incidents or moments of repentance or embarrassment through the series of her autobiographical texts, she is seen to engage in self justification, reinterpretation of the hard truths of her life and even shifting of blame on others just so that she could avoid her pangs of guilt and easily comfort herself. For an instance, while she clearly admits her motive of having seduced a young man in her adolescent years, in her moments of self-denial she would also blame him for not having refused her offer and for being responsible for her pregnancy. Similarly, she finds it difficult to accept that it was not just her embarrassment or "self-defense tactics" (*Gather Together* 327) against the lecherous ways of the couple Johnnie Mae and Beatrice or the influence of marijuana that she had been offered but rather a moral blunder that had actually led to her impulsive idea of setting them up as prostitutes and reaping a divided share of the money that would flow in.

Angelou's frequent tendency to rely on her impulses or instincts often spelled trouble for her as she notes, "…not only was I not a woman, but what passed for my mind was animal instinct. Like a tree or a river I merely responded to the winds and the tides" (*Gather Together* 247). Thus, she found an easier means of escaping her reality by experimenting with drugs, through a peddler in a restaurant who sold her weed. She found that purchasing drugs was not too difficult and all that it required was money and mention of any of its common names -Mary Jane, hash, pot or gauge to a dealer or peddler. In fact, all kinds of drugs and narcotics such as cocaine, opium, marijuana and heroin were easily available. Although, she had often empathized

with the black youngsters who in the desolation of their lives often lurked in street corners or alleys lost in their drug addiction, yet in time she too was drawn into similar drug abuse which felt like an easier escape from reality and relaxed her mind, even if momentarily.

Though she had gradually adapted to the pressures of her city life, she was afflicted with a sense of loneliness, made more acute by her desire and disappointment in love. She felt defenseless without the shield of her grandmother's loving protection that she had once known. Moreover, her share of disappointments in love made her more vulnerable towards her drug dependency which she had used as a means of escape rather than a youthful pleasure as she writes, "[p]ositive dreaming was introduced on long, slow drags of the narcotic. I was going to have it made ─ and no doubt through the good offices of a handsome man who would love me to distraction" (*Gather Together* 311). Drugs temporarily veiled her suffering, numbed her senses and eased her "strain" (*Gather Together* 309), the strain of competition, survival and success. She recalled a popular song of the 1930s - "Dream about a reefer five foot long" that her mother often sang, a song that described the black ghettos which "didn't condemn grass, and at its best extolled its virtues" (*Gather Together* 309).

From what had begun as an impromptu act for a dance audition, she not only found her way into being shortlisted but had also successfully made her mark in an entertainment club, where she came to enjoy much popularity. However, the world of show business where "the only way up was up" (*Gather Together* 316) had turned out to be fiercely competitive with dancers desperately trying to outsmart each other which often made her wonder if she was really cut out for a world that had proved to be- "too coarse for [her] pure and delicate nature, too commercial for [her] artistic soul" (*Gather Together* 324). While there was a time when she respected her body as a dancer with a passion for her craft, gradually, she began to rather casually accept and give into the sexual expectations of the men she liked, worked with or worked for as an 'obligation'. In fact, this was an unconscious participation of her own sexual subjugation similar to the case of the sexually deviant women in her narratives like the prostitutes, promiscuous women and even Vivian Baxter herself, who is otherwise presented in a strong light.

By virtue of her courage and intelligence of negotiating her way through the dangers of her profession, of running gambling parlors, casinos, and pool halls, Vivian Baxter had considerably made all the money that could possibly be made in order to keep her fortunes flowing. She not only owned or co-owned her gambling businesses but also employed many women in the casinos as well. Besides, Vivian Baxter was also a charitable woman who founded the Black Woman of Humanity at Stockton, was the Chairwoman of the Concerned Women for Political Action or even the board member of the United Way, San Joaquin County Blood Center Women's Center, Stockton.

Angelou thus, defined her mother's life as a prosperous one in comparison to her own life, having just begun her struggles as she said, "[a]s I scrambled around the foot of the success ladder, Mother's life flowed radiant" (*Gather Together* 316). However, even as she fancied her mother's changing partners or lovers while she herself struggled to find one, she failed to see that Baxter often invited her share of troubles owing to her carefree life. In one such incident, having invited a gambler friend John Thomas for a meal in the presence of her new lover named Good-Doing David (who shared a sense of hostility towards Thomas, her guest), the couple had an argument that ended in Vivian Baxter's assault on David as she slapped him with a knife that she had hidden in her pocket as he had dared to intimidate her with a blade. In fact, he had not intended to hurt or wound her in any way but only meant to threaten and express his anger to her as she would always have her way in everything. Vivian's immediate reaction had resulted in her police arrest but it had hardly bothered her as she had hardly expressed any sense of regret or repentance at her actions. Vivian Baxter was one woman who would never cower in fear, spare any person who threatened her or forgive anyone who happened to rain on her parade.

Angelou remembered that her mother had never disapproved of any form of work as long as it had a purpose, often repeating the advice to her: "Be the best of anything you can get into. If you want to be a whore, it's your life. Be a damn good one. Don't chippy at anything. Anything worth having is worth working for" (*Caged Bird* 247). Vivian Baxter had herself worked her way up from poverty, surviving the risks that came with running gambling businesses, negotiating her troubles with the law or police, managing her finances and finding prosperity to be able to help others in her community. She believed it was pointless to cry over one's fate of

being born into poverty, of suffering the marginalities that black women faced both within their own community and in their larger society with its disempowering structures of systemic disadvantaging, racial oppression, social inequalities, deprivation and alienation that plagued their existence. Thus, these words of advice to her daughter were rooted in a certain context, that also stemmed from the difficult experiences of working class black women which if taken for its literal meaning or analyzed out of its context would perhaps lose its significance as a sensible piece of advice from a mother to a daughter.

It was not like Angelou had literally internalized her mother's popular piece of advice, but rather her emotional vulnerabilities that had caught her in the wrong. For the first time in her life, Angelou had become involved in the "thirty-second business" (*Gather Together* 345) of prostitution at Clara's whorehouse in Stockton. A brief meeting with L.D. Tolbrook had eventually resulted in her moral and personal compromise of working as a prostitute. Tolbrook was of her father's age with an air of a black Episcopalian preacher who under his dignified guise of a gentleman was a devious person. The old man had won Angelou's confidence by hiding from her the nature of his work as a pimp and a con man. However, she had known of his gambling involvements and had also learnt of his huge gambling losses of around five thousand dollars which had resulted in his desperate need of money in order to save himself from trouble. Tolbrook had apparently requested a white family at Shreveport to lend him some money, which was agreed upon by the white lady who had secretly been in love with him for a long time. However, this was on the condition that he would have to continue working for them, while also secretly fulfilling her desires. And if this story was true, it also reflects how white women took advantage of their situations- knowing all too well that they were safe from being implicated in their romantic involvement or their sexual escapades with black men and worse, they could easily shift blame in their defense in order to get away easily.

However, sensing the danger to his life and the possible risks of him being lynched by the whites, Angelou had instantly decided to give into the 'finer point of sacrifice' by helping him repay his debts. Although, it was her unconditional love for the man that had led her into a decision against her moral principles, yet in Tolbrook's case it was only a sense of desperation and self-interest that had led him to use her as a profitable bait. Her eventual decision to take up

prostitution in order to help her man free himself from his debts also reveals the role of 'emotions' in determining 'decisions' and 'choices'. The factor of emotions or emotional bonding also characterized the nature of women's 'relationships' or 'ties' that is considered to have the potential to have led them or push them towards crime and deviance. Such realities of women like Angelou who were blindly led into rash decisions of committing offenses is also supported by the findings of Steffensmeier and Allan who significantly note:

> Situational pressures such as threatened loss of valued relationships may play a greater role in female offending. Although the saying "she did it all for love" is sometimes overplayed in reference to female criminality, the role of initiating women into crime ─ especially serious crime ─ is a consistent finding across research. (467)

In fact, it was only when Tolbrook had mentioned (with the motive of indirectly suggesting and manipulating her thoughts) the instance of a man named Head Up who had earlier involved his wife in a house at Santa Barbara in order to make quick money and in a month's time had repaid his debts to the Big Boys, that the thought of 'prostitution' had actually crossed her mind and struck Angelou as a definite option that could save her lover's financial crisis.

Thus, Tolbrook had made quick arrangements at Clara's whorehouse asking the manager Clara to ensure that Angelou took up a professional name and did not conceal her face under make-up as the other girls did. Here, she had first learnt the tricks of the trade from Clara and Bea, noting that their clients were also referred to as 'tricks' and that the nature of their work was literally 'tricking' their clients into believing them and taking them into confidence. Gradually, she began to experience a sense of disorientation with the bleak ambience at Clara's whorehouse, the thoughts of lying undressed with strangers, the compulsions of repeating her 'tricks' or acts several times in a day, the nauseating smell of Lysol that was meant for washing her clients and the inability to associate herself with the girl that she had once been- the innocent girl from the South. Despite the sense of fragmentation and her severe depression, she tried hard to focus on the main 'purpose' of this temporary arrangement in order to keep these disturbing thoughts at bay and from haunting her mind continuously.

Though, Tolbrook had prevented her from smoking grass when she initially started prostitution at Clara's whorehouse, it was not out of his love and concern for her just as she had thought but the fact, that he knew well how smoking grass could make a woman frisky. In fact, when Bailey had eventually learnt of the nature of her work, he warned Angelou that if the man had refused her grass, it was only a matter of time that he would introduce her to cocaine to dull her senses, as also revealed in her own conversation with Bea. It was then that Angelou had received the news that her child had been kidnapped and was compelled to leave her work behind. This was when for the first time she had noticed Tolbrook's altered behaviour towards her, where he had transformed from the gentle old lover that she had known all along to the dominating 'daddy' who suddenly seemed free to insult her for even daring to approach him for help at his home. When Angelou had met his wife for just a moment at the door, it occurred to her that the woman in all probability knew all about her and was probably an accomplice in his plans as well. It was only when he had ultimately revealed the truth in his rage about Clara being his woman that it dawned on her on how she had had been cheated all along by a man whom she had trusted with all her heart. However, even as she shuddered at the thought that a lover could be so cold and calculative- a man who was almost her father's age and whom she loved selflessly, she realized that this was no time for her to suffer the angst of her broken heart but to set out in search of her son. She had thus, promised herself that she would never leave her child helpless and alone ever again.

Eventually, it turns out to be a man from the underworld, Troubadour Martin who exposes her to the realities of the underworld by taking her to a drug joint and showing her the condition of drug groupies, and the effect of this slow poison on their lives, including himself. This forms the turning point of her life in the underworld, which makes her realize the need to bring about a new change in the circumstances of her life and change herself for the better. Thus, as she regains her composure and retraces her steps from the edges of the underworld, she writes: "The life of the underworld was truly a rat race, and most of its inhabitants scurried like rodents in the sewers and gutters of the world, I had walked the precipice and seen it all; and at the critical moment, one man's generosity pushed me safely away from the edge" (*Gather Together* 384).

A serious concern in the texts takes into account, the apparent patriarchal and paternalistic attitudes both in the underworld and "upperworld" (Humphries and Wallace 446) of give-and-take, where apparently everything came with a rider, in which 'sex' was considered just another norm. In highlighting the (mis)representations, as well as, the 'politics' of representation of the black woman's body and sexuality, Desiree Lewis in "Against the Grain" (2005), notes the ways in which the image of black woman's body is made to fit into predefined notions of beauty and is subjected to voyeurism, provocation, exploration and gratification as widely prevalent instances of gender bias as well as the exploitation of woman's body and sexuality. The conversations at Clara's brothel between the characters of Clara and Bea, also highlights the tragic plight of prostitutes who lived in the disillusion of a leading a better life with their 'daddy', who not only robbed them of their dignity in every possible way but also splurged on their earnings and their little savings as well. Angelou herself had work for a month's time at Clara's brothel having assumed the name of 'Sugar'- without realizing that she had been victimized and entrapped into prostitution by her lover. In this regard, Steffensmeier and Allan in "Gender and Crime" (1996) provide an insight into such a situation where they discuss the role of men in engaging, manipulating, exploiting and even compelling women into crime which they consider as a consistent finding across empirical research.

Although she knew well that she had made moral compromises owing to certain compulsions, yet she still valued the importance of being morally upright which could also be described as her first nature. To cite an instance, while working at Clara's, she had met an old lady who worked there as a cook or perhaps a helper and who strikingly resembled her grandmother and whenever she would arrive to place her meals on the table, Angelou would fidget around in her discomfort finding it impossible to look at her eye-to-eye, given her own sense of moral guilt. Again in a similar instance, Angelou had often lied to her landlady named Mother Cleo about her strange timings and whereabouts making excuses of having a new man in her life (while in reality being involved in unlawful activities); however, she would still expect the old woman to be strict with her thinking: "with so many unexpected things happening I would be very unhappy to see Mother Cleo's morals slip" (*Gather Together* 273). In fact, Angelou had always valued moral propriety in people. However, she was never judgmental

towards all the criminals or deviants that she had known or even considered herself prudent enough to measure anyone by any means of moral yardstick.

In one of her significant essays titled "Violence" (2009) Angelou decries the violence of rape, and lashes out against sociologists and social scientists who consider rape "not a sexual act" (45) but rather as the "need to be powerful" (45). Thus, while explaining the psyche of sexual violators, she asserts her opinion that the floating of such ideas and propositions ran the risk of influencing the social consciousness, as well as, changes in the law as she writes,

> We must call the ravening act of rape, the bloody, heart–stopping, breath snatching, bone crushing act of violence which it is. The threat makes some female and male victims unable to open their front doors, unable to venture into streets in which they grew up, unable to trust other human beings and even themselves. Let us call it a violent unredeemable sexual act. (46)

Angelou was a victim of rape in her childhood who as a little girl could not comprehend what had transpired between her and her violator Mr. Freeman, who was also in a relationship with her mother. He had threatened her into silence, leaving her frightened as a child, half in fear of what had happened to her and half owing to his threat of killing her brother in case she revealed what he had done to her. As a child, she had always anticipated the fear of being cornered by strangers and in all her innocence had also formulated ready emotional phrases to be spoken in self-defense. However, when such a brutal incident had actually taken place, she could not even understand what had happened to her at that moment, let alone utter a word in her own defense. In time, when her family learnt about the incident, Freeman was sued, tried in court and sentenced to a year's imprisonment but ironically, he had managed his bail the same afternoon with the help of his lawyer.

However even before he could serve his sentence, he was found to have died under mysterious circumstances, supposedly being kicked to death as the police had speculated having found his lifeless body behind a slaughter house. Although, Angelou does not clearly mention who was responsible for Freeman's death, yet she notes the lack of surprise or shock and the indifferent response of grandmother Baxter when she is informed about the news of his death by

a policeman, as a hint of the possible involvement of the Baxter brothers who were known to never miss a chance when it came to avenging themselves on anyone who happened to wrong them or anyone in their family. However, as a child, Angelou was so sensitive that she blamed herself for Freeman's death, feeling extremely guilty at the thought that her disclosure of the truth, just one utterance had ended up taking a person's life. In fact, following this incident, she had slipped into a period of trauma in which she had almost lost her voice, until the support of her grandmother and her mentor Mrs. Bertha Flowers as well as her love for books had enabled her to regain her old self.

In sharp contrast to this terrorizing incident of her life, Angelou as a young adolescent had stepped into the role of a 'perpetrator' before she could realize the severity of her plans when she acted as an 'absentee-manager' to the couple Beatrice and Johnnie Mae who had partly worked as prostitutes. In the course of her interaction with them during her visit to their apartment, she had learnt that they were both lesbians who partially engaged in prostitution, entertaining only two customers per night in order to earn a few dollars (which in Chesney Lind's term it may be defined as "survival sex" 6) and were keen on shifting their home, given their land-lords' dislike of gay couples. The couple had failed to realize that they had made Angelou thoroughly uncomfortable and embarrassed with their display of affection, their sense of frivolity, their silly conversations and small talk while also encouraging her to smoke marijuana along with them. However, when they seemed to enjoy seeing her choke and gasp for breath after her first puff, Angelou had instantly decided to avenge herself for their insensitivity towards her since she had arrived and teach the couple a good lesson.

It was precisely at this moment that she had come up with a plan of involving them as full-time prostitutes who were to work for four days a week while she would ensure that a well-paid cab driver would bring in the potential customers to their apartment. Although she had not pre-planned this by any means yet she welcomed the thought of involving them in a deal that would prove to be mutually beneficial where she would enjoy her share of the money without even indulging in their sinful ways. Thus, the three young women welcomed their new prospects of earning a fortune because they had all stacked their plans for their future. While Angelou had dreamt of a comfortable life for her child, the kind that she never had; Johnnie Mae and Beatrice

had plans of opening up a burger joint and later a restaurant of their own. In fact, both the acceptance and execution of their deal, reflects their child-like desperation to fulfill their dreams by any means even if it involved a brush with the law. Moreover, Angelou's misappropriation of their money to buy herself a luxury car when she had been trusted with the safekeeping of their money reflects her sense of dishonesty and her slipping morals that she had never known earlier. Angelou had been so blinded by her desperation and inexperience that she had failed to realize how she had committed a wrong against two unassuming women and worse, had 'entrapped' them into their roles of indulging in unlawful activities. Thus, Angelou is seen to slip into a role that she had always despised since her childhood i.e., the role of an 'oppressor' further manipulating, as well as, victimizing two young individuals.

Angelou problematizes her narrative by revealing how most of the characters described in the autobiographies are unpredictable in terms of their behavioural patterns and their disposition and how most of these problematic figures (including herself) were elusive and went beyond fixed definitions of their identity, constantly camouflaging their roles and thereby, consistently redefining themselves. Also, most of the characters that figure in her autobiographies are not only vulnerable to the oppressive social forces but also lack immunity from the world of crime and deviance. Angelou's portrayal of these problematic incidences instead of brushing them aside as irrelevant bits of anecdotes in her larger narrative reveals the importance of highlighting the pertinent issues and aspects of female offending and female delinquency as well. Significantly, Lanctot and Blanc while exploring the gender gap in criminal and deviant activities, together with factors accounting for these differences, as well as, deviant and delinquent trajectories notes that 'theories of criminology' tend to be mostly 'male-centric' in nature and treatment. While these theories can be extended to the study of both female criminal or deviant behaviour, social control and social learning theories are still relevant to the study of women and deviance. Further, Steffensmeier and Allan in explaining the gender gap between male and female offending note that,

> [T]he female offend less than males: because they are less subject than males to the cultural emphasis on material success (anomie); because they are less exposed to influence from delinquent peers (differential association and/or social learning); because

> they have stronger bonds and are subjected to greater supervision (social control); and because they are less likely to become involved in gangs (transmission culture). (472-473)

However, if the same insights are extended to the representations of the female criminality and deviance in the textual representations, the women are seen to be ambitious with regard to achieving their social goals, they reflect a tendency to easily negotiate their position and thrive in the networks of crime or deviant circles, their social bonds or ties are severed and they are seen to be independent with regard to their choices, and also the complexities of their experience is seen to hold the potential of leading them into subcultures which makes them equally vulnerable towards or involved in crime, deviance or violence as their male counterparts.

Social pressures or strain can potentially give rise to deviant behaviour and in the sociological context, what defines deviance or deviant tends to differ across social and cultural contexts. Thus, Cressey notes that "[s]ince criminal behaviour is thus developed in association with criminals it means that crime is the cause of crime" (6). Significantly, Sutherland et. al. (1992) in their discussion of criminology, crime and what defines a criminal or criminality notes a difference between 'crime' and 'tort' thus,

> In the conventional view, a crime is an offense against the state, while a tort is an offense against an individual. A particular act may be regarded as an offense against both an individual and the state, and is either a tort or a crime or both, depending on the way it is handled. (6)

While discussing the major theories of criminology, Georges-Abeyie (1969) notes the theories forwarded from the psychological and biological perspectives are found in Hirschi's theory (1969) of inner control and personality traits acquired through socialization as well as Wilson and Herrnstein's theory (1985) on criminogenic factors such as intelligent quotient, temper and hormonal factors etc. He also notes the significance of some of the major sociological perspectives that are covered by Cohen's theory of subculture (1955), Cloward and Ohlin's differential opportunity (1960), Becker's labeling theory (1963), Merton's anomie theory (1968), Sutherland and Cressey's differential association (1978) (37).

The French social scientist Emile Durkheim who is also considered as one of the founding figures of sociology is associated with the 'theory of anomie', a term that referred to the disintegration as well as crises of social norms and moral values in the society. Barker notes that a serious concern that was expressed by Durkheim was centered on the possibilities of the urban society turning into "site[s] of moral decay and anomie" (379) thereby causing social disturbance and unrest through the various categories of crime and deviance. Stephen Turner in the introduction to *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist and Moralist* (1993) highlights Durkheim's work titled *The Elementary Forms of the Religious* Life (1912) which reflected similar concerns of social disintegration while extending the optimism that "[c]risis of social integration are overcome in moments in which change and moral regeneration are possible, and these are the mainspring of the civilizing process" (10).

Durkheim's anomie theory as Abrams notes had also inspired the American sociologist Robert K. Merton's 'strain theory' which held that deviance resulted from conflicting situations or 'anomie' when the legitimate 'means' stands at loggerheads with the 'social goals'. As a result of this conflict, Merton identified five different types of reactions namely conformity, ritualism, innovation, retreatism and rebellion. While conformity and ritualism referred to the adherence of the conventional means of achieving social goals, the latter were regarded as deviant reactions. The factor of innovation referred to the flouting of social norms in order to achieve goals, retreatism defined the complete withdrawal from the dominant social norms and social goals and 'rebellion' stood as a complete defiance from this dominant social process further leading to the formation of subcultures.

Albert K. Cohen, the American sociologist examined subcultural groups in his work titled *Delinquent Boys: Culture of the Gang* (1955) and forwarded his theory of subcultures that highlighted the disadvantageous and alienating factors which often led to the formation of rebellious or even deviant groups inclined towards forming their own distinct identities, defining their own norms, rejecting the established norms of the repressive society and establishing their allegiance to a reliable group of people with shared similarities in terms of social experiences. Cohen who was also taught by Merton extended his strain theory to show how strained experiences among the youth particularly those belonging to the working classes led them

towards forming subcultures through which they defined their own status and established their identities against the dominant and repressive society that alienated them or negated their existence.

In this context, Barker in highlighting Thornton's observation on the use of the prefix 'sub' in subculture that is suggestive of similar terms or references such as "subaltern" or "subterranean" notes that, "[s]ubcultures have been seen as spaces for deviant cultures to renegotiate their position or to win space for themselves" (410). Further, in their discussion on the formation of subcultures and the factors that lead to the development of delinquent norms, Cloward and Ahlin identify three different types of subcultural delinquency namely 'criminal subculture' that resorts to illegal activities for sustenance, 'conflict subculture' that resorts to violence as a means of self-assertion and 're-treatist subculture' that involves drug retreats all of which are at loggerheads with the social norms and sanctions of the dominant society (1). They also note that 'delinquent subcultures' which are categorized under 'deviant subcultures' involve adolescent deviant behaviour listed as "truancy, profanity, property destruction, petty theft, illicit sexual experiences, disorderly conduct, and drunkenness" (5) which legally amounts to juvenile delinquency.

With regard to the 'theory of differential association' Donald Cressey notes that it was first published in the third edition of *Principles of Criminology* (1939) which held that difference in socio-cultural values determined the difference in behavioural patterns acquired through the process of socialization. Similar to the development of lawful behaviour in society, criminality or criminal behaviour was considered to develop in "association with criminals" or criminality (6) which Edwin W. Sutherland opined was a direct result of the 'conflicts' or "inconsistencies in culture" (3). Significantly, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi in their 'theory of self-control' (1990) considered 'self-control' as the distinct factor that led to criminal and delinquent behaviour which Tittle et al. describe as the ability to exercise individual control or restraint when faced with the opportunity of engaging in criminal or deviant activities in "Self Control and Crime/Deviance" (2003). Also, they note that factors such as peer-groups, social relations, strain, morality, motivation among others do not necessarily influence criminality or deviance and their equation with self control is not necessarily causal or deterministic in nature.

According to Walsch and Hemmens the condition of low self-control is defined by the characteristics of selfish interest, desperation, adventurous desire, quick temptation, lack of foresight and tendency of taking up risks which considerably leads to the occurrence of crime and delinquency (150).

Hirschi further held that both 'self-control' and 'social control' which were centered on the 'role of family' were also inter-related based on the social bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement and belief or conformity with social codes (151-152). While discussing social control at length, Chriss delves on social control theories and also highlights Durkheim's ideas that stemmed from his concerns of alarming social problems or "social pathologies─ suicide, divorce, poverty, homelessness, mental illness, crime, violence, and drug use and abuse" (17) which held urban life at risk, with the rising trend of moral disintegration. Durkheim in his seminal work *Suicide* (1897), had identified different categories of suicide viz. egoistic suicide (mostly arising from devaluation of self, society and social bonds), altruistic suicide (ready to take one's own life for a larger social cause), anomic suicide (stemming from personal confusion or moral dilemma) and fatalistic suicide (preference to die than to suffer).

Significantly, Walsch and Hemmens in their tabulation of social theories also mention the concept of 'neutralization' whereby criminals and delinquents tend to "neutralize" (157) their sense of guilt, constantly fluctuating between what is considered as 'pro-social' and 'anti-social'. Further, with regard to self-control they also note thus,

> Low self-control is established early in childhood, tends to persist throughout life, and is the result of incompetent parenting. It is important to realize that children do not learn low self-control; low self control is the default outcome that occurs in the absence of adequate socialization (150).

As discussed by Colvin and Pauly, some of the significant sociological theories that explain the central aspects of crime and deviance in a nutshell are namely: learning theory which considers criminality as a learned behaviour; strain theory which examines the disjuncture in social goals and the means to achieve them; control theory that considers insulating factors which controls crime and deviance; labeling theory in which crime and deviance are examined as social

constructs; conflict theory that defines a clash of social interests; radical criminology that considers society as inevitably dominated by the powerful ruling class; and integrated theories that weave various strands of criminological strands together.

While noting the elusive nature of crime, Downes and Rock discuss how the major sociological theories draw direct or indirect influences from the works of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber. Through their analysis of 'social reaction' and aspects of 'social integration' in pre-industrial as well as post-industrial society, they note the "socially ambiguous" patterns of behaviour of the established powerful in a society such as white collar crime, vandalism or other such forms of 'secondary' deviance that carefully escapes the established law (353). Significantly, Beirne in "Empiricism and the Critique of Marxism on Law and Crime" (1979) discusses the emergence of Marxist literature by Bonger, Renna and Gramsci which were centered on theorizing crime and law in the context of the capitalist mode of production, after a period of political instability of the 1960s and the period saw some of the emerging perspectives on conflict theories and New Criminology. Some of the significant works in the 1920s by Russian thinkers like Berlin and Krylenko were centered on criminal law and modes of production, which were not translated for long and therefore unavailable to a wide readership. Gradually, social deviance came to be studied and analyzed in relation to certain ideological factors that influenced it.

Beirne notes that Labeling theorists or the 'sociologists of deviance' such as Howard Becker in his discussion of the labeling theory examined and provided a new insight on how 'deviance' was a form of 'social construction'. In this regard, Malcolm Spector in his discussion on the contributions of Howard Becker mentions the first three papers published in this area of 'labeling theory' namely: "Social Reaction to Deviant Behavior: Problems of Theory and Method" (1962) by Kitsuse, "Notes on Sociology of Deviance" (1962) by Kai. T. Erikson and "A Note on the Use of Official Statuses (1963) by Kitsuse and Cicourel, which were all published in the journal *Social Problems* edited by Becker. Some of the other journals that published findings and research on crime and deviance were namely *The Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *American Sociological Review*, *American Sociologist* and *Urban Life and Culture*.

Among various other significant strands of sociological theory, Beirne highlights David Jacobs' analysis on how the socially, as well as, the economically powerful, were inclined towards exercising political influence in moulding the 'law' and 'criminal codes' to their own advantage. Further, Pat O'Malley in highlighting the central concepts in Marxist criminology, conceptual status of crime which is "open ended construct with ambiguous boundaries" (75), highlights the concerns of state power versus criminality, analysis of organized crime that include drugs and narcotics, crime rackets, illegal gambling, corporate crimes etc., noting how the Marxist criminologists were confronted with the problem of taking into account the 'international character' of crime as well as a wider 'global' production relations in place of the national.

While examining the Marxist view of man in which man as *homo laborans* engaged in the labour process is the "motor of the society" (223) Kovel, notes that according to this view, man is an active and self appropriating agent and instead of universalizing the self in society, it is important to overcome the class society and its alienation. The humanists viewed the labouring man as rather pre-defined and "stunted" (233) by capitalist forces. Marxist vision of man held that 'dialectical psychology' in man was indeed necessary which was not attached to 'subjectivity' but at the same time bore a 'subjective resistance' to class society together with the desire to be free. From the psychological point of view, Marx had examined the relation between the 'miser' and the 'capitalist' whom he considered similar in regarding the characteristics of greed and chase which were common to both, with the only difference being that- "the miser [was] merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist [was] a rational miser" (227).

Focusing on the Marxist ideas of 'just distribution' Sadurski in the article, "To Each According to His (Genuine?) Needs" (1983), examines and questions the aspects of basic and non basic needs, genuine and false needs as well as the difference between objective needs and subjective desires. Also, he notes that the Marxist formula of 'just distribution' that stands as a problem owing to the difficulty of defining higher non-basic needs such as the needs for leisure, self-realization, satisfaction and cultural development as well as self-development. Moreover, in "Marxist Criminology in the 1970s" (1983), Hinch discusses the initial lack of clarity in Marxist Criminology with regard to class, crime and criminology in the 1970s, as also reflected in the

criminological literature of the time; however, during the 1980s it had acquired newer insights. Thus, Hinch highlights the difference between the radical and the Marxist approaches with their different positions regarding the relation between class and crime. While Radical Criminologists like Turk, Hills, Chambliss, Quinney, Ericson, Krisberg, Hepburn, Taylor, Walton and Young among others argued the 'inevitability' of class relations and capitalist society, which the Marxists refuted who considered the possibilities of a wider 'scope' of social change. Also, many criminologists such as Bakunin and Quinney had even considered the 'revolutionary' aspect of crime by examining criminal acts as a form of 'class struggle', arising out of a system of 'constant repression'. However, Hinch opines that such views ran the risk of 'romanticizing' crime and that the development of crime patterns in direct relation or proportion to the inherent social conflicts demanded a comprehensive study in terms of the 'dialectical' nature of crime and its control.

According to Erich Goode, the theoretical works of the 1960s and 1970s on crime and deviance had lost the promise that it held earlier. In the initial years of developing deviance studies, the 'interactionists' (also referred to as 'labeling theorists') opined that the factors of 'stigma' and 'labeling' prevented deviants from desisting or discontinuing acts of deviance. In the early 1970s, the influence of 'new criminology' (alternately referred to as radical, critical or Marxist criminology) was severely criticized by both Marxist and non-Marxist theorists for its lofty idealism. Goode opines that none of the theoretical trends that followed whether it was new criminology or feminist theory of deviance among others had succeeded in re-awakening the kind of interest that was stirred in the 1960s and 1970s. Goode suggests that Jack Katz's book titled *Seductions of Crime* (1988) had partially filled in that longstanding gap with his theoretical perspectives which in a gist held that- "criminal behavior cannot possibly be understood or explained without grasping how it is experienced or what it means to the actor" (7).

Also, Katz in his work explored the motives, motivations and perspectives of murderers, robbers, urban youth gangs and other offenders. Thus, advocating the revival of sociology of deviance as an academic field of study and research, he writes that despite the pessimistic claims of leading sociologists on the death of the discipline, it is here to stay and in fact, cannot be written off too easily as it is rooted in social realities. In fact, Erich Goode agrees with

sociologist Anne Hendershott's assertion that deviance is being revisited once again by academicians, as well as, growing with participatory narratives of families and communities confirming its significance, reality and presence.

Goode also notes that Hendershott's work titled *The Politics of Deviance* (2002) highlights the relevance of the field while also tracing its historical development and arguments forwarded by the sociological theories of deviance. It was the publication of Howard S. Becker's *Outsiders* (1963) and *The Other Side* (1964) that had "jet-propelled the field of sociology of deviance into limelight of academic prominence" (48). Amidst the rampant criticism that followed, Colin Summer wrote a volume as an "obituary" of the field in 1994, in which he declared that the sociology of deviance invalidated its own purpose and practicality (50). However, Sociology of deviance as a field had only lost the intellectual fervor of the 1970s and held the promise of stirring new academic interests and pursuits. Thus, throughout his concerns on possible ways to revive sociology of deviance as a thriving field, Goode expresses his optimism that the field will grow through further interdisciplinary exchanges, engage in important micro-ethnographic studies and conduct productive research.

Therefore, crime and deviance which form serious concerns of any given social context does require a sort of detangling and comprehensive understanding of its complexities and workings instead of being brushed aside to the margins of academic discourses or more specifically literary and sociological concerns. Crime and deviance are symptomatic of a diseased society and form undeniable pathologies of any society, being in serious conflict with its social structures, systems, intersections, inadequacies, inequalities and injustice etc. therefore, it requires further exploration in order to progress towards finding solutions that would prevent the dangers they pose to the moral fabric of human societies. In fact, Literature too mirrors the society and represents social realities drawing heavily from human life and casting it into its fictional mould. Most importantly a literary text opens up multiple interpretations and also invites enriching perspectives taken from multiple disciplines.

Taking into consideration the black attitudes to crime in the autobiographies, with little opportunities that came their way, the lower classes in the black urban ghettos had to live within their means, conforming to the complex patterns of their lives; creating alternate modes of living

through the formation of subcultures; resorting to crime and unlawful activities against an unjust system of hierarchies; asserting their subversive 'power' against the oppression of the powerful whites; and even 'avenging' themselves in a way by taking recourse to violent modes of crime and deviance. Moreover, given their early socialization in an oppressive society, racial prejudices, social inequalities, conflict of goals and interests, social anxiety, as well as, family histories of criminal or deviant practices among other such factors often created a 'dangerous trap' that almost entangled the most disadvantaged, alienated, marginalized and the most vulnerable of the society. Moreover, Reiman (1984) notes that "[c]ritical criminological analysts remind us that the crimes of the powerless are more numerous than those of the privileged only if we fail to remember that "a crime by another name – (is still a crime)"" (see Darnell xviii).

Thus, starting from childhood experiences to adult 'socialization', these tend to have far reaching influences on criminal propensities and deviance as also suggested by Sampson and Laub, which are determined by various factors of transitions, trajectories, adaptability, stability, continuity and sequence of life events over a longitudinal period of time. A close reading of the narratives reveals that most of the represented characters in the autobiographies may be considered as 'deviants' with criminal propensities even as a handful are seen to be hardened criminals. These offenders are mostly members of the black ghettos, representing the low-life, creating strategies of survival yet being unable to free themselves from being entrapped in the complexities of their situations. In this context, crime and deviance seems to operate as just another means of work, engagement, livelihood, sustenance as well as a mode of 'power' in these circles. Most of the characters are seen chasing one goal or the other and against some competitor or the other in their web of existence.

According to Piven, "[t]he deviant is a socialized person who accepts, believes, and feels that one is what one has been defined as being, and goes on to organize life patterns around that stigmatized identity" (494). In case of Angelou, even if she does not record having faced any form of social stigma or social anxiety similar to the other characters in her narratives, having undergone extremely disturbing experiences in her life from her brutal rape to prostitution, it took her a considerable time to heal before she could move ahead from these difficult phases of her life and regain her old composure and redefine herself. In Angelou's trajectory of

experiences, her social-relations and socialization in the environment of the black ghetto as an adolescent considerably layers her perspectives and experiences where she finds herself constantly divided between her determination or will power and vulnerability, moral values and her practical needs, her choices and her compulsions, her romanticisms and the need for survival.

Angelou who struggled to make ends meet and divided her time between her work pressures and her child who was always left in someone else's care found little time for herself and for some amount of serious self introspection during her adolescent years. Having to confront the practicalities of life and trusting her own sense of direction, she weighed her options as best as she could, often recalling her grandmother's words and her mother's witticisms that always guided her through her severe moments of crisis. She had also known well that she alone had to renew her fortitude every day, reassure herself that the difficult circumstances of her life would pass her by, step out of her comfort zone and push her limits in the hope that she might chance upon new enriching experiences. Also, she had felt that the little formal education that she had earned was not necessarily a disadvantage as long as she could put her mind to its best use and make her life worthwhile as she says, "[t]he quality of strength lined with tenderness [was] an unbeatable combination, as [were] intelligence and necessity when unblunted by formal education" (*Caged Bird* 168).

Thus, the chapter unravels the serious concerns of crime and deviance that emerges from Angelou's autobiographical texts which in highlighting some of the textual representations of characters and relevant incidents also provides some of the critical perspectives drawn from the major sociological theories. As the aspects of crime and deviance are situated in the general social context of America and the particular context of the American Black community, these concerns cannot be studied in isolation and hence, attempts to focus and delve into the black experience that seeks to explore and provide a rounded approach to the black consciousness. In this regard, LaFree and Drass suggest that arguments posited by the various social theorists highlight the 'social forces' or factors responsible for the prevalence of crime and deviance in America and significantly highlight that- post war America and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s also provides ample scope of study with regard to the aspects of crime and deviance.

Angelou had emerged as a stronger and a wiser person despite her mixed set of experiences at the fringes of the underworld, where she was as much the victim as the violator, feeling as entrapped in circumstances as liberated, being as disoriented in her crises as adaptive to the modes of survival and suffering as many disillusionments as also gaining a sense of self-enlightenment. Through her first-hand experience of life in the underworld, she not only gained an insider's view of the underworld but also understood what it was like to be in the position of criminals and deviants thereby also discovering the saving graces in some of these figures that struggled in the darkness- in the "underbelly" (*Gather Together* 230) of urban life. Angelou hardly suffered any form of bitterness towards anyone she had encountered in this difficult journey of traversing the murky world of crime and had accepted all of these experiences as lessons for life, while moving ahead with the "patient philosophy of the black south" that held: "Take it easy, but take it" (*Gather Together* 236).

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Chapter III

Black Experiences in the Autobiographies of Maya Angelou

"I speak to the black experience, but I am always talking about the human condition— about what we can endure, dream, fail at and still survive."

(Maya Angelou in an interview with David Dillon)

Maya Angelou lived in intellectually stimulating times during the 1960s when every bar and bookstore had literally turned into an international hub of intellectuals, artists, writers and young beats. It was a time when San Francisco became a hub of artists, beat poets, impersonators, Broadway actors, political folk singers and fearless comedians. There was a charged spirit and atmosphere in cities like Paris, London, Chicago, Washington D.C. and Philadelphia which were landmarks of "transnational black activism" (Gaines 29) with both black and white children joining protest marches and liberation offices and moving ahead with the times. Meeting the opportunity of joining as a coordinator of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Angelou had also found the opportunity to work for Martin Luther King Jr. and significantly contribute to the larger struggle of the black people.

The textual representations in her autobiographical narratives, and in fact most of her literary works are saturated with her insight into the problems of race relations, not just at the surface level of the established social structures that define the American social context but also at a much deeper level, that reveal a complex pattern of everyday realities, negotiated by blacks at both the collective and at the individual level. A close reading of the autobiographical texts together with her poetry and reflective essays provides her welcome access into the realm of her thoughts and an understanding of the world through her experiences and perspectives. As Ronald W. Bailey notes in his description of the emergence of Black Studies in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) the period of slavery and slave emancipation, segregation in the Southern states and mass migration to the Northern cities were some of the significant phases in the chapters of Black history that had a shaping influence on the larger black experience and had also found a significant reflection in the literary works of black writers.

While negotiating her position as a black individual, Angelou had also presented a minute description of what it felt like to be in the position of a black person, to be a regular victim of racial prejudice, constantly grappling with questions of identity, being rejected on the grounds of colour, surviving the injustice of social inequalities, witnessing the bitterness of racial hatred, living in times of racial conflict and dealing with the disturbing impact of race consciousness that afflicted the American society. Angelou had thus, engaged herself in the challenging task of detailing the nuances of her experiences through her flowing narration and numerous discussions on race, racism, and race relations. The impact of racial anxieties was so extensive at the larger level where it concerned the collective experiences of her people and as intensive in terms of her own personal experiences at the individual level, that true to her conscience Angelou had come to articulate the undeniable truths of black experiences and dilemmas that had preoccupied their existence.

Where it concerned black identity, whether it was the aspect of black self-expression mediated through literature and the creative arts, or the aspect of defining self-hood through black freedom struggles in the political history of America, it is certain that these literary, creative, socio-political movements were all rooted in the assertion of the black identity in the American society and the importance of arriving at a definite form of 'identity'. Sandra Carlton Alexander in the *Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) also defines the concept of 'identity' as the search for self and its relationship to social contexts and realities" (379) that have been significantly reflected in the literary works of black intellectuals and writers. Throughout her autobiographies Angelou emphasizes on the importance of celebrating blackness, black identity and also a humanitarian spirit.

At a personal level, Angelou in her adolescent years is seen to struggle with the constant feeling of being a 'misfit' in all sense of the word and of being thrown into a "maelstrom of rootlessness" (*Swingin' and Singin'* 426) that she felt had to be addressed instead of being suffered in silence. With first hand experiences of racial prejudice and social inequalities at all levels, Angelou had to struggle her way into negotiating her identity, through her experience of an unjust world that neglected and nullified both the talent and potential of black people, with black women constantly suffering multiple marginalization. She highlights how the powerful

whites always took the black pool of talent for granted, reinforcing the belief that they had no credibility and that there was nothing unusual about it. From her individual experiences and her practicalities of life similar to the lives of countless black men and women like her, she came to realize that "no race could sing and dance its way to freedom" (*Heart of a Woman* 685). Thus, she had decided to be a part of the black political struggle in the strong belief that it was time for her people to not only assert their rights or press for freedom but also to transform their lives by transforming themselves. There were exemplary figures like W.E.B. Du Bois who had emerged as one of the first American Black intellectual defining 'the talented tenth' in 1903, whom they looked up to while also admiring Paul Leroy Robeson for the spirit with which he had significantly contributed to the black struggle.

The Civil Rights Movement in America had taken place alongside the fight against Apartheid in Africa. Angelou notes that while in Africa, sixteen million black Africans were controlled by three million whites, black Americans were just one tenth of the American population who were up in arms against the racial injustice that they had to confront at all levels. Angelou was active during the politically charged period of the 1960s as she unravels in *The Heart of a Woman.* At this point of her life, her son was barely fifteen years old and had begun to provide for the family, while she struggled with her activism, nurturing her passionate desire to stage a fundraising show even as her finances were completely drained. Her friend John O. Killens had remarked that at this crucial point of her life as an activist, Angelou had "a theater and no cash, a cause and no play" (*Heart of a Woman* 681). However, she had decided to approach Bayard Rustin regarding her fundraising proposal in support of Martin Luther King Jr.'s work expressing her deep admiration for the remarkable leader given his contribution to race relations and human rights. In fact, she had first heard his words when he had delivered an inspiring sermon at a Harlem Church following his release from jail in New York.

Thus, she was successfully able to organize the special fundraising show named "Cabaret for Freedom" together with Godfrey Cambridge, and also take up the striking opportunity of working with SCLC that Rustin had offered her, convinced by the zeal and enthusiasm that he saw in Angelou towards making a difference to the struggles of her people and doing something worthwhile. Rustin had himself worked passionately for the Civil Rights while also being

regarded a non-violent activist who had worked for the untouchables in India and as a member of the War Resister's League that accounted for a history of marches, demonstrations in the 1940s with regard to race relations. With the progress of her activism, Angelou in time had also organized the itinerary of Malcolm X during his political visit to Ghana apart from having participated in a solidarity march while she continued her radical activism and also supported the Great Washington March of 1965.

During this period, Angelou had noted that "[b]lack and white activists began to press hard on the nation's conscience" (*All God's Children* 908), while providing a vivid description of the political undercurrents in America during the 1960s as well as its impact on the literature of the time with some of the major works being penned by Civil Rights activists. Also, in the course of her live-in relationship with the South African freedom fighter Vusumzi Make, she had found the opportunity to meet and interact with several freedom fighters of various African countries. She had met members of the Pan African Congress (PAC) and Oliver Tambo of African National Congress (ANC)− all of whom believed that they could bring about a change in the "Apartheid loving Boers" (*Song Flung up* 1061).

Both Nelson Mandela and Vusumzi Make were closely associated to the Robert Sobokwe led PAC which she referred to as the "Nation Dreamers" (*A Song Flung up* 1061) founded by Du Bois who was also considered as the father of pan-Africanism. During this time, both Mandela and Sobokwe were arrested and sent to jails and even Make who was regarded as the "South African warrior" (*Heart of a Woman* 702) stood as a defendant charged with 'treason' in the trials following the 1960 Sharpville Massacre that took place in Transvaal. The African National Congress (ANC) and PAC members together with the supporters of protest marchers had met in 1958 to oppose oppression in Africa drawing inspiration from Martin Luther King Jr., SCLC as well as Malcolm X. She even mentions the powerful African trio of Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure who inspired the radical black Americans in the political climate of Africa in her narrative.

In the course of her activism, Angelou had also organized a sit-in demonstration, to protest the 'assassination' of Patrice Lumumba at the United Nations with the slogan− "Come all. Come and let the world know that no longer can they hit black leaders in secret" (*Heart of a*

Woman 764). Ironically, the protest failed to receive the support of many black leaders, let alone others, much as Malcolm X had predicted. Following their demonstration at the United Nations, Malcolm X had shared his opinion on the day's protest with both Angelou and her co-activist Rosa Parks predicting that their demonstration would find many black conservative leaders denying them and turning their backs on their organization that was known as the Cultural Association for Women of African Heritage (CAWAH). In his analysis of the event, he felt that in the political sense, the demonstration was not a well-planned move and feared that the same black leaders could even make things worse for the CAWAH members by falsely implicating them of being communists and thereby casting false suspicion on them. In fact, Malcolm X's prediction had actualized the same evening with radio and television broadcasts of black leaders condemning the entire women's association. However, Malcolm X had stepped in time to take a stand for CAWAH's actions in front of the media declaring, "[b]lack people [were] letting white Americans know that the time [had come] for ballots or bullets" (*Heart of Woman* 781).

The American political climate was charged with activism led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP), the National Urban League and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) that eventually paved the way for newer progressive groups. Thus in her autobiographies, Angelou had captured the political environment both at the national and international level with widespread activism that had literally transformed the spirit of the times. In fact, even young children together with young black men had joined the protest marches, with the black Nationalists advocating their demands of freedom and black Muslims lashing out their anger and resentment against the white folks while noting the fact that "…they were living in exciting times" (*Heart of a Woman* 729), Angelou had known all along that she as an individual was also witness to a major socio-political period in the history of America as well as the international struggle for human rights. Thus, New York had become the centre stage of international political affairs with world leaders and Civil Rights activists petitioning and advocating their rights for freedom and equality at the United Nations.

As evident throughout her narratives that voice her passionate commitment to the American and the pan-American black struggle, with strong opinions on the pressing socio-political concerns and issues of human rights, the writings of Angelou are considerably aligned

to the politics of her time. Therefore, the text of her autobiographies becomes a ground where she finds the opportunity to revisit and even question many aspects of their struggle in retrospect. In fact, Mary Jane Lupton in the *Critical Companion to Popular Contemporary Writers* (1998) notes how Angelou's fourth and fifth autobiography had become more "personalized" and "intensified" through the revelation of her close association with the leading personalities of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X (3).

In a transcript from a live documented interview (2012) during which Angelou had been questioned on whether she considered Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X as different personalities altogether, she had expressed her thoughts saying, "…they were both Ministers, they were both insulted and hurt by injustice, one was Muslim and the other Christian but just that I don't think that's enough to differ. The truth is human beings are more alike than unlike." As mentioned Angelou's first association with Martin Luther King Jr. began when he was in New York- to summon and raise awareness among the Northerners with regard to the struggle against racial injustice in the Southern states of America. She recalled his powerful rhetoric that had moved and captured the hearts of the masses and which had also given her a sense of black pride. Also, she had first met Malcolm X following the CAWAH protest which had left her in awe of his intellect, personality, and political convictions. Thus, as the political struggle for freedom progressed, Angelou had felt more hopeful and optimistic with the thought that: "[i]t was the awakening summer of 1960 and the entire country was in labor. Something wonderful was about to be born, and we were all going to be good parents to the welcome child. Its name was Freedom" (*Heart of a Woman* 687).

However, freedom continued to elude the countless black Americans who had long envisioned and struggled hard towards achieving their long cherished ideals. Angelou herself had suffered a sense of disillusion as it had become apparent that Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violent tactics that were suitable to the context of India did not seem applicable in the American context. However, even as she had come to rationalize that 'Love' alone would not solve America's racial problems, she also found it impossible to detach herself from Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision and ideals or even denounce the same. Moreover, after having joined as a member of the Revolutionist Returnees in the course of her socio-political activism in Africa, she

found herself divided between the tenets of radical ideologies and the black leader's ideals of non-violent struggle every time she would be referred to as a 'radical' by her friends. Thus, even as she had moved ahead from her earlier association with Martin Luther King Jr. who continued his struggles (in and out of jail) in America, she found it impossible to assert herself when it came to taking sides in the presence of her fellow radical activists.

Significantly, by this time, her son Guy who had turned eighteen years of age had already joined several political protests himself starting early at the age of fourteen. Having lived outside their country for several years the mother-son duo missed their home but Angelou like most of the members of the American black diaspora felt that their country had also denied them a sense of belonging. She found herself mulling over the question that often crossed her mind: "who would dare admit a longing for a white nation so full of hate that it drives its citizens of colour to madness, to death or exile?" (*All God's Children* 981).

Following her return to America, she had made up her mind to accept Malcolm X's offer and extend her support to his Civil Rights organization namely the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) even as her mother had held her reservations regarding her decision to work with Malcolm X. Sadly, Angelou had received his last letter, a few days before she received the shocking news that Malcolm X had been 'assassinated' in New York. It was not a white man who was guilty of the assassination but a man from their own community, a case where a black man had assassinated another black man, a black heroic figure. Malcolm's death in 1965 had arrived as a serious setback to the black struggle and as a personal loss to Angelou, and worse, the OOAU had completely lost its former strength and glory without the strong leadership of its dynamic leader. Moreover, she had begun to feel even more disturbed in noting the frivolity and indifference of her own people who drank away the news of the leader's death, easily brushing aside the ideals that he stood for and accepting his death an as inevitable consequence of his political radicalism. Angelou was equally shattered when she had received the news of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination which had left both his supporters as well as non-supporters in mourning as she wrote in memory of the heroic leader thus,

A man lived. A man loved.

A man tried, and a man died.

And that was not all there was to that. And it never was.

(*A Song Flung up to Heaven* 1157)

The day Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated i.e., on the 4th April, 1968 had also tragically coincided with her birthday and as she wrote in one of her essays titled "Mrs. Coretta Scott King" (2009), for over three decades on every death anniversary of the black leader, Angelou had always sent his widow Coretta King flowers or cards or even shared conversations over the phone.

Highlighting the significant role of women in the black struggle, Angelou had particularly noted the role of CAWAH that comprised several black women who were multi-talented, politically aware and ever active together with the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) that consisted members of all African clans which significantly aimed at dispelling "the centuries old tribal mistrust" (*All God's Children* 947) in Africa starting with the 'women folk' which Angelou had truly appreciated while working in Ghana. In fact, in considering her own position, Angelou had always been headstrong when it came to survival as a black woman stating, "[a]s a Black American woman, I could not sit with easy hands and an impassive face and have [her] future planned. Life in my country had demanded that I act for myself or face terrible consequences" (*All God's Children* 94).

Throughout Angelou's autobiographies there is an empowering presence of strong female ties and female bonding with not just with her mother or grandmother but with also her women-friends right from her teachers, sister-friends, to her closest acquaintances whom she had known and befriended through the course of her lifetime. She had shared lifelong friendships with her friends such as Lillian and Martha from the European tour, A.B. Willaimson (Banti) and Kebidetch (Kebi) in Egypt, Efua Sutherland in Ghana, Dolly McPherson and Oprah Winfrey in New York to mention just a few. She enjoyed the blessing of their constant support and solidarity both in Africa and in America. Also, she mentions the secret existence of (black women) organizations such as the 'Daughter Elks', 'Eastern Elks', 'Eastern Stars', 'Daughters of Isis' and the 'Pynthians'.

On revealing the secret involvements of her mother and both her grandmothers as 'Daughter Rulers' and 'High Potentates', she wrote that they were sworn into oaths and "lifelong promises made to uphold the tenets and stand by each other even unto death" (*Heart of a Woman* 750). Thus, these secret groups and the involvement of black women in these organizations indicate the existence of an orderly black sisterhood. Significantly, Nayar discusses the presence of sororities in the circles of black women that are identified as exclusive spaces for "[i]nformal friendships and family interactions" and their organizations "constituted (as Patricia Hill Collins argued) 'safe spaces' where black women could meet and form 'sisterhoods'" (111).

While being on the constant move, with a string of jobs and political engagements, shifting base across cities and nations, struggling hard to sustain relationships and balance family life with professional work, Angelou had found single parenting very challenging often with an accompanied sense of guilt of being unable to promise her son a secured home and also a promising father to look after him. As her child blossomed into an intelligent young man, she had slowly begun to understand and respect his personal space, as well as, to appreciate his independent choices. Thus, the amazing element in the narration of the mother-son relationship is to find Angelou herself maturing as a single parent and as a person alongside her young child. Her son was blessed with a relatively secured childhood unlike her own or her brother's childhood experiences.

As children, both Angelou and her brother had grown up with a limited set of opportunities, living miles away from their parents, fighting racism that invaded every aspect of their lives, hardly finding any scope of self-development, without the promises of a better future, hardly finding any inspiration or motivation towards achieving their full potential. At an age when Guy had already begun to develop political opinions and join several marches, given his inclination towards black socio-political activism, being well-provided for, with all the opportunities of working towards a promising future; Angelou at the same age had literally struggled to fend for her baby, giving up all her aspirations of being a poet, gently declining her mother's offer on pursuing her higher studies and worse, stepping into the world of crime and deviance. The only dominant factor that stood similar in the trajectory of their lives was the prevalence of racial prejudice and the continued practice of racialized systems. Thus, as a mother

she had always wished for her son to not only 'confront' racial discrimination but also to 'transcend' it in every way possible as she wrote,

> The black mother perceives destruction at every door, ruination at each window, and even herself is not beyond her own suspicion…In the face of these contradictions, she must provide a blanket of stability, which warns but does not suffocate, and she must tell her children the truth about the power of the white power without suggesting that it cannot be challenged. (*The Heart of a Woman* 655)

Thus, from her initial insecurity, parental guilt, and compulsions of leaving her child in the care of strangers and being unable to give him much of her time, to her gradual sense of trust in his abilities to look after himself as a young man, Angelou had grown into a confident mother whose motherly instincts told her that if he was ever confronted with crucial moments in life, he would always turn back to her for support and guidance, just as she always turned to her mother in times of distress.

Angelou held a great admiration for her free-spirited and fiercely independent mother, Vivian Baxter who despite the limitations for a black woman in her time had made the best of all the opportunities that life had held out for her. Baxter had revealed to her much later that she and Angelou's father had grown weary of each other following their marriage and spent almost every day quarrelling until grandmother Henderson out of her genuine concern had written to them requesting the children to be sent to Arkansas where they would be safe under her care. Apart from the strain in their marriage it is possible that they also had other added pressures such as financial concerns, increasing liabilities or even professional struggles which may have led to their mutual agreement to send both the children to the South like most other parents who often sent their children to their Southern hometowns.

Although Vivian Baxter was absent throughout their childhood years yet she found a way into their hearts through their more matured years being their constant moral support and a loving presence all along. Baxter supported them through all their endeavours, motivating them with her practical wisdom and especially rushing to her daughter's aid whenever Angelou would find herself entangled in moments of crisis. Vivian Baxter's never-die spirit and care-a-damn

attitude, her individuality and charming personality, her unending witticisms and sense of humour, personal struggles and practical wisdom made her a figure of inspiration for Angelou, who had closely followed in her steps.

Moreover, Angelou had also experienced an interesting 'role reversal' with Vivian Baxter when she finds herself mentoring her mother who had always mentored her. While Angelou was on the verge of starting a new life in Egypt with Make, her mother found herself struggling to save her new marriage. Although, Baxter had praised her husband a great deal in the letters to Angelou, yet she had begun to experience trouble in her marriage again. Thus, when Angelou flew down to San Francisco to bid farewell to her mother before leaving for Egypt with her son, she found her depressed regarding her husband battling with his gradual alcohol addiction. However, Vivian Baxter was very 'proud' of her daughter for having dared to take up a new challenge in life and travelling to a new continent and settling down in a new country, among new people and thus, her mother's words of encouragement had given her the "going-away gift (*Heart of a Woman* 820) that she much needed before embarking on her new journey with her partner Make and her son in tow.

Angelou had first met Vusumzi Make when he was in New York to forward his petition against South Africa's racial policy at the United Nations. Make with a charming personality and sharp intellect had introduced himself as the representative of the South African black hero Robert Sobukwe. He had not only fallen in love with Angelou but also made all efforts to woo her into a relationship despite knowing that she had been engaged to marry another man. However, it did not take him much too long to win her heart as she had made up her mind to accept his proposal and even travel to Africa, given his promises of marrying her, of being a good father to her son and the reassurance of being "the happiest family in Africa" (*Heart of a Woman* 733). However, her fate had different experiences in store for her.

For Angelou, settling down with an ideal man who would be a good father to her son had always held a special place in her heart, longing for the kind of companion and family life that would always provide enough space for her individual pursuits. Unfortunately, after all the heart breaks and disappointments in love that she had suffered earlier, Make had once again (like her earlier string of lovers) had ended up disappointing her by not only shattering the hopes that he

had stirred in her but also failing to live up to his promises. Quite unlike his earlier charming self, Make had turned out to be an authoritative figure at home who wanted everything in his own terms, dominating both Angelou and her son. In fact, she felt deprived of her personal space, denied of her sense of freedom, being discouraged from seeking new job prospects and even making her own decisions. She had wanted to be economically independent and simply do things in her own way as she had always done. Although she had tried hard to follow all that was expected of her as an African leader's wife in the hope of salvaging her relationship, yet she had always been far too independent in spirit to be limited to the confines of her home like her African sisters. After all, Angelou had always been a provider for her family, for her son and moreover, she was her own person, a confident black woman with a strong sense of individuality who had come far by the dint of her hard work and courage. Also she was a strong individual herself to be patronized around by her partner or by anyone for that matter. Thus, she had decided to free herself from her bitter experiences in yet another difficult relationship that she had set her heart in and set out in search of new hopes and better experiences.

Angelou was a widely-travelled person who had no qualms or literally no personal insecurities about travelling to or even settling down in unknown cities and countries. From the day of her being literally tagged with identification markers, to be sent away to the South with a sibling in tow, to her time as a mother of a young child, Angelou had been constantly on the move across the globe and had literally lived out of her suitcase. Also travelling had brought out the best in her as she had met and interacted with people from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Through her experiences she had found that Africa in particular had become the "inevitable destination of all Black Americans" (*All God's Children* 901) where black expatriates prospered in every way, more than they could ever imagine in their own country where they were treated no better than second class citizens. Further, she had also gained significant insights into various cultures (notwithstanding the cultural peculiarities) and working knowledge of international politics through her travels.

Thus, the travel motif is clearly evident throughout Angelou's autobiographies where she notes that the trend of 'travelling' had significantly captured the American imagination with the publication of John Kerouac's *On the Road* (*Heart of a Woman* 624) and also had a lasting

impact on her. Although, she was constantly on the move, yet she was never too far from her own roots, "[a]s scholars have suggested, many of Angelou's texts foreground a search for home through the motif of journeys" (Stamant 103). Further, William L. Andrews discusses Mary Mason's contribution to the study of travel narratives by black women writers that included the autobiographical mode with the metaphor of life as a journey "a pilgrimage, a mission, or a crusade" (200) as noted in the autobiographies of writers such as Ida B. Wells, Nancy Prince, Mary Church Terrell and Eslanda Robeson. Travel broke away the monotony of life and provided her the opportunity of exploring and imbibing something new and enriching in terms of knowledge, wisdom, insight and experience. While in her childhood years, she travelled to unknown worlds through her books and novels, as a young woman she had availed her own opportunities of travelling for mostly professional and political reasons as well as her personal concerns.

The first time she had visited Cairo, she was introduced and greeted to a host of revolutionaries, diplomats and freedom fighters from different nations such as Basutoland, Kenya, North and South Rhodesia, Rhodesia, Swaziland, Tanganyika and Uganda, that had almost turned into an unbelievable experience where her life seemed to have taken a different course altogether as she describes her first impressions:

> I was the heroine in a novel teeming with bejeweled women, handsome men, intrigue, international spies and danger. Opulent fabrics, exotic perfumes and the service of personal servants threatened to tear from my mind every memory of growing up in America as a second-class citizen. (*The Heart of a Woman* 825)

In fact, it all seemed unreal to her where at one moment she was in New York worrying about a series of eviction notices without money to pay her rent, and suddenly at the next moment she was in San Francisco at her mother's side and again in another moment, she was in Egypt with her son lunching near the pyramids of Giza. Life had completely changed for her where she found a new set of baffling experiences along with her son. In fact, she had been so accustomed to living in her modest apartments that she did not realize it until she found the difference while stepping into a lavish home with Make. Cairo had also presented to her a glimpse of both the old and the new world, where she learnt that the chaos and confusion, the crowds and fanfare, the

noisy traffic and busy markets defined their everyday life which stood in sharp contrast to America.

Although she found herself surrounded by the comforts of life yet she never took advantage of the power that came with her being the partner of a renowned African leader. Angelou only permitted an old Sudanese woman to help her with the cooking and completely refused to be surrounded by servants as it made her uncomfortable to even think about having a black man or woman at her service, slaving for her family. However, her partner who had no idea about her sensitive feelings had opined that it was nothing short of "bourgeois snobbism" (*Heart of a Woman* 826) that came in her way of providing employment to the underprivileged and those who needed such jobs. Make had frequently hosted cocktail parties and social gatherings at home which in a way blurred the difference in their personal and public lives. While he had frequently travelled to different countries and places for his political commitments, Angelou had found herself longing for a new job, even approaching her friend David Du Bois for work in an attempt to step out of her confined existence that she found herself in, which at times turned into a chaotic space in the presence of her numerous guests and at other times turned into a lonely space where she found nothing constructive to occupy her mind with. When her journalist friend had revealed to her that according to the traditional practices in the country it was largely held that "[n]ice women don't work in Cairo" (*Heart of a Woman* 831), Angelou found it hard to accept such misogynistic approaches towards African women who like any other women had every right to desire and work towards an individual career and to enter into professional fields of their own choice. However, Du Bois helped her secure a job for a newspaper following which both of them became the only two black Americans who worked as media professionals in the Middle East.

During this time, Angelou who spoke harshly on America's racist policies in Egypt, foregoing her visit to the American Embassy even to access the English collections available there, given her love for reading and research. Therefore, she had decided to read and re-read her own set of collections that she had packed for herself from home which included George Padmore's *Africa and World Peace*, W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folks*, James Baldwin's *Nobody Knows My Name*, together with anthologies by Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence

Dunbar. Among the joint collection of books that belonged to her and her partner, Angelou had found great solace in Baldwin's anthology *Nobody Knows My Name* and particularly the significance of its title that quite aptly defined the multiple roles and identities that she had assumed like: "Marguerite, Ritie, Rita, Maya, Sugar, Bitch, Whore, Madam, girl and wife" (*Heart of a Woman* 833). Similarly, it is surprising to note that even at a very tender age, her son struggled to come to terms with his own identity assuming names such as Rock, Robin, Rex or Les to finally deciding on calling himself 'Guy' instead of being called by the name of Clyde (*Singin' and Swingin'* 615).

Angelou's family was her constant fort of refuge and solace throughout her life. She knew that no matter where she went, she could always count on the support of her mother, brother and her son at all times. She also admired her maternal family−the Baxters whom she considered as a "conglomerate of wisdom" (*Gather Together* 249) who lived life on their own terms and had always inspired in her the courage to confront the world of unequal opportunities and racial hatred without surrendering to her circumstances. Moreover, Angelou held a deep reverence for her grandmother Annie Henderson (whom she lovingly called Momma) who raised both Bailey and her with a sense of moral righteousness, commitment to duty and an unwavering faith in the power of the word. In fact, she had always held that elderly black women had always been "paragons of generosity" (*Heart of a Woman* 689) who despite their share of crises would never hesitate to offer their kindness and shower their benevolence in response to a gentle request saying,

> We were different. More respectful, more merciful, more spiritual. Whites irresponsibly sent their own aged parents to institutions to be cared for by strangers and die alone. We generously kept old aunts and uncles, grandparents and great grand-parents at home, feeble but needed, senile but accepted as natural parts of natural families. (*The Heart of a Woman* 784)

Angelou worked extremely hard to make ends meet, be self-sufficient and also focus on her priority as a mother. She also had to sacrifice her own comforts to settle for work far from home, in unknown countries and when her child was still too young, even entrusting him in the care of her loved ones. However, as she had once promised herself, when she had almost lost

him to a kidnapper, Angelou always made it a point to be there for him through his growing years instead of leaving him to suffer his emotional anxieties and deal with his existence. Guy had grown up to be an introvert and an extremely sensitive young boy who preferred his own personal space being a voracious reader and securing excellent grades in school. She considered him as "the powerful axle of [her] life" (*Heart of a Woman* 878) as he had always seen her through the best and worst of her struggling experiences in the hope of a better life for both of them. Given his intelligence and sense of maturity whenever her friends treated her school-going son like a young adult, she suffered a sense of insecurity, fearing that her son may outgrow the special bond that they had always shared.

Mary Jane Lupton (1998) had remarked that "[a]nother matter of a political and racial nature was [Angelou's] quest for her African roots" (9) while also quoting Selwyn R. Cudjoe who had appreciated how "[h]er search for roots, her involvement with the politics of her people in the United States and Africa, [had given] her work a depth that [was] absent in many other such works" (9). Also, Angelou's quest was not just limited to her gaining a better insight into the socio-political struggles of the modern African nation or tracing racial past, it also magnified her enthusiasm and curiosity to be led "behind the modern face of Ghana" and her ardent desire to catch "a glimpse of Africa's ancient tribal soul" (*All God's Children* 923) which reflected her quest for something larger than her own cultural and everyday experience. Moreover, it was an emotional and a soulful journey which defines her sentiments in relation to her long association with Africa thus, "[i]f the heart of Africa still remained allusive, my search for it had brought me closer to understanding myself and other human beings. The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned" (*Song Flung up* 1041).

Angelou had always been comfortable and at home whether it was in Egypt or in Ghana, being quick in adapting to their cultural milieu and tribal customs, learning their dialects and exchanging stories, travelling across the country learning more about their cultures, settling down to the African way of life and even following their traditional ways of dressing. Her feelings of unity and oneness had defined her sense of 'black solidarity' and a deep sense of regard for them as a people as she says, "I was theirs, and they were mine…we were united in centuries of belonging" (*Heart of a Woman* 666). She had expressed her love for the richness

and multiplicity of African cultures which interestingly revealed the similarities of their cultural ties. Thus, her reflections in her essay "Our Boys" (1993) where she states, "[w]e all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color; equal in importance no matter their texture" (124) can also be extended in this context of her admiration towards the traditional African cultures. Further, in her interview with Audre McCluskey (2001), Angelou notes her enriching experience in Africa thus,

> I think people would have to read some of my work to see why I went and how I lived for a while in Egypt and then for a few years in Ghana. I returned realizing that I was in Africa and an African American. I realized that my people had paid for this land. I had said that before, but when I returned, I knew it. I had known it before intellectually. I read the words of Phyllis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammond I knew the history of slavery. I had been a very keen reader of Mr. John Hope Franklin and Frederick Douglas, but I didn't in my soul and in my bones know it until I had been out of the country for a while. When I returned I thought, This is my land, my people have brought it with their own blood, their sweat, their tears, their prayers, their laughter and their dance. (9)

Throughout her narratives Angelou captures the subtle nuances as well as the complexities of human emotions, relationships, thought processes, to its minute details in an elaborate and discursive manner. Also, the trope of motherhood which largely figures in most of her literary works and is equally sustained throughout her autobiographies where Angelou depicts the nurturing role of her grandmother Henderson, the influence of Vivian Baxter as an inspiring mother, her own role as a doting mother and friend to her son Guy as well as her motherly role towards a young school-going boy named Kojo in Ghana. She was fond of the sweet and innocent boy Kojo who often reminded her of Bailey. She spent a lot of time with him after work, helping him with his lessons, agreeing to his insistence of running little errands for her after school hours and being each other's company- for which his folks were very much grateful to her.

Angelou further discusses how Africa was referred by the widely-used 'metaphor of the Supreme Mother' of all African people. The African freedom fighters of diverse nationalities

whom she had met had also their regard for Africa as their Mother, whose "breasts they had all come to suckle" and in fact, she recollects the words of Nana Nketsia, the first African Vice Chancellor at the University of Ghana who had expressed his deepest regards to their nation in a conversation at a party saying, "Africa is herself a mother. The mother of mankind. We Africans take motherhood as the most sacred condition that human beings can achieve... 'The mother is there to protect you. She is buried in Africa and Africa is buried in her. That is why she is supreme'" (*All God's Children* 975). During this party she had met several African tribal chiefs who expressed their dedication to their nation and their rich culture, the collective struggles of their clans and all African people as well.

Despite the rhetoric of the African nation as the people's Supreme Mother, African men were still not free from their gender biased perspectives or misogynist practices as noted in some of their socio-cultural practices and customs as well as social norms of their society which shall be discussed elaborately in the following chapters on inequalities and intersections. However, Angelou appreciated the reverence with which Africans held their nation and the value that they accorded to 'motherhood' much as black Americans in her own culture. On this note, an African woman named Alice had also suggested an alternate view where she expressed her inability to imagine "Africa as a woman" (918) as Angelou mentions how her friend "resent[ed] the use of any sexual pronoun to describe [the] complex continent" and opined that if Africa was to be defined in terms of gender at all, it would rather be characterized by a more neutral or androgynous nature (*All God's Children* 918).

The narratives that follow Angelou's fourth autobiography *Heart of a Woman* are defined by a sense of 'racial solidarity' where she is enriched through the commonality of experiences that she finds in her bonding and friendships with her African friends and fellow activists. In fact, she had always nurtured the belief that the entire black race was more alike than different and the African people who considered only whites as "strangers" (*All God's Children* 967) had readily welcomed her into their fold and even traced her probable origin to the Bambara tribe given her physical features i.e., her height, head and colour. In fact, as the time for her departure from Ghana had drawn nearer, Angelou had found herself in a position of being able to examine both the African as well as African-American cultures side-by-side, given the insider's view that she

had acquired and her first hand experiences of African culture. While she had considered herself as an undeniable part of both the cultures, she opined that there was an undeniable sense of "thrill" (*Song Flung up* 1012) in the collective disposition of the black Americans with their inventive strategies of self-defense in order to combat white repression as against the characteristic sense of propriety of the African people as she notes,

> Black American insouciance was the one missing element in West Africa. Courtesy and form, traditional dignity, respectful dismissal and history were the apparent ropes holding their society close and nearly impenetrable. But my people had been unable to guard against intrusions of any sort, so we had developed audacious defenses which lay just under the skin. At any moment they might seep through the pores and show themselves without regard to propriety, manners or even physical safety. (*Song Flung up* to *Heaven* 1012)

Another defining aspect of Angelou's autobiographies is that they are replete with interesting witticisms, axioms, aphorisms, age old sayings of black folks and gems of practical wisdom that capture the 'black experience' in its totality. She had never missed the slightest chance of weaving black witticisms in her writing as well as capturing the valuable and inspiring words of grandmother Henderson, her mother Vivian Baxter and her brother Bailey who always had ready proverbs and axioms for every situation in life. While Vivian Baxter had always left the 'receiver' to decipher the meaning of her aphorisms, her grandmother Momma had always encouraged her to pay heed and try to absorb the hidden messages in what "country people called Mother Wit" (*Caged Bird* 79) with the firm conviction "[t]hat in those homely sayings was couched the collective wisdom of generations" (79).

The collections of black proverbs were fashioned from their own distinct cultural experiences and as "a lot of phrases to live by" (*Singin' and Swingin'* 510), these were to her people the capsules of practical wisdom as well as morale-boosters that had been passed down the generations in the form of oral traditions that survived as treasures in the black community. Significantly, during her long stay in Africa she had also found that much like black Americans, the African people too had their own treasures of abundant proverbs and sayings both in their oral folklores and literatures. Moreover, Neubauer significantly highlights the "use of their native

wit and resourcefulness to overcome debilitating odds" (126) while also noting Angelou's inclusion of borrowed "narratives from folklore" (124) in her writing that further enriches her own narratives.

Significantly, during their story-sharing sessions, while African women had narrated stories of queens, princesses, young girls and market women who had dared to stand against the British, French and the Boers, Angelou narrated the brave stories and the courageous deeds of the black slaves, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. Crenshaw too mentions Sojourner Truth's famous declaration– "Ain't I a Woman?" in 1851, which had also revealed the reality of experiences lived by black women and inspired them to assert and speak up for themselves. Those challenging experiences of black women were informed by discrimination met at multiple levels and 'intersections' that also acted as the site for "identity politics" (1299). In this regard, Carrasco (1997) too suggests the importance of narrating stories that holds the powerful potential to "produce counter hegemonic development stories from the bottom" (428) while also addressing the problems of "clear-cut" (428) racial identities in America.

In the context of storytelling, Dianne F. Sadoff in "Gender and African-American Narrative" (1991) notes Valerie Smith's observation on how the "hybrid" or "double-voiced" (121) black narratives broke the traditional practices of literary representations by highlighting the emergence of the 'black storyteller'. Further, with regard to narrations of black women, Lewis highlights Susan Willis' significant work titled *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience* (1987) that significantly notes that "[h]istory gives topic and substance to black women's writing" (123). The emergence of Black Literary Studies in academics with the efforts of The University of Pennsylvania, as Griffin notes, had introduced a new approach to black literary works which saw wide publication, literary contributions of black women writers, creation of black bookstores and book clubs, formation of literary and art institutions, large recruitments of teachers for black literature among other changes. The emergence of black feminist theory and criticism were first highlighted by Barbara Christian in her work titled *African American Literary Studies* (1980), which was followed by the development of discourses pertaining to black experiences by critics and theorists such as Valerie Smith, Mae Gwendolyn

Henderson, Hazel Carby, Anne Du Cille, Deborah McDowell and Hortense Spillers among others.

In an interview with Carol Neubaeur (1987), Angelou had compared various "facets" (286) of life experiences that are reflected in her autobiographical writing to a "stained glass window" (286) and as Shapiro suggests, autobiographies open up "windows" (432) that provide various perspectives of life across time and space. Angelou in describing how memories "went about its business knitting itself" (291) mentions that to her the autobiographical form was her "beloved" (288) that she had chanced upon as the perfect mode through which she could naturally voice her subjective experiences of life with the artistic freedom as a writer as well.

In reviewing Joanne M. Braxton's *Black Women Writing Autobiography* (1989) Lewis also highlights Braxton's observation that some of the most challenging events, portrayed in Angelou's autobiographies also turn into major shaping influences of her life, owing to the fact that 'identity' undergoes a process of continuous change or transformation. Thus, Sayre opines that autobiographers as much as, the autobiographical texts are continuously "reinvented" (1) in the quest of self-narration, as well as, self-definition stating that the aspects of "assumed accuracy and authenticity of autobiography-its historicity" (17) gives the autobiographical text a certain "authority" (17) over fiction or drama. The autobiographical text is an interesting blend of factual information, as well as, stirrings of the imagination that captures dynamic changes while also providing moral and intellectual insights with its distinct aesthetic value.

Autobiographers heavily rely on fragments of memory and imagination in order to engage in the creative process of aesthetically or artistically recreating the past and providing a deeper insight into the uniqueness of an individual's journey as well as the social processes that shape his or her experiences of life in its entirety. With regard to the element of truth in the autobiography, Angelou in an interview with Audre McCluskey had admitted that truth played a pivotal role in her self-revelations throughout her autobiographical volumes saying:

> What I have tried to do in all of my work over the past 30 years is to tell the truth and tell it eloquently. I've been careful about the facts, but the facts take a secondary role to the truth because facts can obscure the truth. You can tell so many facts that you never get to

the truth. You can say the places where, the times when, the people who, the methods how, the reasons why, and never get to the truth. In all of my work, I have tried to tell the truth. (3)

Shapiro suggests that while autobiographies as a literary form are restrained by representations of "actual experience and practical wisdom" that provide new insights or perspectives on the moulding experiences of life, autobiographical novels or fictions are free from the necessities of representing lived experiences which as a form could be defined as "free to explore the extreme ranges of man's possible experience" (425). In highlighting the difference between autobiography and memoir, Abrams and Harpham note that while autobiographies focus on the development of the narrated self, memoirs lay more emphasis on the people and events witnessed (30).

Uma Parameswaran compares the act of struggling with words on paper to an instance of handling of a camera which necessitates certain adjustments in focus and angle, light and shade together with an aesthetic or artistic sense to capture a distinct photograph. In discussing the process of autobiographical narration she thus notes that even as the differences between autobiography and other forms of creative writing are often blurred, autobiography is commonly associated with the revelation of truth and creative writing as fiction much inspired by elements or figments of imagination. However, she notes that in practice autobiographical writing too employs fictional elements. While the factual details in autobiographies such as date, time, place or identities are kept intact, Parameswaran notes that "actions and relationships are twisted, distorted, manipulated, to give a certain viewpoint─ literally the position from which the reader is made to see the event or persons being talked about" (53).

Further, Shapiro significantly suggests that the element of truth is not merely "fidelity to fact" (425) but also "the projections of a story of successive self images and recognitions or distortions of these self-images by the world; it is the story of identity as the tension between self-image and social recognition" (425). In this context, Neubauer highlights the natural tendency of an autobiographer to employ modes of fictionalization to capture past accounts, conversations or memorable anecdotes. As memories are effervescent in nature as well as "infallible" (125), fictionality considerably influences the autobiographical voice that

painstakingly articulates past memories where the autobiographer finds himself or herself engaged in recreating the same in a manner that also captures and convinces the reader. Thus, she notes the elements of fictionality in the creation of the 'dialogues' found in Angelou's recreated conversations with some of the major political figures, famous singers and performers, well-known writers and intellectuals or even in her descriptions of the particular historical period or her subjective experience of these changing times covered in the autobiographies. In fact, in presenting her past interactions or discussions through the creation of dialogues or reconstruction of conversations, her acquaintances who find a place in her autobiographical narrative also become "characters" (124) in the text.

A significant aspect pertaining to Angelou's autobiographies is her selection of titles for each of her autobiographical volumes. Starting from her first autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird*, the arresting title is inspired from Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poem "Sympathy" (1899) that describes the torment of oppression and the longing for freedom which Angelou as a young child perceives as possible and necessary as also expressed through her heart-warming narrative. The final volume *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* also draws its title from the same poem as well. In his introduction titled "Lyrics of Lowly Life" to an anthology of Dunbar's poems (1922), W. D. Howells notes that Dunbar who was born to slave parents and worked as an elevator-boy with a gift for poetry had captured the pain of being captive in one's condition with dreams of freedom in his poem "Sympathy" where he wrote:

> 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!
>
> (Dunbar 102)

Through the metaphor of the cage and the caged bird, Angelou had not only highlighted the struggles of her imprisoned soul and that of her people but had also unraveled the possibilities of transcendence. According to McCluskey, the metaphor of cage is at once the "prison that denies selfhood" but is also the "vehicle for self-realization" (106). However, the journey of self-discovery was not without its share of difficulties where she found herself torn between her finer sensibilities and her deviant nature particularly during the phase when she had first met with the experiences of the underworld.

Thus, the second volume *Gather Together in My Name* draws its title from the Biblical verse of the Book of Matthew that reads: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (19:27) which Sondra O' Neale suggests is presented as "a New Testament injunction for the traveling soul to pray and commune while waiting patiently for deliverance" (154). By the end of this narrative, her prayers are indeed answered with her self-realization and decision to free herself from being further associated with the murky experiences of the underworld. As she mentions in an interview with Bill Moyers, Angelou recounts her mother's words who had told her: "You might encounter many defeats, but you must never be defeated, ever. It might even be necessary to confront defeat. It might be necessary…to get over it, all the way through it, and go on." This sense of resilience and fortitude is reflected in the way she had emerged as a stronger person who was determined to celebrate her life, instead of wasting it away.

The title of the third volume *Singin' and Swingin' and Getting' Merry Like Christmas* refers to the phase of her joyous celebration of her new found self, almost like a reborn Christian from her earlier sinful indulgences and presents her whirling through European cities mostly on her own while rediscovering her passion for dance and music that defined her finer artistic sensibilities. Although, Lupton opines that the joyous declaration of this title also contradicts some of the anxieties found through her narration particularly highlighting the pains of her separation from her child whom she had left in her mother's care, yet the volume also presents a perfect individual space for her self-development, creative growth, flowing fortunes, scope as a performer, finding international audiences, widening her perspectives through her interaction with various European cultures and the blossoming of her own persona after the rough phase of

her struggle– which had transformed this new journey into the much necessary sabbatical that she owed herself.

Following this carefree phase of her life, she had returned home and reunited with her family gradually experiencing a shift from her immediate personal concerns to the growing concerns of the socio-political issues that was centered on black lives. Thus, she finds herself gradually inclined towards working as an active agent of change for her people which in Koyana's description forms "the heart of the matter" (42) in the fourth volume. Also, the volume defines a phase where she had delved into the heart of personal matters regarding her priorities while also engaging in some serious soul-searching. Her socio-political commitment had stemmed from her share of continuous inner conflicts which were a manifestation of the regular struggles of the self-in-society as she wrote, "[y]outhful cynicism is sad to observe, because it indicates not so much knowledge learned from bitter experiences as insufficient trust even to attempt the future" (*Heart of a Woman* 654). As Hagen further mentions Angelou drew the title of her fourth volume from Georgia Douglas Johnson's poem that reads:

> The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn,
> As a lone bird, soft winging, so restlessly on,
> Afar o'er life's turrets and value does it roam
> In the wake of those echoes the heart calls home.
>
> The heart of a woman falls back with the night,
> And enters some alien cage in its plight,
> And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars
> While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.
> (*The Heart of a Woman* 176)

Moreover, as she moves from one phase of her life to the other and enters into the political domain of the larger black race through the course of her activism, she discovers her desire to further push her limits and travel through Africa with a desire to trace her ancestral

roots. Thus, her journey into the heartland of Africa also leads her to an inner journey of self-discovery where she not only learns of the possibilities of her ancestral lineage but also gains a clearer insight into her own personal convictions. Although she suffers inner conflicts finding herself stuck in the interstitial space between cultures and nations, she also formulates her own cultural responses and negotiations with regard to her own position. Thus, William Andrews notes that the title of her fifth volume *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* metaphorically represents both her symbolical and her literal journey in the quest for enlightenment.

Tangum and Smelster in drawing parallels between Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Maya Angelou's *Caged Bird* discusses both their self conscious positions in the course of their narration centered on the 'gaze' that engages the narrator, reader and the character in the complex "web of intersubjectivity and then torn apart" (81). Through the course of the narration, while they distance the reader's gaze in order to hold the entry of a reader as an aesthetic judge of the text thereby leaving them outside the text; simultaneously, they also invite the reader's gaze into comprehending and even relating with the narrator and the reality of the text, thereby inviting them into the realm of the text as in the case of Angelou's narrative which is described thus,

> Angelou's language alternatively lures us in, almost seductively, to share a gaze-connect ourselves personally− with the subject. And then we are forced out of the connection by language that diverts our attention to a vision of how difficult that connection is to maintain, and how dangerous to the ultimate success of the text. Beckoning us to personally enter the experience by looking not only into the eyes but into the soul of the subject, we feel with Angelou the anticipation of the ceremony, the gift-giving that precedes it, the excitement of beginning it… (87)

Further, they note Angelou's efforts of capturing the rhythmic or lyrical quality that defines the black voice to capture the essence of their collective experience often referred to as the "long black song" (Andrews 197). From her childhood days in the South, she had learnt many spiritual hymns which she sang along with the musically-charged congregation at Church that believed in making a "joyful noise" (*Caged Bird* 97) through their worship.

Also, every black child knew the Black National Anthem and the hymn "Jesus Loves Me This I Know" by heart like the English alphabets. She also recalled how the Black Anthem would make her emotional and proud of her people who had come a long way as also captured in its verses:

> Stony the road we trod
>
> Bitter the chastening rod
>
> Felt in the days when hope, unborn, had died.
>
> Yet with a steady beat
>
> Have not our weary feet
>
> Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
>
> (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 142)

Angelou had not only worked as a singer and songwriter but also at a record store in Fillmore, given her wide knowledge of the best musical feeds both old and new, spending a lot of time listening to the melodies of the 1940s and 1950s herself, before recommending them to her clientele. Music had also sobered her as a person whereby she had rediscovered in her the love for music following the erratic nature of her struggling years. In fact, her third autobiography with its musical title *Singin' and Swingin'* begins with her confession: "Music was my refuge, I could crawl into the spaces between the notes and curl my back to loneliness" (391). Angelou had thus expressed her gratitude to both the known and unknown black voices that had transmitted their stories in the form of songs and tales which always proved healing to others like her, as she wrote,

> If we were a people much given to revealing secrets, we might raise monuments and sacrifice to the memories of our poets, but slavery cured us of that weakness. It may be enough, however, to have it said that we survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets (include preachers, musicians and blues singers). (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 143)

Thus, an aesthetic element that characterizes the writings of Angelou is its appealing musical or lyrical quality whether it is her prose or poetry. She had nurtured a passion for music and even performed for large audiences singing or reciting in her deep, soulful voice. At times she would also break into a spiritual hymn or lyrical poetry in the middle of her interviews. Angelou took pride in the treasures of black folk songs, their oral culture and the modern musical forms that stemmed from the traditional repertoires. Abraham Chapman notes in his introduction to *Black Voices* (1968) that the expressions of folklore, spirituals, work songs and blues among others, the propensities of what he defined as expressions of "The Forms of Things Unknown" (45). In this regard, Sayre highlights one of the notable observations of Frederick Douglas' with regard to the songs of slaves who had said:

> I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find person who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy (16).

Music permeates the day-to-day lives of people and their experiences in inseparable ways by both drawing its inspiration from life and becoming an inspiration of life itself. Aaron Ridley in *The Philosophy of Music* (2004) significantly notes that "[i]n common with everything else, music occupies a conceptual space, not in a vacuum, but at the interstices of an indefinitely large and shifting set of other concerns, each of which it conditions and is conditioned by" (2). In this regard, the oral traditions of African American music may be considered intrinsically bound up with as well as influenced by the varied socio-cultural and psychosocial factors prevalent during the days of slavery in America particularly in the South. The early oral traditions of music that had developed among the enslaved generations of African Americans, significantly found expressions in the form of 'work songs' and 'spirituals' that articulated their experiences, captured their struggles, uplifted their weary souls and gave a (creative) vent to their pent up emotions.

Peter Burkholder et al. in *A History of Western Music* (2010) traces the musical practices of the enslaved people from various parts of Africa who had been mercilessly torn away from their families, as well as, sold and brought like any other goods and commodities to serve as

slaves for the American people. Among the slave populations, the variety of African indigenous communities and their spoken languages accounted for both similarities, as well as, variations in their musical traditions. Although, they experienced difficulties in communicating in the mixed groups that they found themselves in, yet they sang together sharing the common experiences of their emotional, physical and spiritual suffering that tied them together. The slave-holders and over-seers, who engaged them in hard toil and labour, barely understood their accent or even noticed any form of dissent and resistance conveyed through their songs. Nor did they restrict their singing at work as the white masters considered singing as a mode that would keep their slaves and servants all the more motivated towards work. With time, these everyday musical practices gradually began to coalesce into an interesting form of musical tradition in itself which came to be eventually recognized as the early traditional forms of African Americans folk music as Angelou notes, "[m]y people had used music to soothe slavery's tormentor to propitiate God or to describe the sweetness of love and the distress of the lovelessness" (*Heart of a Woman 685*).

The songs and musical practices of the enslaved were thus, passed down through several generations in the form of 'oral traditions' of African American folk music. This musical tradition of the enslaved people had meandered through various challenges down the centuries before it could eventually flow as a distinct tradition of its own. In this regard, while capturing the roots and origins of American folk music Katherine Charlton writes thus,

> Folk music and performance traditions varied from one part of the United States to another, because the music was based on songs and dances, people of different cultures brought with them from their homelands. Many of these settlers maintained their Old World songs and musical traditions as a connection to their cultural roots (40).

Again, Burkholder et al. in *A History of Western Music* (2010) highlights some of the major characteristics of 'African folk music' that also finds a significant expression in 'African American folk music' such as the call-and-response form, liberty of musical variations, syncopation, bending or transitional pitches, various forms of vocal expression, cycles and multiple textures of rhythmic patterns (767). Significantly, African American folk music incorporates a wide use of traditional 'polyphony' with musical strains blending uniquely to

produce harmonies as also noted in black work songs and spirituals. Also, it includes the practice of synchronizing body movements i.e., hand gestures and swaying movements along with their song performances.

The musicals and the black-face minstrelsy were two of the most popular forms of entertainment during the nineteenth century. In the North, the black-face minstrelsy saw white actors perform parodies or caricature the prevalent black stereotypes on stage while also borrowing musical strains for their stage performances that were originally sung by the African American slaves and plantation workers. Although the blacks were unable to prevent such stereotyped representations on stage, after the American Civil War (1861-1865) they too entered the black-face minstrelsy, performing musical parts and enacting roles that made their presence felt on stage, considering the fact, that it was one of the major platforms through which they could showcase their musical talent and dramatic performances as well. Thus, from its earlier informal tradition and practices, African American folk music gradually began to be noticed and appreciated among people as well. The classical African American ballads also referred to as 'black ballads' or more commonly as 'blues ballads' which were created in between the period of 1890 to 1925, also drew musical influences from their repertoire of folk music, recording low-life realities and everyday black experiences.

Ann Du Cille in an interesting entry in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) on the significance of 'work' to the African Americans writes that throughout their history, the lives of the indentured African slaves and their descendents were centered on their work which they perhaps equated with their 'survival'. Therefore, the songs they sang during after work or about the routines of their everyday work were rooted in the history of their oppression, reflecting little narratives of their journey and struggle, trials and tribulation, turmoil and distress, strength and resilience, hope and courage, faith and fortitude. Their emotional depths, tormented souls, exhausted bodies and broken spirits found natural expression through these songs of struggle and hope that they instinctively created and sang. Therefore, these every day, informal and impromptu practices not only provided them a sense of solace but also gave them a 'voice' that could subtly express their resistance as well as their longing for freedom from the sufferings of bondage. Furthermore, singing enabled them to synchronize their group

activities or work, while also boosting their morale in their collective efforts of work and survival as a community.

Traditional work songs comprised occupational songs, chants, field songs, pastorals, herding songs, hunting songs, miner's songs, sea chanteys, songs of working African women, prison camp work songs, rail road songs, songs of lumberjacks and such industrious workers to mention a few. These were orally transmitted from one generation to the other and only during the nineteenth century these traditions were recognized and thereafter, formalized into musical practices. Out in the cornfields there were solo 'corn field hollers' also known as water calls or whoops by field workers and sharecroppers that would sound like calls or cries across the vast stretches of agricultural lands. Interestingly, there were also mealtime songs at work such as songs sung at the end of day's work and lullabies sung by women for their babies while working outdoors.

Significantly, there is a rich tradition of African American women work songs that captured their unique personal experiences, as well as, the poetics of their private spaces. Through their songs that they sang, they created an exclusive personal space where they could just be themselves, free from the overbearing presence of their white masters or even the overshadowing presence of their male counterparts. While singing dispelled the monotony of their repetitive work every day, it also provided a rhythm to their collective work that enabled them to coordinate and focus better on their work. Thus, they empowered themselves and their sororities that they formed with these powerful means of expression as well as, interaction.

While discussing the development of spirituals as a musical form, Kimberly Rae Connor in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) notes that, "[t]he spirituals constitute one of the earliest, largest, and best-known bodies of American folksong that have survived to the twentieth century" (693). Slave spirituals may be traced back to the early nineteenth century when these were simply sung as songs of spiritual salvation particularly in the 'call-and-response' tradition which eventually took the shape of formal 'black gospel music' later on. However, it was only during and after the Civil War that black spirituals came to be widely acknowledged as a distinct musical form of expression enriched with its characteristic vocalization, melody, sound and rhythm.

Connor notes that some of the characteristic musical elements of the spirituals were the "West African percussive forms, multiple meters, syncopation, a call-and-response structure, extensive melodic ornamentation, and an integration of song and movement, each involving improvisation" (694). One of the notable performers of black spirituals was the group known as the Fisk Jubilee Singers that performed spiritual songs and also enjoyed international success in the 1870s. Notably, the volume titled *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867) comprising 136 songs was the first compilation of African American folk songs that was published by Northern abolitionists namely, Lucy McKim Garrison, Charles Pickard Ware and William Francis Allen.

The spirituals of the former black slaves who in the course of time stepped out of their confines to join the Civil War, reflected hope, courage and their ardent desire to be emancipated. Significantly, all the titles of the spiritual songs are expressive in themselves, capturing the very essence of these songs, for an instance many black spirituals reflected the trials and tribulations, the challenges experienced by the slaves in songs such as: "A Little Talk with Jesus", "Singing with a Sword in My Hand", "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child", "Stand by Me" or "Trouble Done Bore Me Down" to mention just a few. Some of the thematic aspects found in the body of black spiritual songs are themes of salvation, freedom, hope, righteousness, worldly or spiritual struggles, fear of unseen or fear unknown troubles among other concerns. Moreover, their unwavering faith finds a reflection in the recurrent themes of devotion to God, sufferings shared with the God; songs sung in high spirits; call to God in distress, call to believers, faith and surrender to God as well as songs of praise and worship.

Thus, Gerald Early in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) notes the significance of the African American musical heritage in the following words, "African Americans have exerted a bigger impact in music than in any other cultural expression in the United States" (517). The African American musical heritage can be drawn from the early informal musical compositions of the work songs, slave spirituals, the development of the black-face minstrelsy followed by the ragtime music of the early 1900s and jazz music in the 1920s; swing music of the 1930s; the music of rhythm and blues of the 1950s; and soul music of the 1960s, all of which came to be established as formalized and classical traditions of Western music.

It is interesting to note that the phenomenal era of 1920s in America right following the end of the First World War saw a definite change in the intellectual and cultural ferment of artists and intellectuals of this period who were mostly regarded as members of the Lost Generation. Following the Great War, the phenomenon of the Roaring Twenties was experienced in America as well as Europe which chiefly included the metropolises of New York, New Orleans, Chicago, Los Angeles, Paris, London and Berlin. While the 1920s was referred to as the Age of Intolerance, Age of Wonderful Nonsense or more popularly as the Roaring Twenties, it was also referred to as the 'Jazz Age'. The ragged or syncopated rhythms of ragtime music gave way to jazz music that truly "revolutionized American culture" (517) in the words of Gerald Early, with its rich musical rhythms, symphony and harmonious improvisations.

An efflorescence of the rich Black cultural heritage which had long remained overshadowed for centuries throughout the oppressive history of Black Americans defined the socio-cultural movement of the 'Harlem Renaissance' which was initially concentrated in Harlem, New York from which it derives its name. The movement is considered to have covered the years from around 1918 to 1937, encompassing a range of creative, performative, literary and cultural fields owing to which Harlem came to be associated with black intellectual awakening and celebration of their rich black cultural heritage. Ernst Mitchell significantly notes that the Harlem Renaissance was "international in scope, interracial in character, and intergenerational in duration" (641) and that the New Renaissance was broad in its scope.

Some of the leading names associated with the movement of Harlem Renaissance were the writers like Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Jessie Redmond Fauset who formed the 'Niggerati Writers' as well as the 'New Black Intellectuals' comprising W.E.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke among other significant figures. Langston Hughes had advocated that it was necessary to develop the Black arts by resisting dependence on the standards of White aesthetics. Such a development in practice saw the appealing elements of folk and oral traditions introduced in diverse fields that significantly included a distinct form of Black music. Moreover, the Black Arts Movement started alongside the Black freedom struggle in the 1960s that was characterized by the revival of the Black Arts which was politically charged as well as expressed the angst and potential of the

revolutionary black artists. Also, music in a major way became a powerful medium through which black artists could express, protest, resist or even assert themselves.

The Black Arts encompassed various forms of art and culture, particularly music, theatre, dance, visual arts, poetry, literature and folklore. Several formal institutes and organizations had sprung up across the nation, in a bid to reeducate and enrich people's knowledge on the rich traditions of black arts and culture. With this new whizz in artistic activities and widespread awareness through various forms of media, the movement had positively gained its ground. The Black Renaissance, as defined by its artistic and aesthetic movements were some of the major developments in American history which gave rise to expressions of the black consciousness and ushered waves of revolution in America.

At the core of all the revolutionary movements whether cultural, artistic or the socio-political was the assertion of 'black identity' which had been stripped from the black people right from the days of their captivity and bonded slavery when their predecessors were trapped, silenced, suppressed and exploited by the whites. It took centuries of struggles for the African American people to establish their stake and identity which accounts for the celebration of their black identity, experience and expression through black arts, literature and culture. Thus, William J. Harris in highlighting the various developing phases of the Black Aesthetic i.e., the emergence of Black Literature to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and the Neo-Black Aesthetic Movement of the 1980s to 1990s, all of which were centered on the efflorescence of Black literary, socio-cultural and artistic heritage as well as the collective black experiences thereby notes that,

> Although the term *Black Aesthetic* originated in the 1960s, since at least the early part of the nineteenth century African Americans have formulated racial aesthetics, that is, general artistic rules based on ethnic concerns and preoccupations. However, the Black Aesthetic of the 1960s was a distinctive and highly self-conscious formulation of a racial aesthetic. (67)

Harris mentions that these developments initially began in the 1820s with black writers who expressed their desire to find salvation through their writings that gradually saw the flowering of

the Harlem Renaissance which again transformed into various developing phases and movements through the progress of centuries.

As Lamb and Thompson discuss in their introduction to *A Companion to American Fiction 1865-1912* (2009) the history of America stands witness to the 'changing modes of oppression' of the black people that first had its beginnings in the torturous days of slavery which only ended in the year 1865 by law thereby leading to the emancipation of four million black populations from the shackles of bonded slavery. Although, this was followed by a period of Reconstruction, yet the introduction of the Jim Crow laws had turned into new modes of oppression which as the authors note, not only led to widespread segregation but also to violent means such as racial lynching often as "public spectacles attended by black families" (1), mutilation and immolation to mention a few. Angelou also recollects her difficult experiences of having lived and grown up in a period that saw some of the most brutal atrocities committed by the powerful whites on her people when she first understood what defined 'racial hatred' as she records in one of her poems:

> Old hates and
> Ante-bellum lace, are rent
> But not discarded.
> Today is yet to come
> in Arkansas.
> It writhes. It writhes in awful
> waves of brooding.
> ("My Arkansas" 134)

All of these varied experiences also find a representation throughout the autobiographical volumes of Angelou while also capturing the changing phases of her life which Lupton also defines as a "saga" (1) that begins from the period after the First World War and is neatly tied to the changing socio-political contexts before and after the Second World War. Thus, starting from her early interactions with the intellectual circles or even informal conversations as a member of

the Writer's Guild, she would always rush into their discussions with enthusiasm as she found the members "persistently examin[ing] the nature of racial oppression, racial progress and racial integration" (*Heart of a Woman* 651), as some of the serious concerns pertaining to the lives and struggles of the black people that had always interested her. In appreciation of her distinct remarkable style of writing and treatment of dominant themes in the autobiographies, Koyana writes that

> It is indisputable that Maya Angelou's contribution remains unsurpassed. Angelou's unique probing of the interior self, her distinctive use of human and self-mockery, her linguistic sensibility, as well as her ability to balance the quest for human individuality with the general condition of black Americans distinguish her as the master of the genre. (35)

In fact, both her travels through Europe and Africa had enriched her world-view and her personal experience, providing her with insights into various cultural traditions (notwithstanding the cultural peculiarities), working knowledge of international politics, opportunities of working closely with the African American diaspora, as well as, gaining a better perspective on the larger black struggle informed by various intersections. Thus, Koyana aptly states that the autobiographies of Angelou "reveal the multiple and dynamic interconnections between households ─home and family ─and the larger political economy" (35).

In a more metaphorical sense, Angelou had herself undertaken an inner journey into discovering her hidden potential, testing her inner strength, finding new adventures, surviving the difficult times, celebrating the spirit of adventures and rejoicing the gift of life with unwavering courage and determination while also meticulously shaping her life into her own autobiographies. The present chapter thus, presents the ways in which the black struggles had largely stemmed from black socio-political experiences which were also led by some of the leading figures in black history and how these movements were tied to the struggles of the larger black race. Also, in highlighting the affiliations and enriching exchanges with African culture, it provides an insight into Angelou's own personal or subjective experiences with all of these aspects together with the concerns of her own everyday experiences. Thus, it foregrounds the multiple roles that Angelou had played, her role as a writer and activist, the eclectic experiences

of her life as well as the various concerns related to issues of identity at both the social and individual level- in an attempt to bridge an understanding of the multiple concerns that informs the collective black experience. A detailed discussion on the constructions of race, racial ideology and race-relations shall be taken up in the next chapter highlighting the emergence of the Critical Race Theories as well as the development of Intersectional Studies that lends an insight into the aspects of macro intersections in the form of established ideologies of power.

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Chapter IV

Intersectionality, Crime and Deviance

"The root cause of racism and its primary result is that whites refuse to simply see us as people."

(*The Heart of a Woman* 787)

Race and racial discourses have always found a serious reflection in academic circles, socio-political activism and the literary traditions of America as well. Race can be defined as a "pervasive" and a socially constructed "system of colour coded hierarchy" (Lightfoot 32) that emerges from social stratification and imposition of 'social meanings' on those identified as racial minorities which are constantly reproduced. In fact, Maya Angelou in her autobiographies mentions how the whites would hurl their racial slur, thereby casting and reinforcing stereotypes on the blacks who were referred to as "niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots and spooks" (*Caged Bird* 86) and a host of other names to intimidate, humiliate and remind them of their inherited inferiority and the rigidity of these binaries and differences.

Although the practice of slave trade had come to its end following the American Civil War, yet race and racial ideology continued its disturbing presence and authoritative influence on the social structures and systems. Thus, Philomena Essed describes 'racism' as the– "cognitions, actions, and procedures that contribute to the development and perpetuation of a system" (181) of white power justified on the superiority of race and racial hierarchy. Further, *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) in an article on 'race' notes thus,

> Despite the reductive, essentializing power that race has been assigned by natural and social scientists, intellectuals and artists alike, and precisely because it has been such a vexed question nibbling at the edges of our consciousness, the idea of race has, paradoxically, contributed enormously to ongoing national and global dialogues about the Other in ourselves. (Cedric Gael Bryant 618)

Smedley in an essay titled "Race and the Construction of Human Identity" (1998) highlights the construction and function of the concept of 'race' which according to history did not exist either as an idea or as an ideology, prior to the seventeenth century. It examines

historical records of the Old and New Testament and of the ancient world where there were no such fixed ethnic identities but rather the freedom and fluidity of acquiring cultural identities (691). In the ancient world, the barbarians could easily intermingle with Greek or Roman cultures if they learned and could communicate in their language, similarly during the colonial period the African people were free to intermingle and choose their religious identity while also enjoying the fluidity and the added advantages of assuming multiple ethnicities in the African tribal communities (692).

While highlighting the history of how racial differences had been established, Smedley notes how the term 'race' was initially used as a mere reference to populations in the slave trade during the sixteenth century, until it came to acquire layered meanings by the eighteenth century. Thus, the conceptions of racial classification by the early Europeans were aimed at creating a convenient system in which the whites could easily identify and socially categorize as well as easily differentiate and assert their superiority on blacks, perceiving as well as reinforcing their perceptions of blacks being an inferior and insignificant race. Race as a defined concept of social categorization, began in the colonies of America in the eighteenth century before it spread to the colonies of Europe. In America, the social division between blacks and whites came to determine the hierarchies of social structure, where blacks were considered to be at the lowest rung of the American society.

In a discussion on the historical factors that determined the classification of people into distinct races, Hans and Martinez Jr. (1994) highlight how 'physical characteristics' came to determine racial categories in the nineteenth century while multiple debates on the usage of appropriate terminologies such as 'colored', 'negro' or 'black' ensued during the twentieth century as well as the considerations of alternate terms for 'race' such as 'ethnic identity', 'ancestry', and 'heritage' (212). While 'race' essentially depended on physical or biological characteristics, 'ethnicity' depended on the factors of distinct ancestry, culture, nationality and other such set of identities. This had brought about a gradual emergence of studies on 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic differences' and while many scholars treated 'race' and 'ethnicity' as similar though only varying in degree, there were critics and scholars who clearly differentiate between the two.

Georges-Abeyie notes Milton Myrton Gordon's definition of ethnicity as "the intersection of race, nation of origin and religion (a cultural variable)" (38). Black ethnic minorities comprise African-Americans, Africans, Black Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Virgin Islanders, Jamaicans all belonging to various religious denominations such as Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and the Baha'i faith. Ethnic identity is further differentiated by hue and colour also characterized as *blanco*, *moreno*, *mulatto*, *negro*, *pardo* and *sucio* (38) which also points to the fact that there are several divisions that categorize 'inter-racial' as well as 'intra-racial' ethnic identities. In highlighting the difference between race and ethnicity, Acker in "Inequality Regimes Gender, Class, and Race in Organization" (2006) mentions that while "[r]ace refers to socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture, and historical domination and oppression, justified by entrenched beliefs. Ethnicity may accompany race, or stand alone, as a basis for inequality" (444).

Following the Civil War, the Southern states in the nineteenth century were brought under the Jim Crow laws which enforced racial segregation as a measure against the black Americans from sharing equal rights and privileges as the whites. Black Americans were not only deprived of equal participation in all spheres of life whether socio-political, economical or even socio-cultural but were also denied of their citizen rights and their fundamental human rights. Bart Landry mentions that for an instance, the racial markers of identification were much more lenient in Brazil (which also had a slave history) than the rigid codes of racial identification in the American society (3). The Southern states of America had a system of laws that were based on the "percentage of racial ancestry" (3) which in time came to consider a few exceptions for the light skinned 'mulattoes' who could pass for whites and enjoy white status in the cities although they would still be treated as blacks by the law in their hometowns or places of origin.

Ted Olsen in a note on Jim Crow in the *Oxford Companion* (1997) notes that following the period of Reconstruction, the social condition in the Southern states had worsened with the whites adopting modes of racial violence and crimes against the blacks, as he also mentions that "a record number of lynching were committed in the 1880s" (399) in the south. With the *Plessy V. Ferguson* ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896, the 'separate-but-equal' doctrine of segregation further strengthened the Jim Crow laws already in practice and thus all public

institutions and facilities were legally segregated which Olsen lists as the following: "segregation on trains, streetcars, steamboats and buses; in schools, boarding schools, hospitals, and neighbourhoods; at workplaces and recreation areas; and within organizations (unions, for instance)" (399). In this regard, Simien too notes that according to empirical research, blacks in general and the black middle classes in particular were subject to racial discrimination in white neighbourhoods, schools, colleges, offices, residential complexes and other such institutions (545-546). Significantly, the Civil Rights Movement had gained momentum with the Montgomery bus boycotts that took place from 1955-1966 with widespread 'protests' and "urban uprisings" (Timothy Tyson 147) decrying racist and hegemonic practices of the whites and pressing for democratic civil rights. A decade later, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights of 1965 were passed and the leading black intellectuals and figures with the support of the masses began to take the movement forward.

Holdaway mentions that David T. Goldberg had significantly highlighted the existence of multiple forms of racism or in other words, "racisms" (20) as "[a]gainst typically singular and monolithic, ahistorical and unchanging conceptualizations of race and racisms" (Giroux 16). Thus, race relations had always been critical as well as vulnerable between the white and black folks throughout the history of America. Although the Second World War had ended with America's promise of bringing an end to racial discrimination yet the long ingrained prejudices of the dominant whites made no difference to what had been promised to its oppressed citizens. Black Americans held secret hopes of not only emerging victorious in the Great War but also in gaining their long-denied rights as equal citizens of the country.

Being born black and raised in the submissive spirit of her grandmother, life in the South was a painful experience for Maya Angelou. Racial segregation was clearly pronounced in Southern America with demarcations identified for both the white and the black community where as she describes "the town was halved by railroad tracks, the swift–Red river and racial prejudice" (*Gather Together* 280). Having spent her childhood in the hometown of Arkansas, Angelou nurtured a deep sense of regard for her people and their traditions as a child while also unconsciously accepting "the total polarization of the races as a psychological comfort" (*Gather Together* 281). The only sense of peace and freedom that the black folks knew was within the

circle of their own community. The segregation was defined so clearly that to the black children the white folks only existed in the realm of their imagination and the whites were so prejudiced towards the blacks that as a small instance, they were not even allowed the freedom to treat themselves to vanilla ice cream and had to be happy with their chocolate ice cream for obvious reasons.

Life in the black South was not without its share of difficulties where the folks had to exercise extreme caution in their limited interaction with the whites in authority while also being passive in their conduct, practicing discretion in their dealings, never daring to question white authority by any means or offending their sense of pride. In other words, they had to be extremely conscious, submissive as well as neutral in their disposition when confronted by whites and most of all never make the mistake of speaking their minds at any cost. The black folks were almost at the mercy of the powerful whites and treated like mere puppets in their hands, who pulled and played with the strings of their fate just as they fancied. In fact, they all lived in perpetual fear of the whites who wielded power over their lives and even held the law in their hands, triggering violence and racial murders at the spur of a moment. Thus, every time a black man was lynched or murdered for any trivial or unexplained reasons, a terrible sense of gloom would descend on the black community and envelop them like a shadow suspending the peaceful lives that they otherwise shared among themselves. They were merely helpless and victims of circumstances as were countless other black people like them particularly in the Southern states.

In one such incident that takes place in the year 1940, Bailey who was still a child suffered the literal shock of his life when he had seen a mutilated body of a black man by the riverside in Arkansas. The moment he had questioned his grandmother in all his innocence regarding what he had just seen, the old woman perceiving the danger and threat to the little boy's life because he had been a witness, had immediately decided to send both the siblings back to their mother in California where lynching was unheard of and where they would be in safer hands. As Angelou recollects this incident, she writes that for a black boy to ask questions in Arkansas or for that matter any black person to raise questions at that time was equivalent to risking their life in the hands of the powerful and cruel white supremacists.

Much early in her life, Angelou had been taught to internalize the black codes of conduct and the firm belief that "[b]lack folks can't change because white folks won't change" (*Heart of a Woman* 647). Thus, one can imagine the sense of distrust and lurking suspicion among the black people at all levels who had almost internalized the racial hatred and torture to which their folks had been subjected to for decades, and their ancestors down the centuries. Moreover, as she comes of age, Vivian Baxter also warns Angelou that anyone would take advantage of her for being a woman unless she exercised caution; especially because she was a 'black' woman and the generosities of black women were either misinterpreted or too easily taken for granted in their society. This naturally made Angelou all the more distant and suspicious of particularly the motives of white men whereby she came to assume a sense of fear regarding their crazy whims and fancies. Moreover, she had faced discrimination even at the Lafayette County Training School and the George Washington School where she was discriminated and jeered for being a black girl; as well as at the employment office, mentioning how hateful jokes were made on her people.

Despite her strict upbringing, she had always been a sort of rebel in her own right and in one such another incident, Angelou in great defiance of her grandmother's code of conduct had dared to argue against two wayward white girls in Arkansas, defying the fact that it could invite trouble from the whites and even cost her own life, if she was falsely accused or blamed for starting that argument. However, when grandmother Henderson was telephoned from the white quarters and informed on what had transpired between the girls, the old woman in her helplessness and anger had slapped Angelou each time that she tried to justify the situation not only reducing her into literal silence but also arranging for her to be sent away to her mother's protection like she had earlier done for Bailey. Angelou often noticed and found it disturbing to watch her grandmother practice tolerance towards the insolent white girls who were free to insult the old woman whenever they visited her thriving store. In one such incident three white girls namely from the white side of the town namely Helen, Ruth and Eloise had come visiting to the store and were cheeky and insolent towards Momma as Angelou had observed. Moreover, in all their indecency they had purposely turned cartwheels while leaving to expose their privates and enjoying both Momma and little Angelou's embarrassment.

Thus, referring to the ways in which Angelou rose above these disturbing experiences which she was not even allowed to question, Dolly McPherson in *Order Out of Chaos: The Autobiographical Works of Maya Angelou* (1990) notes that Angelou's seemingly most difficult years spanning from the late 1930s to the mid 1940s "reflects her search for self-discovery and identity in the difficult environment of racism" (58). Although, grandmother Henderson taught her lessons of peaceful resistance and tolerance at all times by being a consistent example herself, yet Angelou did not necessarily assume her grandmother's position with regard to her way of dealing with any form of prejudice or racial hatred that she had met. Angelou in her essay, "Our Boys" (1993) had admitted that racism had unknowingly invaded the psyche of both white and black folks saying, "[t]he plague of racism is insidious, entering into our minds as smoothly and quietly and invisibly as floating airborne microbes enter into our bodies to find lifelong purchase in our blood streams" (121).

Angelou often thought to herself how difficult it was for her, or possibly for her estranged father, her brother and many black people like them to swallow their pride in an oppressive world which had no concern for their dearly held aspirations or their talent. Her "black ugly dream" (*Caged Bird* 8) of suffering displacement, discrimination and inequalities somehow stifled her sense of self. Being sent away on a train by her parents at the age of three along with her four years old brother to the segregated South of all places with address tags that read "To Whom It May Concern" (*Caged Bird* 9) – she felt that there was no one who was truly concerned about her existence, that the world was hostile to those who were born black and that life for black children or even youngsters was beset with unknown challenges and difficulties. That journey was literally her first experience of being displaced from her first family- her parents, her home, an identity, a sense of belonging and security as well as a symbolic journey of a black child who would grow up to charter her own journeys and fulfill her aspirations.

In 1904, Martin Luther King Jr. in the words of Du Bois had noted that "[t]he problem of the twentieth century will be the problem of the color line" (*All God's Children* 985) and indeed, the continuation of discriminatory practices on the basis of 'skin colour' had resulted in the establishment of white superiority and power over the dark races in all aspects of American life. The blacks on the other hand were categorized as the inferior race whose "burden of blackness"

(*Caged Bird* 145) meant that they were "to experience the humiliating effects of Jim Crow and a double-conscious identity" (*Oxford Companion* 163) as the dark skinned were categorized as 'second class citizens.' In one such incident of racial discrimination, Angelou's grandmother had taken her to a white dentist named Dr. Lincoln for a severe tooth-ache but the doctor had straightaway refused to treat her on the grounds that his work policy did not allow him to treat coloured people saying "my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's [sic]" (*Caged Bird* 86). Ironically, the same doctor had borrowed money from her on two occasions when he was in dire need of finances. Such a humiliating incident not only highlights the hypocrisies and prejudiced notions of a white man but also reveals the insensitive, inhuman and unethical practices of a doctor who had denied basic medical treatment to a child on the grounds of her being a black. She describes this painful memory that troubled her not only because she was refused treatment but because her grandmother was insulted by a white man in front of her thus she says, "[i]t seemed terribly unfair to have a toothache and a headache and have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness" (*Caged Bird* 145).

At the personal level, Angelou had always been sensitive, conscious and defensive when it came to any form of racial remark, innuendos or slur at her colour –aimed at humiliating or insulting her in any way, which she never allowed or even tolerated especially as an adult. From a tender age, she reflected an apparent obsession with colours and more particularly, skin colours drawing her own similes and associations with various shades. In admitting her fascination for colours and more particularly the beauty of various hues and shades of skin colours, she wrote: "[b]utter-colored, honey brown, lemon- and olive-skinned. Chocolate and plum blue, peaches-and-cream. Cream. Nutmeg. Cinnamon. I wondered why my people described our colors in terms of something good to eat" (*Caged Bird* 238).

At the same time, she had also expressed a sense of hatred for certain shades of colour when she was a child such as "ecru, puce, lavender, beige and black" (*Caged Bird* 141) which actually reminded her of her own dark skin. She often felt humiliated because of her skin colour as a child when her playmates often described her skin as "shit color" in comparison to her brother's "velvet-black skin" (*Caged Bird* 21). In fact, recounting the experience of giving birth to her child in her essay "Giving Birth" (2008), the first thought that had crossed her mind while

delivering her baby was regarding the 'colour' of her newborn. Even while nursing her newborn child, she was often teased for her son's light skin by her former school mates who enjoyed their rudeness towards her, passing insensitive remarks at her such as "crow gives birth to a dove" (*Caged Bird* 238).

As the word itself suggests, 'colorism' (a term coined by Alice Walker in 1982) denoted exclusive privileges based on skin colour that had become an openly accepted means of group discrimination (Burton 2010). Such discourses are thus complex in itself, in the way these intensively 'effect' and 'affect' the collective consciousness of both the suffering blacks on the one hand and the powerful whites of the American society on the other. In fact, Angelou held that Apartheid in Africa was just as "evil" (*Heart of a Woman* 719) and unjust, as the colour line and racial oppression in America.

Although this discomfort of living in her skin had relatively dissolved in her later years, yet her sense of being coloured (and all the meanings that were attached to it) never seemed to stop bothering her completely−as she admitted of suffering a nagging sense of doubt and a disturbing double consciousness which led to her being ever mindful of how she was perceived by others in all kinds of situations. Therefore as evident in her 'self-narrations', her consciousness was considerably shaped by her early experiences, interactions and negotiations in a social milieu chequered with racial politics and white power. In her autobiographical texts, Angelou reflects the ways in which aspects of crime and deviance not only reveals itself as a vent of long-term anger or the frustrations stemming from long violated rights or unaddressed needs but also as a 'retaliation' of their long pent up emotions against the hegemonic socio-political structures in the form of protest marches, sit-ins, political demonstrations and radical activism.

As a major development stemming from these discourses, there have been serious debates on Critical Race Theories (CRT) within the academic as well as the legal circles which has significantly opened up new areas on the study of race, race discourses, racial inequalities, processes of racialization, racial oppression, socio-cultural institutions, law and power structures that are pertinent to this area. In an article titled "Critical Race Theory as International Human Rights Law" (1999), Saito discusses the centrality of 'race' in Critical Race Studies (CRS) that

stems from the "history of racism" in America (228). The critical insights gained through CRT addresses the roots of the race problems, race relations and social hierarchies particularly in the American society. Also, Delgado and Stefancic highlight the complexities that exist in the 'interrelation' of race, racism and American jurisprudence.

By the mid-1970s, a crucial need to study newer methods of understanding the dynamics of race and ethnicity in America came to the fore with the works of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman. Critical Race Theory (CRT) as it is known today first began as a legal movement that was referred to as Critical Legal Studies (CLS) Movement in the 1970s, which took up unresolved issues and discourses of blacks and all other minorities. Legal theorists, race critics and activists believed that CRT held great promise with its foundation in legal studies. Some of the major race critics (also referred to as 'racecrits') were Alan Freeman, Charles Lawrence, Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, Kimberlie Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, Angela Harris, Mari Matsuda and Charles Lawrence.

Further, while tracing the origins of CRT, Delgado and Stefancic in an introductory chapter to *Critical Race Theory* (2007) also notes that it encompasses the ideas of some of the leading thinkers like Antonio Gramsci and Jacques Derrida, together with the ideals of W.E.B Du Bois, Frederick Douglas, Martin Luther King Jr. and Sojourner Truth. CRT significantly addresses some of the important dimensions such as "material determinism or interest convergence", "social construction" and "differential racialization" (3). They also note that "[c]losely related to differential racialization− the idea that each race has its own origins and ever evolving history− is the notion of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. No person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity" (4).

CRT also debates against the prevalence of "negative stereotyping" (Taylor 122) and racial discrimination long after the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, thereby, exposing the continuation of the "racial fault lines" (122). While Edward Saito opines that "a racial focus has also been useful in addressing questions of justice and human rights because of the intertwining of racism, poverty and systematic disadvantaging" (228), Donna E. Young notes that some race critics prefer to shift focus from colour-blindness as an "organizing principle" (424) altogether. Taylor in "A Primer on Critical Race Theory" (1998) discusses how CRT

addresses multiple black issues in order to bring about political changes and create meaningful exchanges, to transform American legal systems and most importantly the American consciousness. Also, he makes a note of how creative stories and storytelling can meaningfully challenge blinded perspectives, constructed social ideas as well as negative stereotypes.

In his "Introduction to the Special Issue on Race and Ethnicity" (2002) Dalton Couley discusses the ways in which Critical Race Theory with methods employed by "racecrits" (Carrasco 1997) had evolved out of the historical Civil Rights further highlighting the importance of a critical examination of race politics, multiple intersections, "debilitating effects of institutional racism" (Barnes 1866), systemic racism, discrimination-within-discrimination, socio-political hierarchies and other relevant aspects. This further necessitates a critical examination of both white and black consciousness in perspective. Epperson thus notes the importance of being sensitive about racial issues while also avoiding any form of essentialism in the same breath, Couley opines that "privileging any experience" rooted in the matrix of social structures may run the danger of leading towards unequal considerations of the larger "*paradigmatic experience*" such as "gender, culture, socio economic class, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation" (2034).

Significantly, Burton et al in the article "Critical Race Theories: Colorism and the Decades Research on Families of Color" *(*2010), critically examines the body of work produced so far in the area of CRT and in essence highlights its main principles thus,

> Critical race theories represent ways of thinking about and assessing social systems and groups that incorporate recognition of the following principles:
>
> a) race is a central component of social organizations and systems
> b) racism is institutionalized–it is an ingrained feature of racialized social systems
> c) everyone within racialized social systems may contribute to the reproduction of these systems through social practices; and
> d) racial and ethnic identities, in addition to "the rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power" associated with them, are not fixed entities, but rather they are socially constructed phenomenon that are continually being revised on the basis of a group's own self interests. (442)

In an interview, Susan Giroux notes Goldberg's discussion on the severity of race-related discourses and politics of state mechanisms which she describes in the following words,

> Modern state power is defined by both its monopoly on force and its capacity to categorize, through which it acquires the necessary justification. The state determines who will be protected under the mantel of citizenship and who will remain alien, who will be declared friend and ally and who will be charged an enemy combatant. (22)

Significantly, Angelou's representations of the socio-political contexts, black experiences, race relations, social inequalities, and the aspects of crime and deviance also point to the critical intersections of race, class and gender. This also introduces one to the sociological concept of 'intersectionality', a term coined in the 1980s by the American Critical Race theorist and legal scholar Kimberlie Crenshaw, which was a partial offshoot of both Critical Race Studies and Critical Black Feminism during the early 1970s. Although the concept had floated among the intellectual circles of the early 1970s, yet it had also partially stemmed from the black feminist movement which held the belief that black women experiences were informed by multiple intersections. Thus, Intersectional thinkers concentrated on examining the "interconnected mechanism of oppression" (Lee 468) with leading contributions by Patricia Hill Collins together with several black feminists and activists in America.

Intersectional studies play an important role in identifying and resisting the strategies or matrices of racial oppression. It also highlights the importance of understanding the complexity of these multiple intersections and how they influence one another in social systems. It is regarded as a significant research paradigm that poses considerable challenges for scholars in this area and in this regard, Christine Bose in "Intersectionality and Global Gender Inequality" (2012) notes that intersectional studies being mainly concerned with sociological research methodologies and scholarship focuses on the "perspective of those who are 'multiply-marginalized'" (68).

Both Critical Race Theories and Intersectional theories lend significance to an examination of the multiple intersections that almost invariably determines the quality of life and experiences of those who are trapped into the problems of multiple marginality owing to the

established structures of oppression. Significantly, while taking up discourses pertaining to identity, identity-politics and intersectionality, Hernandez-Truyol (1997) highlights that critical theories of race encompass multiple identities of marginalized communities acknowledging their "multiple consciousness" (409) that are invariably informed by layered intersections.

The social identities that tend to form intersections of inequalities comprise race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, nationality etc. Thus, Intersectional scholarship "addresses the *intersectionality* of identity, the notion that identity is the sum total of one's identity components and heritage, which cannot be isolated from the individual as a whole" (Hernandez-Truyol 409). Also, it examines institutional racism (a term coined by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in 1967) also referred to as 'systemic racism' which is considered to mediate through the socio-political institutions and judiciary systems.

While intersections play an important role in 'identifying' and 'resisting' the strategies or matrices of racial oppression, it also focuses on the "perspective of those who are 'multiply-marginalized'" (Bose 68) and the ways in which multiple intersections influence one another. Further, intersections are studied at the 'macro' and 'micro' levels, the former comprising systems of racism, colorism, sexism, classism, patriarchy, capitalism etc. in a "top-down" (6) approach to binaries of "power relationships" (Landry 6) and the latter comprising aspects such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, age etc. informing everyday experiences and interactions of social life.

The "psychological comfort" (*Gather Together* 281) of ignoring a community rendering it almost invisible and creating exclusive spaces had also been a common strategy of power to the white supremacists and a strategy of survival for the resisting blacks. As a counter to the white prejudices Angelou wrote,

> Among the many prejudices in American race relations is the fact that Blacks do not relish looking at whites. After hundreds of years of being the invisible people ourselves, as soon as many of us achieved economic security we try to force whites into nonexistence by ignoring them. (*Singin' and Swingin' and Getting Merry Like Christmas* 519)

Perhaps, this approach of rendering whites as 'invisible' was an easier means of adapting to the complex process and patterns of racial segregation in the South, the restrictions of colour line, specified residential neighbourhoods in the cities, formations of black ghettos, etc. where the oppressed had to either adjust and settle down according to the orchestrated designs of the powerful or cry foul without any means of justice to their avail.

If blacks aspired to a better life beyond the limitations of serving at the lower rungs of the society they were treated as "farcical and presumptuous" (*Caged Bird* 140) by the whites. Given her desire of a better life than the one she had led in her adolescent years, Angelou in her desperate hopes of joining the army had literally committed 'perjury' which was a criminal offense against the state by lying and hiding the necessary information about her child in the fear that she would be rejected by the army if she was found to be a 'mother' with a child to care for. However, she was eventually rejected for another reason i.e., on the grounds of her Labor School being on the House Un-American Activities list without any fault of hers. In fact, she had been granted a 'scholarship' to study at the California Labor School and it was ironical that she was rejected from the army for being a student of an institution that was suspected of having ties with the communist organizations.

Thus, she had often looked back at her lost opportunity of working in the 'army' with a deep sense of regret, possibly because it was one of the golden opportunities of her life that could have altered the entire course of her struggles or even saved her from stepping into the underworld, from her involvement in prostitution besides providing the perfect life that she always dreamt for her son. However, she had begun to realize that the workings of the established systems had never been in their favour in any case and that there was more to lose to the system rather than benefit from it in terms of their progress and well-being. Thus, in her hidden consciousness of "unrevenged slavery" (*Gather Together* 293) that always troubled her, she had often found consolation in the fact that "[t]he U.S. Army with its corps of spies had been fooled by a half-educated black girl" (*Gather Together* 308).

Angelou's life in the diplomatic circles came with its share of challenges where she had to live in perpetual fear of her partner's life or that of her own son, frequently receiving threatening phone calls to warn her of the dangers to Make's life, much similar to the wives of

most freedom fighters. In fact, Angelou had also mentioned Malcolm X finding his regular share of 'death threats' over phone that went unheeded or also in the form of writing that were always tucked away into his drawers or remained unread in his mail box. Even as an adult, Angelou hardly enjoyed the security of life, where she had to live in the constant fear of professional burglars in the neighbourhood as well as the 'Savages', a feared subcultural gang comprising young black men known for their violent and murderous ways who had perhaps, internalized the perception of being unworthy to compete with the whites "who ruled the world, owned the air and food and jobs and schools and fair play" while also being unwilling "to share with them any of life's necessities" (*Heart of a Woman* 697).

Moreover, as a worried mother, Angelou feared that her son would internalize the prevalent bias and stereotypes that was apparent all around him, in the news, the television, the radio, the advertisements, his school, reinforced by his teachers and even his peers. She often feared that life around him had probably drilled into his consciousness in "thousands of ways that he had come from nothing and was going nowhere" (*Heart of a Woman* 639). Guy Johnson was a gifted child with a precocious nature who was considered all too matured for his age, which had often led to him being misunderstood by his school mates as well as his teachers. Angelou felt that they did not (or could not) try to understand a black boy's mind given the limitations of their own prejudiced notions.

In one such instance, when she had received a call from Guy's school counselor to visit the principal's office, she found out that her son was reprimanded for explaining the process of sexual intercourse to ignorant kids which the staff had considered as profane and even explicit particularly owing to such frank explanations in front of their prudent white girls. Angelou knew well that it was not an instance of misbehaviour on his part rather it was his sense of openness towards the natural processes of life which were not meant to be treated as taboos rather to be openly discussed much as she had taught him. However, he had not only been misunderstood but was also made to feel like a misfit in school like she had been when she was a young student. It is precisely during such moments that she had often found herself tongue-tied, being unable to articulate the complexities of black experiences that shaped their lives, their consciousness and patterns of thought which had a considerable influence or bearing on their growing children.

Some of the questions that crowded her mind which she could not spell outright for the sake of decency and which remained in the realm of her thoughts were:

> How could I explain a young black boy to a grown man who had been born white? How could the two women understand a black mother who had nothing to give to her son except a contrived arrogance? If I had an eternity and the poetry of old spirituals, I could not make them live with me the painful moments when I tried to prove to Guy that his color was not a cruel joke, but a healthful design. If they knew that I described God to my son as looking very much like John Henry, wouldn't they think me blasphemous? If he was headstrong, I had made him so. If, in his adolescent opinion, he was the best representative of the human race, it was my doing and I had no apology to make. (*The Heart of a Woman* 639)

Although varying in degree, time and context, yet Bailey had also experienced a similar insensitive approach and treatment at an impressionable age as a child of barely eight years, when at the behest of a few white men, he was literally compelled to help out in carrying the mutilated body of a black man who had been lynched. Bailey along with the two black men named Mr. Bubba and Mr. Jim were instructed to place the dead body at a 'calaboose' that housed black prisoners pleading their white masters to save them the torture of being locked up with a rotting dead body. In response, the white 'bosses' only laughed at them and their situation, enjoying their own cruelty, that they could exercise on those whom they regarded with contempt and hatred as was the case throughout slave history. In fact, in *Mom & Me & Mom* (2014) Angelou even mentions the racial hatred and cruelty practiced by the much feared 'Ku Klux Klan' who would not spare young black boys from being beaten, wounded or even lynched if they even dared to take notice of white girls (9).

Angelou thus, felt that for black boys who grew up with their unaddressed perplexities of life and the psychological torment defined by their difficult experiences "raised the question of worth and values, of aggressive inferiority and aggressive arrogance" (*Caged Bird* 154). In fact, at times when she felt the need for psychological counseling or psychiatric help, she could not count on a psychiatrist to help her in making sense of the complexities of her own experiences or even her own mind. Despite her trying several times to visit psychiatrists both for her and her

son, she began to realize from her first-hand experiences that a white psychiatrist would never comprehend the workings of a black man's psyche or for that matter the psychology of a black woman, as he had no access to or idea on what a black person went through every moment of their lives every single day, noting her cynicism thus, "[t]he psychologist had been white, obviously educated and with those assets I knew he was well to do. How could he know what a young Negro [sic] boy needed in a racist world?" (*Heart of a Woman* 649).

Again in her personal essay titled "Porgy and Bess" (2008) she mentions how her bouts of guilt and depression had led her to Langley Porter Psychiatric Clinic where she found herself crying inconsolably for being unable to articulate her thoughts to a doctor who she felt would never be able to perceive or wholly comprehend the complexities of a black woman's life (65). Such repeated visits to psychiatrists always ended abruptly with her changing her mind and opting out of such attempts of seeking counseling. However, one of her closest friends Frederick Wilkerson, also her voice teacher and mentor had come to her rescue and even changed her perspective towards life forever through his recommendation of a simple exercise of writing down a list of blessings with her gratitude to God for each one of them. She found that when she followed this simple ritual, it instantly helped her to feel cheerful and complete. In this way, she not only found herself a route towards happiness but also felt all the more grateful for her blessings being able to look at the brighter side of life all over again and never despair even in her moments of crisis or difficulties.

Thus, the fundamental principle that worked in their day-to-day interactions with whites and their systems of power often filled with injustice, humiliation and disheartening moments was the – sheer 'optimism' of rising above it through 'self-created strategies of survival' whether it was through a spiritual, a song, a story, some scribbling or simply reminding each other of the treasures of wisdom captured in their age-old proverbs and witticisms. Angelou like her folks took pride in the belief that they held the "honorable tradition" (*Heart of a Woman* 661) of crossing all the hurdles of life that stood in their way, deriving from the lessons that their ancestors had passed on to them. Thus, she also defends the psyche of her people saying,

> In America we danced, laughed, procreated; we became lawyers, judges, legislators, teachers, doctors and preachers, but as always, under our glorious costumes we carried

> the badge of a barbarous history sewn to our dark skins. It had often been said that Black people were childish, but in America we had matured without ever experiencing the true abandon of adolescence. Those actions which appeared to be childish most often were exhibitions of bravado, not unlike humming a jazz tune while walking into a gathering of the Ku Klux Klan. (*All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* 947)

During the political climate of the mid 1950s, Angelou mentions that the serious intellectual debates or discussions that took place at the home of John Oliver Killens or even in the diplomatic circles were centered on the aspects of racial inequalities, black progress and racial integration (*Heart of a Woman* 651). It was a time when the Alabama and Montgomery bus boycotts and protests against segregation took place as part of the Civil Rights Movement. In one of her political conversation with Malcolm X when Angelou had expressed her resentment at Shirley Du Bois' non-participation in the black struggle, instead of condemning her opinion, the leader had explained the larger problem at hand saying,

> Picture American Racism as a mountain. Now slice that mountain from the top to bottom and open it like a door. Do you see all the lines, the strata? ...Those are the strata of American life and we are being attacked on each one. We need people on each level to fight our battle. (*All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* 1001)

Malcolm X always provided her with fresh insights into any situation and infused her with a sense of positivity. Angelou had always believed that the blacks would never let down their defenses to their oppressors just as the whites would never agree to put an end to their oppression, bent on perpetrating their racial hatred on them. However, her reviving sense of 'optimism' never failed her and in time she had made up her mind to become a part of the black struggle. Thus, it is interesting to note the transition from her days of admiring posters of black leaders at bookstores when she was as a homemaker, to finding the opportunity of working closely with the leading figures of her time like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X towards black progress─ Angelou in time had become a voice to reckon with.

Through both her writing and activism, Angelou had vehemently opposed all forms of discrimination defined in both the covert and overt practices of racism, sexism, patriarchy

classism that affected the lives of many like her all at once. Thus, as she mentions- apart from black women being "caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and black lack of power" (*Gather Together* 209) they also suffered oppression at multiple levels so that they were not just doubly or triply marginalized but rather multiply marginalized. However, there were exceptional women in Angelou's life, one of the closest being Vivian Baxter, who past the prime of her life had decided to join in the services of a Merchant Marine, as a member of the Marine Cooks and the Steward's Union at a time when such a profession for women, and particularly black women was unheard of in these services.

Baxter was told that black women would never make it to the 'union' to be able to go to sea and she had precisely wanted to challenge such prejudices even as she was self sufficient as a realtor, owner of a hotel, a surgical nurse and a licensed hairdresser with several certificates in a range of jobs in order to meet the slightest opportunity or professional demands that arrived her way. This made Angelou wonder at the formidable courage, hard work and resilience of black women like her mother who had taken all their disadvantages and turned them into their strengths throughout their history as she wrote: "I thought about black women and wondered how we got to be the way we were. In our country, white men were always in superior positions; after them came white women, then black men, then black women, who were historically on the bottom stratum" (*Song Flung up* 1166).

Angelou who was a firm believer in the ideal of freedom and strongly opposed to any form of oppression had found it completely unsettling that whites had not only wanted to overpower blacks but also desired to oppress their 'souls' as she says, "[o]ppression had made orphans of black Americans and forced [them] to live as misfits in the very land [they] had helped to build" (*Heart of a Woman* 685). In fact, her resentment against America finds an expression amidst the floating rumours and suspicions in Africa, following the attempted assassination of President Nkrumah, when Ghana had denounced American "capitalism", "imperialism", "intervention" and "racism" (*All God's Children* 949). To her Ghana's sudden hostility towards America meant that atleast Ghanaians would be more convinced of the 'truth' in all the painful stories and narratives of oppression that the American black diaspora had brought with them from their land. For this reason, she quietly thought to herself that, "[i]f South African

Blacks can petition the U.N. against their policy of apartheid, then America should be shown on the world stage as a repressionist and bestial racist nation" (*All God's Children* 993).

In this context, while discussing the 'systems' and 'processes' of differentiation or domination, Dhamoon (2011) highlights interactive processes that takes into consideration the "practices of gendering, racialization, ethnicization, culturalization, sexualization" (234) mentioning how "systems refers to historically constituted structures of continuation such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, sexism, capitalism, and so on" (234). She significantly cites Crenshaw's "metaphor of intersecting roads" (231) as also noted by Nash (2008) where various intersections of identity are represented by a free-flowing traffic which is relatively easier to examine when moving but difficult when accidental collisions occur at these intersections (467). To quote Crenshaw's famous analogy that emphasizes the necessity of acknowledging the unique experiences of black women she wrote thus,

> The point is that Black women can experience discrimination in any number of ways and that the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional. Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in intersection, her injury could result from sex, discrimination or race discrimination. (149)

In terms of discrimination that historically affected the experiences of black women Alexander-Flyod (2010) takes into account the conditions of slavery which was also one of the earliest forms of "sexual terrorism" (816) against which African-American women had struggled and resisted hard. Thus, Crenshaw (1991) describes the experience of black women as victims of male violence that stem from the intersections of racism as well as sexism. In this regard, Dhamoon (2011) opines that, "[w]here the roads intersect, there is a double, triple, multiple, and many layered blanket of oppression" (231). Throughout the phases of American history, right from the period of antebellum to post antebellum period, the days of Jim Crow Laws to the Civil Rights and after most socio-political discourses were centered on the intersection of 'race' which

Radhakrishnan (2007) defines as the "history of untruth" (81). He notes that these long embedded practices of systemic racism are seemingly difficult to pin down and define− given the eluding nature of the ideology of race itself (86). In the same strain of thought, Belkhir and Barnett (2001) significantly note that:

> Since the U.S. is characterized by a history of racism, sexism and classism that enhances social, cultural, and institutional forms of differentiation, inequality, and resource distribution, it is crucial to understand how capitalism uses racism, sexism and classism to maintain working-class disunity. (159)

Further, it reflects how various intersections such as gender, class and sexual orientation are some of the basis on which racial oppression is also justified by oppressors. Angelou held the strong opinion and insider's view on how "[t]he needs of a society determines its ethics" (*Caged Bird* 173) that considerably explained the occurrence as well as the prevalence of crime and deviance in the Black American ghettos or neighbourhoods in which she had lived from her adolescent years as she writes,

> Stories of law violations are weighed on a different set of scales in the Black mind than in the white. Petty crimes embarrass the community and many people wistfully wonder why Negros [sic] don't rob more banks, embezzle more funds and employ graft in the unions. 'We are the victims of the world's most comprehensive robbery. Life demands a balance. It's all right if we do a little robbing now.' This belief appeals particularly to one who is unable to compete legally with his fellow citizens. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 173)

However, Angelou's narratives had also presented glimpses on the white-side of stories as well. For an instance, Angelou in narrating her "vagabond life" (*Song Flung up* 1006) had described an uncommon experience in her life when she had decided to live in a 'commune' with her son for almost a year. While she worked at West Coast and Hawaiian night clubs singing, she also became a member of the Beatnik Brigade and later began life in a houseboat commune based in Sausalito which had also offered her the much needed "respite from racial tensions" (624) that surrounded her existence. Some of her commune mates were home makers, inventor,

musician, ichthyologist who were whites and with strong political leanings or convictions. In *Mom & Me & Mom* (2014) she had described how helplessness and poverty had led a white family comprising a couple, their old mother and teenage children to live in a car for a week who willing to work had looked for employments but had found no such available opportunities in line until Vivian Baxter had decided to help the family on behalf of the Stockton Black Woman for Humanity.

Angelou may have deliberately chosen to project the world of crime and deviance more than to focus on the law enforcers engaged in their roles of social control whom Angelou considered as men on duty who thrived on the misery of poor blacks. However, there is a reigning fear of the police among the criminals and deviants in the narratives. For an instance, Angelou fears any form of police intervention or arrest for managing a whorehouse or to even approach the 'police' for help when her baby is abducted by Big Mary owing to the nature of her illegal profession as a prostitute or to cite another instance, the juvenile gang who constantly feared the discovery of their junkyard homes by the police. The whites often had it easy with the law and this could be one possible reason for Blacks being indifferent to the unjust practices of the law enforcers and resorting to crime which was also a quick way of "making some nigger money" (*Caged Bird* 171). Thus, her insider's view of the underworld and the pockets of crime in the city enables her to see through the intentions of criminals and deviants who she opined made use of "their intelligence" (*Caged Bird* 173) in order to find opportunities where there was none and also to strike back in retaliation to the hostile society in which they lived as determined by oppressors.

Therefore, the active presence of the police or the rigid practices of legal procedures hardly surfaces or is evident throughout the autobiographical narratives. There is only a sense of 'caution' (and at times even the absence of it) rather than the sense of 'fear' of the police, legal procedures as well as matters of incarceration. Where it concerned the operations of the underworld with its criminal and unlawful activities, everything seemed to operate smoothly as though black criminals or deviants were almost immune to the law. For an instance, when Mr. Freeman's body is found, a policeman on duty only had arrived at old Mrs. Baxter's home to 'let her know' rather than 'enquire' about the man's death. The policeman had mentioned that the

man's body had probably been kicked to death before being dumped near the slaughterhouse and following this there was neither any form of enquiry, nor further investigation. However, Angelou seems to subtly hint that grandmother Baxter knew very well who could have been responsible for Mr. Freeman's death.

Rather than projecting the role of police or depicting scenes of police patrolling, car chases or courtroom procedurals that are commonly associated with depictions of American crime scenarios in popular literature on crime and deviance, Angelou highlights the role of bail bondsmen who readily come to the rescue of their clients in times of trouble with the police or the role of hired Roughnecks who settled scores on their own terms before law enforcers could even intervene. Angelou in her essay, "Accident, Coincident, or Answered Prayer" (2008) notes that Vivian Baxter who had to ensure immunity from the law given the risks associated with her businesses of running gambling clubs and pool halls, had Boyd Puccinelli as her bail bondsman as well as "police contacts" (31) in place. This is how Angelou had first learned the word 'recognizance' from her mother who often mentioned of being released "on [her] own recognizance" (*Mom & Me* 32). Vivian Baxter held the belief that going to jail was nothing to be ashamed of and that it did not "frighten [her]; jail was made for people, not horses" (*Mom & Me* 33) as she held that her arrests were not for lame reasons rather these could be explained as a defiant choice of asserting what was right in her opinion. She did not mind being in jail for assaulting a person who deserved it for cheating her in some way or the other or had little fear of shooting someone to death and alarming the police, if that person happened to threaten her life or the life of her loved ones.

In an incident when Angelou was locked up and battered by one of her lovers named Mark Jones also known popularly as Two Finger Mark, instead of calling the police (as her bondsman had suggested), Baxter decides to count on three strong Roughnecks from her pool hall in order to rescue her daughter and teach the man a lesson. However, before they could lay their hands on him, Two Finger Mark was arrested on the suspicion of stealing cartons of cigarettes which had actually been stolen and dropped in his car by two kids who stole from a tobacco vendor's truck. It was ironical that his actual offense- an attempt to murder his lover Angelou by trying to slash her throat with a razor and also his brutal battering had gone

completely undetected by the police and he was eventually arrested for a petty crime of stealing that he had not even committed.

In fact, following Mark's release and her daughter's recovery, Baxter had even insisted her to shoot the man with her .38 Special and settle scores for what he had done to her in his brutality. She even drew up a plan of setting him up in a bar at a hotel with the help of a bartender named Trumpet, getting her daughter to pretentiously flirt with Mark on the phone and thereafter inviting him to the hotel lobby where he would be caught without defense and unaware which would make it easy to kill him in an instant. However, even as Angelou had sufficient time to shoot him according to plan and Mark had been only a few steps away from her, somehow she could not follow her mother's instructions and bring herself to kill a man she had once loved. Thus, when she saw her daughter spare the life of a man, a lover who had almost killed her once, Baxter certainly felt that her daughter was a better woman than her after all she reasoned that it was the credibility of her grandmother's upbringing.

Probably, the only moment that the police are shown to intervene against crime and violence is during the radical protests and the Watts riots in Los Angeles that took place in 1965. On her first visit to Watts as a market researcher, Angelou had found an access to the black homes in the town where the women had opened up their hearts to her and the men shared their anxieties of losing their jobs and being unable to provide for their families "embarrassed at their powerlessness" (*Song Flung up* 1091) who had vented their frustrations through domestic violence. Most of the jobless men suffered bouts of depression, indulging in heavy drinking and whiling away their time away.

Although in its outwardly appearance, the town of Watts seemed orderly and pleasant yet in reality it housed the chaotic lives of the black families who lived in uncertainty about their present and their futures. This had resulted in broken or nuclear families, with people leaving their homes and abandoning their children. Many of these young children had thus dropped out of school and formed families with those who had suffered a similar fate. Moreover, given their unrestrained freedom, these children had begun to form 'gangs' that exhibited their anger and resentment out in the streets. Angelou in noting the gloom and disturbance that surrounded the entire town, also pondered on the tragic conditions and circumstances of the once stable families

who had led meaningful lives- with parents dreaming of better lives for their kids and young children who held a purpose in life notes:

> What could school offer them that could be of use? Education, so they could get jobs? But their parents had had jobs that were taken away. Their parents had believed in the system, and see them now? Empty uncaring husks of the people they once were. No school promised nothing, nothing save a chance to lose families they had just made and needed so desperately. (*A Song Flung up to Heaven* 1091)

The Watts riots that took place in 1965 were an outburst of such frustrations and resentment of its long deprived black residents who were victims of an unequal and unjust system. When the news channels covered this urban uprising the reporters had to first describe the location of the town which until then was literally non–existent particularly to the millions of white residents in the city. Although the Los Angeles police were immediately deployed to take control of the situation yet the rioters seemed fearless staring down death and hurling whatever they could find at the police, without even caring to run for cover and even preventing firefighters from dousing fires all around them. There were in fact as Angelou notes "hundreds of looters" (*Song Flung up* 1094) who were arrested by the police along with arsonists who burned down the white owned stores and super markets, numerous buildings and houses, inciting violence and vandalism as well.

Moreover, such extreme violence fed the news which captured black men burning and looting their town, represented acts of vandalism that captured a black man turning over a car or a black woman throwing a bottle at a store window. However, there were many civilians who chose not to engage in the violence but simply guarded over their half-damaged properties. In order to stop the rioting, the police were compelled to engage the 'National Guards', mostly comprising troops of young men who were probably uncomfortable with their new assigned roles or duties to fight against those equally young rebels and lawbreakers. In fact, Angelou records an overheard conversation of a soldier who expresses himself saying, "Hey, man, don't you feel stupid keeping people from stealing something that was already stole in the first place?" (*Song Flung up* 1095).

Although only the first day of the riots witnessed a major participation of the citizens irrespective of their age yet the enthusiasm of the older citizens had disappeared by the fourth day. Angelou had made a poignant observation that even as the elderly seemed to sense the meaninglessness of such violence, no one seemed to prevent the young rioters from the same. However, the riots had lasted for five consecutive days before the political figures and community workers went to survey the 'situation' brought under 'control' and thereby hold their press conferences. This was surprisingly followed by tourist visits as well as the visits of journalists from England, France and Soviet Union who interviewed the citizens of Watts who had long remained silent against the systems of oppression, inequality and ignorance that lacked an insight into the lives of the needy and the deprived sections of the society.

Angelou notes that the purpose of white visitors who came to Watts after it had been almost over, was simply "to get a thrill" (*Song Flung up* 1097) for they could not care any less about bothering themselves with the rooted problems of black lives knowing well that a black could not be bothered to beg for any kind of empathy and solidarity. They either resisted violence or retaliated through violence given the nature of their experiences in life. Perhaps, this explains why instead of sitting in front of the television and mulling over what had taken place, Angelou had literally dared to walk down the burning streets of Watts to understand the situation for herself even as she risked her life with rioters and the police being all around the town. She had thus captured the tension and impact of the Watts riots as a first-hand witness in one of her verses:

> Lighting: a hundred Watts
>
> Detroit, Newark and New York
>
> Screeching nerves, exploding minds
>
> Lives tied to
>
> A policeman's whistle.
>
> ("Riots: 60s" 37)

It was precisely the shortcomings and in fact the ignorance of the established systems and structures that led to their economic deprivation, position of powerlessness, frustrated lives, moral depravity and even helplessness that resulted in such an outburst. Also, this was not the first time that riots had taken place in the black neighbourhood and such violence had also taken place in Chicago in 1919 following the oppression and racial tensions as Doreski notes in *Writing America Black* (1998) that,

> Nationally the spring [referring to the Chicago riots] had brought racial violence. Riots from Arkansas to Washington, D.C., erupted from years of discontent. Journalists had warned Chicago that the unaddressed issues of unemployment and poor housing would surely lead to violence. (27)

Also, in this context James Baldwin in *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985) had aptly defined the deeper contexts and conditions that led to what was termed and always brushed aside as the 'riots' for he wrote,

> In the twentieth century…the idea of community scarcely means anything anymore…except among the submerged, the "lowly" …called communities because they are informed by their knowledge that only they of the community can sustain and re-create the other. The great, vast, shining Republic knows nothing about them-recognizes their existence only in times of stress, as during a military adventure, say, or, an election year, or when their dangerous situation erupts into what the Republic generally calls a "riot". And it goes without saying that these communities, incipient, wounded, or functioning, are between the carrot and the stick of the American dream. (qtd. in Doreski 24)

The Revolutionist Returnees in Ghana (despite their being radicals) had organized a solidarity march to coincide with the Great Washington March that took place on 28 August, 1963, a memorable day in the pages of American history. On this occasion, Martin Luther King Jr.'s landmark speech, "I Have a Dream" had articulated the aspirations of black people and their desire of true freedom and harmony. It was also the day when W.E.B Du Bois had silently passed away. Amidst the mixed feelings of joy and sadness, the marchers in Ghana who had

begun their march early given the difference in time zones, found themselves singing spirituals in memory of Du Bois even when their objective of the solidarity march was supposed to be strictly political in nature.

Moreover, when they gathered at the American Embassy they noticed two soldiers occupied with the routine ceremony of flag raising or hosting, with a black soldier getting hold of the sagging flag and placing it "lovingly" (*All God's Children* 986) on the arms of the white soldier. Although, some of the marchers of the group had enjoyed a good laugh at the two soldiers, yet Angelou was overcome by her emotions, thinking about how so many black people like her still believed in the only flag, the only home country that they ever knew as their own regardless of what they did to pretend and deny the truth and no matter where else in the world they went to and settled down. She thus wrote:

> Many of us had only begun to realize in Africa that the Stars and Stripes was our flag, and that knowledge was almost too painful to bear…I shuddered to think that while we wanted it pristine, its white stripe, summer cloud white. Watching it wave in the breeze of a distance nearly made us choke with emotion. It lifted us up with its promise and broke our hearts with its denial. (*All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* 987)

As a black woman who suffered racial prejudice, gender discrimination and white hatred all at once, she knew all too well on what oppression meant and also the life-long implications of what it meant to be born black as well. After all, starting from the days of Economic Depression in the south (prior to the Reconstruction period) where whites created a sense of "fear-admiration-contempt" (*Caged Bird* 41) in the black imagination to the period of 1950s, when black international leaders spoke against American racial policies at the cost of their lives, she had lived through it all. Thus, Stefancic and Delgado (2007) significantly note that with the "ever evolving history" of each race, the identified intersections are subject to change as well which explains the absence of a "single, easily stated, unitary identity" (4) of any individual. In yet, another important explanation forwarded by Jacqueline Jones, she interestingly employs the metaphor of a rushing river to explain the problems of describing the complexities of race and gender thus,

> Attempting to discuss race and gender as discrete categories of historical analysis is like trying to study a rushing river by capturing a piece of it in your hands. The river constitutes a powerful force and alters the landscape it traverses in dramatic ways; but it is not possible to isolate its constitutive parts and still appreciate its fluidity- that is, the very characteristic it defines. (220)

Paula Stewart Brush while discussing effects of racism considers race consciousness as denoting "a political, oppositional consciousness of race and racism" that is further encapsulated in the phrase "the personal is political" as suggested by Teresa de Lauretes (171). In this regard, Stuart Hall opines that owing to distinct "historical specificity" (176), the practice of racism also differs across different contexts. Further, de Lauretes considers "differing historical conditions" as factors that not only determine identity formation but the fashioning of consciousness as well which she aptly describes as:

> Consciousness of self, like class consciousness or race consciousness is a particular configuration of subjectivity, or subjective limits, produced at the intersection of meaning with experience…..In other words, these different forms of consciousness are grounded, to be sure, in one's personal history , but that history– one's identity– is interpreted or reconstructed by each of us within the horizon of meanings and knowledges available in the culture of the given historical movements, a horizon that also includes modes of political commitment and struggle. Self and identity, in other words, are always grasped and understood within particular discursive configurations. Consciousness, therefore is never fixed, never attained once and for all, because discursive boundaries change with historical conditions. (qtd. in Brush 177)

In addition to this, Barnes in highlighting the problems of black double consciousness, the ingrained "other" consciousness that further highlights the importance of examining the nature of multiple consciousness which he also describes as "myriad of identities, ideas, positions and other attributes" (409). Although, in the poststructuralist sense, the concept of identity is considered to be in a continuous state of flux which at once problematizes or makes it difficult to pin down its absolute or universal definition or meaning, yet at the same time it also opens up

multiple possibilities, positions and perspectives through which identities can be broadly examined.

Significantly, the article "Criminal Behavior as Theoretical Praxis" (1975) provides a critique of the ways in which criminal theories formulated by criminologists become more like forwarded "ideologies" owing to their objective view of criminal experience which plays a dominant role on the larger social consciousness (96). These ideologies find a way into the minds of people through the 'mass media' and projected imageries of criminals, notions of crime/criminals or deviance/deviants and reinstated definitions to mention a few. In this regard Cultural Criminology as a field of study and research developed by Jeff Ferrell and C.R. Sanders in their work with the same title, *Cultural Criminology* (1995) critically examine the complexities of crime in relation to culture and cultural processes. Further, it explores the role of mass media, media representation, and its influence on popular culture, all of which determine how 'crime' and 'deviance' are widely perceived in a given cultural context. As a significant area of scholarship, it draws from the disciplines of cultural studies and criminology more particularly stemming from the 1970s British School of Cultural Studies and British New Criminology. Some of the major cultural criminologists are namely D. Hebdige, Stuart Hall, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke, A. McRobbie, P. Willis, S. Cohen, J. Young, S. Redhead, among others.

The present chapter in tracing the concept of race and its pertaining discourses to the history of slave trade, highlights how through the centuries, these prejudiced practices had stealthily crept into established social structures as well as social systems and made its way into the larger social consciousness of both blacks and whites, further influencing their qualitative experiences of life. Moreover, Angelou in extending these aspects to the experiences of black women makes an important observation thus,

> Beyond her door, all authority is in the hands of people who do not look or think or act like her and her children. Teachers, doctors, sales clerks, librarians, policemen, welfare workers are white and exert control over her family's moods, conditions and personality; yet within the home, she must display a right to rule which at any moment, by a knock at the door, or a ring of the telephone can be exposed as false. (*The Heart of a Woman* 655)

Thus, ideologies of power and hegemony are clearly evident through the study of intersections at the macro-level that focuses on how the established social systems and relations inform everyday black experiences and further act as influential factors that shape crime and deviance. As Barker notes Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' is defined as "the strategies by which world views and power of ascendant social groups are maintained" (68) which also "connotes issues of power" (70). Further, Louis Althusser had significantly noted the influence of power through social 'institutions' which are referred to as the "ideological state apparatuses (ISAs)" (64) comprising family, religious institutions, education system and the mass media. In this context, while Winant notes how "racially based movements" had stormed the centre of American politics in what he examines as the developments of "the hegemonic post war nation" (177), Brush discusses how the major American movements such as the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements had also stirred women's race consciousness owing to the fact that it was primarily 'race' that affected their experiences of other social inequalities, particularly through its intersection with gender and class.

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Chapter V

Tracing Race, Gender and Class at the Intersections of Crime and Deviance

"Because she arrives, vibrant, over and again, we are at the beginning of a new history, or rather of a process of becoming in which several histories intersect with one another."

(Helene Cixous)

Belkhir and Barnett (2001) note "[r]ace, gender and class represent the three most powerful organizing principles in the development of cultural ideology worldwide" (157). Race, Gender and Class Studies was a more focus approach in the 1970s with its share of debates among critics, many of whom considered the study of race, gender and class as only a partial approach towards examining the larger social condition which was informed by multiple intersections. However, many black women scholars who took up Race, Gender and Class studies in a major way also asserted the significance of focusing on the ways in which the three identities created "social locations" (Landry 1). Moreover, with many coloured women thinkers entering the field in the 1960s and 1970s, the significance of these intersectional perspectives gradually began to emerge thereby providing deeper insights into the experience that occurred at these intersections across social contexts.

Around the same time, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Black Power Movement began to emerge which stood against institutional racism and became a call for black liberation as Stokely Carmichael, the leader of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) came to declare the urgency of establishing what he termed as Black Power. Van Horne writes that as an offshoot of the Civil Rights Movement, the highly charged and passionate Black Power Movement had made its mark in the American political scenario that was largely advocated by black youth of the time and largely aimed at transforming the "potential power of Black people into actual power" (372). Black power which cautioned that "a mind is a terrible thing to waste" (Van Horne 380) stood against institutional racism and brought to the fore the persistent problems that plagued their lives and prevented their progress. Jeffrey B. Leak in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997) notes that Carmichael's socio-political convictions stemmed from his opinion that the Civil Rights had not been much successful in altering much of

America's racist practices and that its immediate legal resolutions were only "an illusion of inclusion" (120).

The Black Power Movement was thus, aimed at tapping the potential of black people to ensure an all-round development of blacks as individuals, to instill in them a sense of 'black pride' and to build peaceful environments where they shared equal rights and would be able to shape their lives with full freedom. Thus, Van Horne notes that the Black Power Movement laid its emphasis on the assertion of freedom and free will that would bring about changes in their long history of oppression with "[o]ver nearly 12 generations of chattel slavery, followed by almost 5 generations of de jure Jim Crow" that saw them "treated as objects rather than as subjects in society" (368-369).

Significantly, the movement was also aimed at bringing about changes in the criminal justice system, thereby altering the lives of countless young black men and women who were indicted or incarcerated and who given the right opportunity could make counted differences to the society. However, many black feminist thinkers held the opinion that the Black Power Movement was not free from being patriarchal and discriminatory in nature. Nayar in *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (2010) explains the dissent expressed by black feminists who held that the Black Power Movement had placed black men in "a position to define" (109) the position of black women. Moreover, black feminists like bell hooks opined that the experiences of black women were rarely addressed by the Black Arts Movement or even the Civil Rights Movement. Significantly, Rachel L. Einloohner et al. highlight how gender significantly intersects with social movements in her discussion on 'engendering movements' noting that "movements can be gendered on the basis of the collective or individual identities they claim" (687). Further, they note that it is this process of engendering social movements that may affect, alter or even determine the success of "feminine" (687) movements owing to the stereotyped notions of 'feminity' or 'masculinity' itself. Therefore, they opine that the engendering of social movements take place at the individual, interactional and structural levels (682). Thus, Jackson and Scott note that 'gender' as a concept "emphasized the social construction of masculinity and feminity and the social ordering of relations between women and men" (2) where such constructions also differ from one social context to the other.

Angela Y. Davis who is widely regarded for her contributions to the study of race, gender and class in an interview with F. Barat titled "Progressive Struggles Against Insidious Capitalist Individualism" (2014) in response to a question on the significant role of black feminists during her discussion on the Black freedom struggles, Black Power Movement, prison systems and contemporary politics forwarded the opinion that,

> Black feminism emerged as a theoretical and practical effort demonstrating that race, gender, and class are inseparable in the social worlds we inhabit. At the time of its emergence, Black women were frequently asked to choose whether the Black movement or the women's movement was most important. The response was that this was the wrong question. The more appropriate question was how to understand the intersections and interconnections between the two movements. We are still faced with the challenge of understanding the complex ways race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and ability are intertwined— but also how we move beyond these categories to understand the interrelationships of ideas and processes that seem to be separate and unrelated. (Davis 4)

The nineteenth century witnessed the imagined notion of black criminality that was internalized by the whites, evoking images of black men engaged in killing, lynching, raping and rioting. Smith writes that white supremacists held the opinion that such criminality among the African Americans stemmed from after the slavery era, that continued into the century in the absence of the discipline of their white masters. However, Du Bois stood against any such extreme and insensitive perceptions on his people, arguing that 'criminality' was not 'inherent' among blacks but was rather 'situational' which was as true with regard to the example of the slavery period itself. Du Bois' open sociological exhibition held in Paris, one of the first of its kind also that displayed photographs of black men-women and black life among other exhibits such as statuettes, books by black authors, maps, pictures, patent volumes etc. to mark black progress. In her interpretation of the objective or purpose of this grand exhibition, Smith significantly notes that "Du Bois was not simply offering images of African Americans up for perusal, but was critically engaging viewers in the visual and psychological dynamics of "race" at the turn of the century" (582).

Rollock et al. take up a discussion on the long ingrained prejudices in the white consciousness towards black and other minorities in America characterizing them into stereotypes with regard to their intellectual abilities, talent, disposition and their potential all at once. The black body then became the site of white hatred, fear, criticism, control, labels and denigration. The authors held that starting from the early black childhood experiences of gaining self-awareness and negotiating differences in terms of the identity markers pointed out by whites, to adopting various modes of self-assertion as members of rising black middle class, the black experience was saturated with much pain and insecurities. Moreover, with the literal "zoologizing of the black body" (1083) - a metaphorical phrase borrowed from hooks, the black body was subject to the male gaze, easily objectified and conveniently otherized as well. In this regard, the authors also mention the voices of leading critics like Stuart Hall and bell hooks who point to the role of popular culture and media in hardening these stereotypes.

In their article "Gender, Religiosity, and Reactions to Strain Among African Americans" (2005) Jang and Johnson take up Robert Agnew's 'general strain theory' which emphasizes on the factor of emotional distress further categorized as: 'self-directed distress' (i.e., depression, anxiety, fear), 'other-directed stressors' (i.e., anger), 'state distress' that takes into account the frequency of its occurrence and 'situational distress' that is determined by situational context and degree. Agnew thus differs from the traditional strain theories posited by Merton, Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin as discussed earlier. Further, Agnew also suggested that there were several other conditioning factors or possibilities that could determine the predicament of an emotionally distressed individual engaging or indulging in criminal and deviant activities.

Further, the authors studied the inconsistencies in the rate of deviance and crime among black women who are found to be more distressed than their male counterparts while also extending Agnew's general strain theory to the study of strain among African Americans who considerably suffered "higher levels of psychological distress" (326) owing to the prolonged experiences of racism and unequal opportunities. Thus, emotional distress which resulted in violence not only stemmed from weakening factors of social control but also from 'strain' in Agnew's opinion who also suggested that both internal and external conditioning factors resulted in distress as well as both criminal or deviant action/inaction. The authors had also suggested that

at the macro-level 'religiosity' also stood as an important conditioning factor as also determined by empirical research that either influenced or checked against crime and deviance.

In her personal experiences, Angelou did not want black oppression to be a permanent feature of her land. She further expressed her opinion in the essay "In all Ways a Woman" (1993) that "being a woman [was] hard work" (6) given their set of struggles and challenges that they had to confront and overcome. Yet, she believed that every woman must realize the need to "resist considering herself a lesser version of her male counterpart" (6) as women held the significant role of empowering the nation. Moreover, where it concerned the lives of black women, Angelou felt that their spirit of survival and resilience was "often met with amazement, distaste and even belligerence" (*Gather Together* 209) often ignoring or overlooking the struggles and hardships that defined their experiences.

Further, in an interview with the *Black Scholar* (1977), Angelou had highlighted the difference in the subjective approaches of both black and white women with regard to family, men, children, and their own individual choices. This could be explained by the fact that the lives and experiences of black women were informed by their positions of disadvantage and marked by considerable hardships. In fact, she had noted an apt metaphor for the experiences of black women that one of her friends named Lillian had once mentioned to her in the opinion that every black woman in the country was vulnerable to the lurking dangers to their lives saying, "when you have your head in a lion's mouth, you don't snatch it out. You get up and tickle him behind the ears and you draw him out gradually. Every black woman in the country has her head in a lion's mouth" (*Song Flung up* 1089).

This also implied a strategy of survival for most black women who suffered challenges both in the domestic and the public sphere; were subjected to racial and gender discrimination (both by black and white men); met sexual exploitation and economic disadvantages; and bore psychological and emotional stress in their everyday lives. Angelou had been so vocal about her beliefs against the racist policies of America during her time in Egypt and Ghana that as a small instance, she had even opted out of visiting the American Embassies for any kind of help that she may have required in these unknown countries. She had expressed her firm conviction of the right to live as a dignified 'citizen' of the country to which she belonged and to be part of a

nation that valued its black citizens instead of looking down on them. Thus, she strongly articulated the desire for freedom and equality in her own country in the true sense, which would significantly alter the lives and experiences of its black citizens like her who held that "the dream of a democracy [was] not the sole possession of the strong" (*Letter to My Daughter* 84).

Thus, in highlighting the same, Angelou had taken up the significant contributions of Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party and Fannie Lou Hamer in an essay (titled after Hamer) that was published in *Letter to My Daughter* (2009). It was Angelou's tribute to Hamer as one of the first black woman who at a time when it was dangerous for a black woman to rebel had dared to step out to protest the flawed practices of the American democratic system questioning its racist practices. In fact, Angelou had noted that black history was witness to the shining examples of Patrick Henry, George Moses Horton, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and others who in their true spirits believed in the importance of both the true emancipation and empowerment of their people in the American democracy. In one of her elegies written in memory of Douglas and Tubman, she had captured the legacies that they had left behind for their people and the future generations through the metaphor of earth that eagerly awaited the sprouting of seeds and spreading of roots to blossom with life as she wrote:

> I lay down in my grave
>
> And watch my children
>
> Grow
>
> Proud blooms
>
> above the weeds of death.
>
> ("Elegy" 107)

Also, while living far from her home land, she had drawn inspiration and even inspired the circles of black women with various nationalities by narrating the brave stories of the two legendary black women─ Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, whose names shone in the pages of American black history. Tubman, who was a former slave had dedicated her life to work towards emancipation of her people despite suffering from severe brain injuries and Truth had almost risked her life by challenging a group of white men, in a meeting on equal rights in the

year 1851. The white men present in that meeting were not only alarmed at the dissenting voices of many white women who stood against gendered practices but were also unable to prevent a black woman from raising her protest. In this historic speech referred to as "Ain't I a Woman?" Truth had literally expressed the collective anguish and torment of black women who were the worst targets of victimization as well as multiple marginalization that layered their everyday experiences. Thus, she posed her rhetorical questions against such prejudices and unjust practices declaring:

> Yoked like an Ox, I have plowed your land. And ain't I a woman? With axes and hatchets, I have cut your forests and ain't I a woman? I gave birth to thirteen children and you have sold them away from me to be the property of strangers and to labor in strange lands. Ain't I a woman? I have suckled your babes at this breast… And ain't I a woman? (*Heart of a Woman* 751)

Ironically, what had followed her impassioned speech was the sarcasm of one of the male leaders of the town who had questioned the members if they were indeed being addressed by a woman at all and worse, suggesting that the white women who were present at the meeting could verify the same by taking Truth to the inner chambers in order to examine her in this regard. Such humiliation meted out to a woman regardless of her creed or colour was one example that spoke of the chauvinism and bigotry of the white supremacists.

Through her wide experiences, Angelou had also gained an understanding that gender biased practices or gender discrimination were prevalent in almost all societies. She had also learnt of the various cultural differences and practices with regard to the traditional norms and societal perceptions of women who were situated in different cultures. As a relevant example, Angelou had learnt from her personal experience that while 'polygamy' for a man was culturally acceptable in African society, his 'infidelity' was also justified by what was socially assumed to be the enormity of an African man's sexual appetite. On the other hand, African women were simply expected to make good wives, considered perfect for the African home, being denied of their dreams of an independent career, an individual identity as well as being ignored of their sexual desires. However, she had also mentioned that there were women like Hanifa Fathy the Egyptian poet who had stepped out of these socio-cultural biases and constructs thereby

emerging as powerful figures in their societies who stood as examples for other women. Angelou even had the chance to meet Fathy whom she admired as a poet thinking, "[i]t was unusual to hear an Egyptian woman's marital alliance not reported as her first accomplishment" (*Heart of a Woman* 847).

While in America there were legal procedures for divorcing couples, in Africa the custom of palaver was followed in which any dissenting couple would be persuaded by a mediator or negotiator to settle their differences and possibly reunite in marital harmony. In her own case, when Angelou had found out about Make's illicit relations with Mendinah, who was infamous in the diplomatic circles, Angelou had made up her mind to sever all ties with him. However, she had to sit through the custom of palaver for his sake which she had not only found embarrassing but also unnecessary. It was precisely at that moment that it had struck her as one small example of a clash or conflict of cultural values as Black Americans had no custom of "airing private affairs" (*Heart of a Woman* 859) in public like the Africans apparently did and moreover, black Americans considered infidelity as the ultimate 'blow' to a relationship unlike the African people who accepted it as part of their marital experiences.

Even within the personal space, the overriding power relations were evident in Angelou's marital relationship with her first husband Enistasious Tosh Angelos, a Greek sailor and her live-in relationship with her African partner Vusumzi Make. Although with regard to her first marriage, Vivian Baxter had disapproved of her daughter marrying a white man, yet Angelou's marital ties with Tosh Angelos were not strained owing to the difference in their racial identities rather their problems were centered on their personal equations of power where she refused to conform to a pre-defined role with regard to her wifely duties even if it meant giving up her dearly held romanticisms of an ideal 'happy family life'. She wanted to live freely without any form of imposition, even in matters such as the freedom of practicing her religion without having to conform to her husband's strict atheism or where she did not have to live with her husband's hostility towards her beloved mother for an instance.

Moreover, Angelou had always been a provider for her child, making the best of her talents, ever energetic in exploring new avenues of work and far too outgoing to be stuck in the image of the ideal homemaker and worse adjusting her difficulty of fitting into the role of an

ideal African wife as in the case of her live-in relationship with Make. Before long her love for her second partner had also worn out owing to his overbearing presence and patronizing attitude towards her. In sharp contrast to his intellectual acumen and broadened world-views, given his wide travels, his voracious reading as well as numerous interactions with people of various nationalities and cultures, Make also seemed to exhibit a narrow-minded approach with regard to his private world that involved his family and his personal equation with Angelou. She had tried to mend her relationship with Make but when she had found out about his promiscuity and sexual affairs, all her efforts to salvage their relationship had come to an end. In fact, Make had tried to justify his promiscuity as a 'necessity' in a man's life in order to convince her of accepting and even forgiving his natural urges. Thus, even as he played the role of an assertive leader who fought for the ideals of freedom in the public domain, yet in his own personal space, he not only denied Angelou her sense of freedom but also misused his own.

Make had discouraged Angelou from resuming an independent career, curtailing her freedom to take decisions, disagreeing with her desire to provide for the family, frequently leaving her alone at home and being adamant with regard to his decisions for their family. In fact, when she had decided to take up the job of an Associate editor of the *Arab Observer* in Cairo without his prior consent of even applying for the job, it had completely infuriated him. Moreover, he had asked her to refuse her friend David Du Bois regarding her job, asking her to explain to him that even as she had opted to work like all other 'American' women were naturally inclined to, Make had "reminded" (836) her that she was "an African wife" (*Heart of a Woman* 836).

At the same time given her bitter experiences, she also knew well that a black American husband would treat her no better than an African man where it concerned the imbalance or even equality in the power equation with a strong willed black woman like her. In her essay "In the Valley of Humility" (2009), Angelou also mentions her decade long marriage with Paul DuFeu who hailed from England which had eventually resulted in a mutual separation as he admitted of being tired with "monogamy" and his desire to find "more provocation in life" (117). Despite her two inter-racial marriages, the first with Tosh Angelos and the second with Paul Du Feu their

personal differences, beliefs or desires were some of the causes for her separation rather than factors of racial or cultural differences.

Angelou's parents were not the best of examples given the complexities of their own lives, their absence in her formative years and their deviant practices both in the public and their private spaces. On the one hand, Angelou had noticed her father's promiscuous ways, leaving his partner Dolores to deal with her frustrations at home and on the other hand, she describes her mother's carefree ways of life, lacking commitments in love, bringing her new lovers to live along with her children (who often had to adjust themselves to these strangers) and being a daredevil when it came to evading any form of dangers from men particularly in her gambling circuits. Vivian Baxter was not only prone to quick temper but was also known for her mean ways, who while stepping out into the public space, would make it a point to "slip a little .32 in her big skirt pocket" (*Caged Bird* 160) as she also had worked late at the pinochle tables with the responsibility of managing large sums of money. Angelou had thus begun to validate from her own experiences, the fact that black women had to come in terms with the stark reality of the harsh conditions, against which they had to constantly prove themselves saying,

> Black females, for most part, know by the time they are ten years old that the world is not much concerned with the quality of their lives or even their lives at all…Behind the women's eyes, however, there is a wisdom that does not pretend to be unaware, nor does it permit gullibility. (*A Song Flung up to Heaven* 1088)

Similar to the lives most other black women, Angelou felt that her life was filled with constant insecurities, impending dangers and difficult challenges of survival. Although, she had managed to overcome the insecurities of her youth, yet a coveted life of peace continued to elude her even through her matured years as an adult where it almost felt like trading one set of insecurities for another. To cite an instance, she mentions her personal experiences of residing in various cities and localities with her grown up son where she was constantly preoccupied with worries regarding their security at home owing to "the possibility of crime" (*Heart of a Woman* 689) and the lurking presence of professional burglars in the middle class neighbourhood to which she had moved into from the poor black neighbourhood of her adolescent years.

However, the social and economic compulsions to be self-sufficient and secured at all times had considerably hardened the sensibilities of many black women to such an extent that when circumstances demanded they did not hesitate resorting to deviant means in order to resist any form of danger or threat to their lives. Thus, in the instance when a violent gang of mostly young school-going boys known as the 'Savages' had threatened to kill her son, Angelou had found no other way to protect her child's life than opting to personally warn the leader of the Savages with a borrowed pistol at his own home despite knowing that they were feared for their brutality. In fact, the Savages as they called themselves were a terror to their neighbourhoods including the police. Elsewhere, she also mentions their cruelty of not only committing murders but also mutilating murdered bodies. Despite her hostility towards such subcultural gangs, Angelou had also found herself examining the psyche of these juvenile delinquents and the nature of their social experiences that eventually shaped their anti-social attitudes and exposed them to deviant subcultures that made them feel more comfortable about themselves as she notes,

> They were young black men, preying on other young black men. They had been informed, successfully, that they were worthless, and everyone who looked like them was equally without worth. Each sunrise brought a day without a hope and each evening the sun set on a day lacking in achievement. Whites, who ruled the world, owned the air and food and jobs and schools and fair play, had refused to share with them any of life's necessities−and somewhere, deeper than their consciousness, they believed the whites were correct. They, the black youth, young lords of nothing, were born without value and would creep, like blinded moles, their lives in the darkness, under the earth, chewing on roots, driven far from light. I understood the Savages. I understood and hated the system which molded them…. (*The Heart of a Woman* 697)

She had understood the angst of these young black boys as she herself had experienced the same in her youth which enabled her to see through the factors that moulded their psyche and most importantly to empathize with their circumstances in a society that had always alienated them in almost every way. However, she had also opposed the terror that they created in the lives of people in a bid to assert their powerful presence against their early experiences of powerlessness

in the dominant society. In one such conversation with James Baldwin, she had learnt of the infamous 'Roughnecks' who were known to move about the streets of New York. The Roughnecks were high school gangs among other such gangs such as the 'Saints', mostly comprising juvenile delinquents who were engaged in theft, drinking, fighting and even killings. Also, unlawful activities and getting into trouble with the cops was common among the black juvenile gangs who cared little about messing with the law and frequenting jails. Further, William Chambliss had also noted the difference in the incarceration of these two gangs where the Roughnecks and the Saints comprised boys from the lower classes and middle classes respectively, the former perceived as trouble and the latter as "bright youths" (Elrod and Ryder 37) who were led astray.

It was perhaps the fear of threat or unknown dangers to life that probably explains why Vivian Baxter and her daughter held weapons in their self defense and protection. With her care-a-damn attitude and her villainy, Vivian Baxter would reiterate how important it was for any woman to stand in her own defense at any given moment saying: "You see, baby, you have to protect yourself. If you don't protect yourself, you look like a fool asking someone else to support you" (*Mom & Me* 147). In fact, to save herself from any form of trouble with the police, Baxter at all times had her own bail bondsman ready as already mentioned before. Moreover, she had developed a sharp foresight given the dangers that she courted every day which is why she always had everything planned out before trouble came knocking and always prepared herself for the worst of situations.

Angelou thus recalled the vivid memories and her early experiences of seeing police cars and ambulance vans frequently arrive outside their home which meant that her mother had spelled trouble. In one such incident, Vivian Baxter had cared little to fire shots and wound her business-partner for cursing her repeatedly despite her warning and in another she had assaulted her live-in partner David which had resulted in her arrest as well as her easy bail. To cite other instances, on one such visit to a departmental store after attending church, Baxter had again ended up assaulting a middle-aged woman who was also a friend who had tried to force and nag her into stealing after having stolen from the store herself and this was enough to trigger her anger, following which there was a fight and both the women were also arrested. Even Angelou

had not escaped her mother's temper when Baxter found her arrive home very late after having spent an evening with her friend feasting on Mexican food. Baxter had thus assaulted Angelou as well with a bunch of keys, half out of worry and half out of anger at her taking liberties. Baxter had later explained that she had instantly reacted thus out of fear– the imaginary fear of finding her daughter in a helpless situation or being victimized by someone or trapped in some unknown danger like she had once been as a child.

After the state had curtailed or lifted the earlier segregation laws, Baxter had even carried her .38 revolver to a "newly integrated hotel" (*Mom & Me* 138) in California just so that she could scare anyone who denied her the right to enter its premises. In yet another incident when Vivian Baxter had found out that her lover Cliff Thomas had cheated on her, she reached his home to frighten both him and his former wife with her German Luger pistol, threatening him into her car, taking him to her home and demanding an apology on his knees until the terrified man had done as he was told. To Baxter, a weapon not only served as a mechanism of self defense but was also an assertion of her power, an indicator that she would not let anyone mess with her or get the better of her in any way. Although Angelou herself did not conform to any such violence and pardoned people easily, yet she held the firm belief that it was necessary for people to protect their self-worth and defend themselves at all times as she says, "I am never proud to participate in violence, yet, I know that each of us must care enough for ourselves, that we can be ready and able to come to our own defense when and wherever needed" (*Mom & Me* 103).

There was a time in Angelou's life when she desired to be prosperous having "money without fame and the ease without the strain" (*Gather Together* 275) however, such patterns of thinking had stemmed from the inexperience of her younger days which had led to her 'drift' from her virtuous behaviour towards deviance. She had admitted that when it came to confession and repentance for her misdeeds and her sexual transgression at Church, all that she had felt was a sense of wonder at the countless black girls in the country who had suffered lonely struggles and had borne early pregnancies. As a young mother, Angelou had the freedom of deciding her own career or profession as well as the 'choice' of accepting her mother's request who wanted to provide for both her and her son's comfort but she had consciously decided not to depend on her

mother or even surrender to "old lady welfare" (*Caged Bird* 378) being determined to charter her own course in life. Angelou was well-aware of her responsibilities and had taken everything in her stride without regret or remorse. However, the predicaments of her life and the turn of events had often compelled her into making rash decisions which she had never even imagined, for an instance, apart from all her deviant activities that she had engaged in her adolescent years, she considered the day that she had slept with a stranger for money as her first experience with the world of "mortal sin" (*Gather Together* 348), a sense of guilt that she could not erase from her memory, a sense of fragmentation that robbed her self-worth and an inner turmoil that caused a self-repulsion at her own deeds remembering the virtues that her grandmother had once instilled in her and how the Bible itself warned against adultery with punishments for erring women like her.

At fifteen years of age, she had easily convinced her mother to support her desire of finding a new job while she was still studying at school. Despite the limited jobs for the inexperienced, she seemed selective in finding a suitable option, running her thoughts through a list of available jobs. She had struck off options such as office work that involved manual typing, opting out of shorthand or filing work given her "intellectual pride" (*Caged Bird* 203); of working at war plants and shipyards for being underage. Also, she had always taken pride in her talent as a girl who was passionate about dance and respected her body which was her medium or "instrument" (*Gather Together* 323) through which she could express her art to ever compromise with it in anyway. Ironically, with the turn of events and the unpredictable experiences of her life, she had found herself compelled to work as an office employee (much to her dislike) outside her country in the absence of pay parity which despite her disagreement was justified by an absence of necessary qualification and worse, had to compromise on her dignity, pride and her self-esteem work all at once to work as a prostitute in the hope of saving someone else's trouble. Yet, again this incident represents prostitution and sexual coercion as a continuation of slavery or slave practices where the slave holder was ironically not the white master but a black man. In this context, Gemma Tang Nain makes an interesting point where she notes that while sexist practices are common in both white and black men, sexism in white men stem from their "power" whereas in the case of black men it stems from "a position of powerlessness" (see Jackson and Scott 118).

Black women were exploited and subjugated throughout their history. As Davis notes in *Women, Race & Class* (1981) slave women were treated as "breeders" (8) or sexual subjects, being whipped or compelled to work even when pregnant, not being able to nurse babies and bearing painful breasts. Many slave women worked for the Louisiana levees, Southern railroads and many in the mines of the South were also treated as "beasts of burden" (10) pulling trams in the mines which was far too inhumane. While elaborating on the treatment meted out to black slave women, Davis writes thus,

> Expediency governed the slave-holders' posture toward female slaves: when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were regarded, in effect, as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were locked into their exclusively female roles. (6)

Although post-industrialization, the work-spheres were altered for black women yet one form of slavery was replaced by another which highlighted the continuing forms of sexual exploitation and the complete disregard for the black women's well-being, first by white men and followed by their own men. Davis also mentions that while black women worked equally as black men "bearing the terrible burden of equality in oppression" (19), they also were equal in the domestic sphere as well as asserting themselves against slavery.

Angelou was not much different from her independent mother who defined herself as the "do it yourself girl" being the kind of woman who was in Angelou's words "a firm believer in self-sufficiency" (*Caged Bird* 203) and she was surrounded by strong women like grandmother Henderson, grandmother Baxter, Bertha Flowers and her women friends whose lives were centered around and inseparable from 'work' in every way. Although in Ghana and Egypt, African women were mostly confined to the domestic sphere of work yet American black women found themselves engaged in both the domestic and the public sphere of work. According to Koyana, the perspective of black women and the dynamics of their family or community relationships was defined by "motherwork" (a term coined by Patricia Hill Collins) took into account both their personal and public space precisely because "black motherhood always encompassed work" (36). One of Angelou's poems titled "Woman Work" too describes

the multi-tasking that a black woman had to do in terms of work, surviving all odds and challenges.

Again, Black women were considered to have a tendency towards identifying more with the image of "Black superwoman" which also further highlighted in the opinion of Beauboeuf-Lafontant, "a sign of dis-ease and un-ease, of problematic divisions of labor within Black families as well as between Black and non-Black communities" (119). In this regard, Woodard and Mastin highlight the role of *Essence* (1970), a lifestyle magazine for black women which played an influential role in identification of four major stereotypes with regard to American black women viz. the mammy, matriarch, sexual siren and welfare mother or queen. The 'mammy' figure represented the loyal domestic help and caretaker in the white households; the 'matriarch' represented the mother who was instrumental in controlling and disciplining the black home; the 'sexual siren'- a dominant and negative image that defined a sexually aggressive black woman; and the 'welfare mother' representing the figure with little or no desire to work apart from a casual approach to life and living, given the welfare received from the state (271-271).

Further, Barker in defining the term 'stereotype' as "vivid but simple representations that reduce persons to a set of exaggerated, usually negative, characteristics" (264) also mentions the five major stereotypes of African American men that were highlighted by Donald Bogle namely: tom, coon, mulattoes, mommies and bucks. Black men were often cast into these convenient categories where the ideal good black was referred to as 'Tom'; 'coon' referred to gamblers and entertainers; 'mullatto' defined the desirable black man with mixed ancestry; and 'buck' figure represented a black man with hyper masculinity. In fact, black men were equally subject to stereotypes as their female counterparts and these were all the more reinforced in the field of work. To cite such instances, Angelou mentions how black men (unlike black women) were considered to be 'bad news' in show business; black men were the objects of envy for white men given their inborn physical attributes and what they perceived as the black man's hyper masculinity that made way for white suspicion as well as the presumption of their natural tendency towards crime or violence.

The prevalence of stereotypical notions as well as the uneasiness of being stereotyped also explains a small yet significant instance when Guy as a school going boy had expressed his discomfort to Angelou regarding his surname i.e., Henderson which made his slave ancestry apparent to people as someone had pointed out to him which naturally made him self-conscious. Although, it is convenient to classify the women (and men) in Angelou's autobiographies according to their roles in their respective sphere of work, for an instance grandmother Henderson may easily qualify as the ideal 'matriarch 'or Vivian Baxter as the 'welfare mother', yet casting them into such stereotypes would also mean limiting the multiplicity of their roles. Such labels and social definitions tend to reproduce the burden of these stereotypes by either creating the pressures of conforming to or the difficulties of struggling against such notions for those who are cast into these moulds.

Through her struggles, Angelou as a working class mother had deconstructed the social norms of motherhood, the hierarchical divisions in the family structure and the ideal notions of marriage thereby challenging the "cult of true womanhood" (35) as noted by Siphokazi Koyana. Moreover, she had also succeeded in breaking down racial discrimination at work for an instance, she made her way to become the first black girl to be employed as street car conductorette in San Francisco, her first job experience at a time when coloured women were not even expected or accepted for the job. In fact, she had persisted in her desire by garnering support from the black organizations as it was a job that she had always fancied as a young school-going girl and thought herself well-suited for the same. She described her inner conflicts where she could not bear to be denied her right to employment by a white woman also a Secretary to the Manager of the Market Street Railway Company to avail the opportunity of working as a conductorette thinking thus,

> The incident was a recurring dream, concocted years before by stupid [sic] whites and it eternally came back to haunt us all. The secretary and I were like Hamlet and Laertes in the final scene, where, because of harm done by one ancestor to another, we were bound to duel to the death. Also because the play must end somewhere. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 205)

Even after she had won this opportunity, she found herself in difficult situations as she had to work in strange shifts at night that it felt like the authorities had purposely assigned her the difficult tasks of keeping up her new job in the streetcars. Her mother had stood beside her at this point, constantly boosting her morale, encouraging her to persist in her desires and even driving her daughter home early in the mornings from the car barns. Following a semester of work, when she had returned to school, Angelou had also experienced a new sense of confidence in her own abilities with the experience that she had gathered and the realization that life had much more to teach than the George Washington School itself. Thus, school life no more interested her and her mind had begun to waver from the confined space of her school to the open streets of San Francisco where she could well be her independent self and explore more of the world around her. In fact, her gaining of self-confidence had considerably drifted her from what she had described as the "Black ghetto's shielding-sponge quality" (*Caged Bird* 207) and she strongly desired to transcend these confining spaces of her school and her neighbourhood to find her own niche.

As she had begun to venture out for new work opportunities, experimenting with a string of jobs Angelou had also found herself interacting with men from the underworld at the nightclubs where she had worked and frequently met or interacted with gamblers, boosters, thieves, street-walkers, pimps, and panderers who had become a common feature during her adolescent years. Thieves and boosters operated at night with their underhand dealings and contracts, often earning a tidy sum from pimps who brought their stolen goods with the money that they took from their girls. Also, she had met several instances of discrimination at work-where she had to exude a certain sense of 'sexual' appeal to thrive as a club dancer despite the embarrassment and self-consciousness of being close to nudity. In this regard, Angelou also mentions that she had never wanted to be a striptease dancer in a night club but the job paid a good amount of three hundred dollars although they had to strip their clothes and perform nude to deserve such a pay. However, in keeping with the requirements of the job, she had managed o purchase a skimpy costume to which she had decided to add long fancy feathers just as her mother had suggested reminding her: "[u]nderstand if you are not going to take off your costume, what you will have to wear will have to be so skimpy that the audience will be satisfied since they will be seeing nearly all of you" (*Mom & Me* 120).

The gamblers and sex workers from San Francisco and Los Angeles who found their way to the towns on weekends to make money were never apprehended by the police owing to which crime prospered in the pockets of small towns. As represented in Clara's whorehouse, the lives of sex workers were ruined with drugs, competition and rampant exploitation both by their pimping men as well as their customers who enacted their power play with these women. For an instance, following a sexual encounter with a white man, Clara who was a black prostitute had expressed her utter dislike for her white clients owing to their patronizing attitudes as she says, "[t]hen when they get finished they got some nerve to ask you how you liked it. And talk about your freaks! White men can really think of some nasty things to do" (*Gather Together* 349). When Angelou learns about Tolbrook's profession much after she had been victimized into prostitution, she also speculates that he must have begun pimping in the South with white girls "thinking that by taking their bodies and their money, he was getting revenge on the white men, who were free to insult him, ignore him and keep him at the bottom of the heap" (*Gather Together* 365). Tolbrook had not only jilted her in love but had also kept her in the dark about his underhand activities, his connections with the Eastern pimps, maintaining various brothels, supplying narcotics to the girls and his promiscuous relations with them, while he also had a woman at home who was perhaps his wife.

Again, when Angelou had first applied for a job at the *Arab Observer*, longing to step out of caged existence with her partner Make, the middle path that had been suggested to her was to form women's organizations or women's clubs among the wives of the diplomats as African wives were not expected to work or engage themselves in the public sphere. While in America, the problems that black women often encountered were rooted in the dominant race or racial issues, in Africa these seemed to be rooted in the issues of gender. Also, she had often found herself in moments of desperation while working far from her country and her family, where even in order to fly back home to her son, she had to 'work' and work harder to earn her basic flight fare. Thus, the continuity of displacement that had started from her early life had continued to affect her experiences where she not only suffered spatial displacement but also displacement from her personal comfort zone or even the sense of emotional security that she had found in her home and her child. Neubauer in examining how displacement informs Angelou's experiences

also notes that she also portrays the common reality of displacement in the lives of black people and their families that often remained unaddressed.

While growing up she had noticed the "black male disappointment" (*Gather Together* 302) in her brother Bailey who despite his talent and intelligence found too many doors of opportunities closed for him. This remained an unresolved issue at multiple levels owing to which black men equally suffered as victims of prejudice as well. She saw how black men carried a sense of suspicion which she describes as their "distrust and fear of whites which history had taught them in distressful lessons" (*Caged Bird* 164). Perhaps, the socio-economic disadvantage, stereotyped roles of (hyper) masculinity and the pressures of survival explained why young men like Bailey were often compelled to turn towards the limited options that were available to them. Instead of finding the scope of developing his aspirations as a bright young boy, Bailey had turned into a professional fence to sustain himself while being involved in drug use often moving in and out of jails. In one such instance, Angelou mentions how their "houseman" (*Mom & Me* 29) Papa Ford had expressed his resentment towards Bailey's decision to quit his job after losing his wife whom he had loved dearly saying,

> This ain't no time to leave the road. Get his meals for free. Tips. He can bring home butter and stuff can't he? Nigger [sic] men ain't got but two outs now, as I see it. Keep on sleeping with Old Lady Southern Pacific, or start sleeping in the streets…. Any kind of business he try to start going to be against the law, and he have to be sharper than mosquito shit, too. Keep out of jail. He better stay on the road. (*Gather Together in My Name* 360)

This also reflects the black patriarchal notions that were constantly reproduced creating and insisting on the pressures of survival that mostly black men had to confront with, at times being pushed to the points of desperation and even, towards the dangers of subversion. In one of the meetings with Martin Luther King Jr., Angelou on being asked about her sibling had half-heartedly revealed that her brother had been doing his time in jail for his involvement in selling stolen goods, wondering if the leader would at all understand the circumstances that had led to her brother's imprisonment. However, much to her surprise, instead of condemning him, the leader had 'explained' the problems that affected the black youth in America. In fact, even a

leading figure like Malcolm X was known to have transformed his life from his days of hustling on the streets to becoming one of the most influential leaders of America.

When the time came for a black man to "push off from the wharf of safety into the sea of chance" (*Caged Bird* 201) it also presented the possibilities of leading him into a world of unforeseen dangers. And, it often saddened her to stand as a witness to many young talented black men who resorted to drugs in the street corners without an inkling on how they were wasting a brilliant life that could have been theirs if they had tried harder as she says,

> Sparkling young men who were hopes of the community had thrown themselves against the sealed doors set up by the larger community, and had not only hadn't opened them, but hadn't even shaken the bolts. The potential sharp-tongued lawyer, keen eyed scientist and cool-hand surgeon changed his mind about jimmying the locks and took to narcotics so that he could float through the key hole. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird* Sings 321)

While most black men in the ghettos often grew up and grew apart from their homes often wandering into the subversive paths there were others such as Angelou's childhood friend in Stamps named L.C. Smith, a decent young man who was so tied to his Southern roots and his old dependent father that he had not only ruled out shifting to the cities in search of new prospects but had also committed suicide by shooting himself on the day of his father's funeral.

Although Angelou took pride in being a survivor who had the courage to survive all the odds that stood in her way yet there were several moments in her life when she too had contemplated on suicide particularly owing to her long separation from her child and had suffered pangs of parental guilt together with a sense of hopelessness in life, devaluing both herself and the life she had led. Significantly, Steffensmeier and Allan in their discussion on the nature of female offending, note that women involved in drug abuse have a tendency to step "into the underworld and criminal subcultures" (471) where male drug users are seen to take advantages of such women addicts in their network. They bring into light the socio-economic contexts, the unavailability of opportunities, additional responsibilities of children, emotional vulnerability, "situational pressures" and "threatened loss of valued relationships" (467).

Further, the authors note that criminological theories reasonably explain the patterns and determining factors of crime by women also highlighting power relations of patriarchy as responsible towards "pushing women into crime through victimization, role entrapment, economic marginality and survival needs" (470). In this regard, Klien and Kress (1976) take into account how the radical and progressive criminologists (unlike the traditional criminologists) emphasized the importance of studying the socio-economic and political conditions of women that is considered to have a direct effect on crime.

Lucia Zedner's essay traces the historical development of studies with regard to women and crime with particular reference to the eighteenth and nineteenth century England. While noting the psycho-social context of the periods, the author notes the practiced conventions and the prevalent notions that defined the ideals of 'womanhood' and the 'notions of the fallen women'. In other words, during the middle 19th century, women were defined or socially judged by the ideals of womanhood which were considered as standards or conventions of feminine behaviour during the period, defying which they were subject to the torments of being labeled immoral or fallen. Moreover, deviant women or women criminals who toed the line of social norms and conventions were not only penalized but were expected to reorient themselves with their lost ideals. Thus, in the Victorian age, the behaviour of women criminals or deviants was studied in the light of Victorian morality, and later through biological and psychological perspectives.

Further, Zedner in her essay "Women, Crime and Penal Responses" (1991) discusses the contributions of Michel Foucault, the French philosopher in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1977) that had influenced many revisionist writers based on his discourse of the significant role of prison management and prisons as ultimate institutions of discipline. Zedner in this regard writes thus, "Foucault suggested that the conception of power as knowledge formed the basis of this disciplinary order. Penal institutions were primarily observatories in which offenders could be watched, known, and thereby controlled" (310).

The first longitudinal study of female delinquency was conducted by Glueck and Glueck (1934) as noted in "Explaining Deviance by Adolescent Females" (2002). Hoyt and Scherer in "Female Juvenile Delinquency" (1998) enquire into the relatively overlooked area of female

juvenile delinquency in mainstream sociological theories and research to find out the individual factors, social contexts including peer-group influences and social environments that influence female delinquency. In the early stage of understanding female delinquency, delinquent patterns of behaviour were considered to have evolved from female sexual impulses or sexuality. Again, it was also widely assumed that the radical influence of feminist movements accounted for the sharp rise in female delinquency, although empirical findings did not record any such difference. Gradually, female delinquency came to be understood in terms of various influential factors such as psycho-social factors, social environments, family factors, socialization, social controls, power-controls based on the 'power-control theory' that considers 'social class' of a family as influential in producing delinquency. Thus, the study significantly points out the importance of formulating a more gender-integrated theory that could provide a detailed knowledge and holistic idea on female delinquency for further studies and research.

Josefina Figuera-MacDonough in "Feminism and Delinquency" (1984) ascertains the possible influences of the 20th century feminist movements on the rising trend of female delinquency to a certain extent through her analysis mentioning how Durkheim opined that radical shifts in gender roles and the expansion of opportunities for women created a "state of normlessness" (326). Again Robert Merton is also mentioned to have noted that women's movement inspired many women to defy social norms and resort to deviance in a bid to achieve "heightened aspirations" (326). The author's empirical study suggests that exposure to the ideals of women's movement had a more socially productive outcome seen in positive aspirations among women and only a small proportion of women were found to take recourse to deviance, driven by success-oriented ambitions in order to grab denied opportunities.

In questioning the historians and criminologists who have brushed aside the area of women and crime to the margins of criminological theory, Feely and Little point towards various studies that reflect the declining trend of female criminality for an example the decline witnessed in England from the early period of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The economic and social historians also note that in between these centuries, female status and roles in the household and the public sphere were marginalized (743). In a wider context, they examine the suggestions made by sociologists on the aspect of women and crime, such as the influence of

social conformity on female criminality, decline in female criminality due to their entry in the labour force and the influence of social control exercised on both men and women.

Norland et al. in their article "Intrafamily Conflict and Delinquency" (1979) opine that family plays a critical role in shaping children's consciousness and is one of the most significant variables of examining patterns of delinquency. In general, it is seen that social control is exercised more on adolescent females and is more lenient in case of adolescent males. Family plays a major role in this regard and thus, family ideals and conflicts are seen to have a lasting effect or even a shaping influence in both the psyche and behavioural patterns among adolescents. While pointing at the unavailability of sufficient data on the changing aspects of women and crime, Smith and Visher in their article "Sex and Involvement in Deviance/Crime" (1980) through their research findings suggest the "convergence" or similarity in the black male and female ratio where it concerns deviant actions are "less rapid" in the case of criminal actions as the authors suggest is also reflected through empirical data (698).

Again, Shawn Michelle Smith in her article "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others" (2000) in examining the Exhibition of1900 that displayed portraits and photographed images of blacks as a way of bringing up the prevalent prejudices at the root of binary discourses and the privileged perspectives of the whites and particularly the white-middle class into question. Smith mentions the same strain of thought was also reflected in bell hook's essay "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life" (2014). Thus, Smith takes up a discussion on W.E.B. Du Bois' idea of "double consciousness" which in other words could be explained as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (581). This also brings the power of 'white gaze' into play which spurs a sense of duality in the black consciousness.

In an introduction to Audre Lorde's work titled *Sister Outsider* (2007), Nancy K. Bereano writes that Lorde through her significant works captured aspects of everyday life to define her positions or multiple identities as a black woman and a lesbian mother, an activist and a feminist, daughter of immigrant parents and a cancer survivor and therefore arrive at a certain sense of "wholeness" (9). However, in case of bell hooks as she reveals in *Talking Back* (2015) coming to terms with her own self and articulating her thoughts was a difficult proposition in the South where during her childhood days even the slightest act of answering back was considered

insolent and punishable by southern parents and grandparents, not unlike Angelou's own grandmother Henderson and her admonitions. Southern black girls were rarely expected to be outspoken despite their longing to articulate themselves. Starting from her childhood days when hooks was derided by her sisters for writing in secret to her years as a writer when she received harsh criticism for her work *Ain't I a Woman* (1981), hooks did not surrender to the easy comforts of silence as she wrote:

> Since that time, I have heard stories about black women, about women of color, who write and publish (even when the work is unsuccessful) having nervous breakdowns, being made mad because they cannot bear the harsh responses of family, friends, and unknown critics, or becoming silent, unproductive, Surely, the absence of a humane critical response has tremendous impact on a writer from any oppressed group who endeavors to speak. For us, true speaking is not solely an expression of creative power; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless. (8)

Cornel West in the foreword to *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* (2016), notes Angela Davis' contributions to more than fifty years of struggle as a leading "intellectual freedom fighter" (vii) known widely for her radical activism for the downtrodden and the marginalized, who had also lost a promising academic career owing to her association with the Communist Party, was also on the FBI's Most Wanted List yet continuing her struggles undeterred by false allegations of criminal involvements as well as her trial and imprisonment (vii). While voicing her concerns on the aspects of race, gender and class in the work titled *Women, Race and Class* (1981) which she refers to as the "triple jeopardy" (18) Angela Davis agrees to the importance of intersectional theories in grappling with these issues and at the same time also takes into account the importance of the little histories that struggled to articulate these discourses prior to the academic speculations on the same.

Alice Walker who opines that "Angela is a miracle" (see Davis xiv) herself stands as yet another important intellectual who through her literary works and criticism brought to the fore those unacknowledged works of black women writers who had long remained unheard or even ignored. Thus, in her essay "In Search of Our Mother's Garden" (1972), describing what it must

have been like for millions of struggling black artists at a time when they were not even allowed to write Walker expresses her imagination:

> How was the creativity of the black women kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a black person to read and write? And the freedom to paint, to sculpt, to expand the mind with action did not exist. Consider, if you can bear to imagine it, what might have been the result if singing, too, had been forbidden by law. Listen to the voices of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, and Aretha Franklin, among other, and imagine those voices muzzled for life. Then you may begin to comprehend the lives of our "crazy," "Sainted" mothers and grandmothers. The agony of our lives of women who might have been Poets, Novelists, Essayists, and Short Story Writers (over a period of centuries), who died with their real gifts stifled within them. (403)

She reflects on the millions of black women whose voices were lost in time without any trace or record, those black women– mothers, sisters and grandmothers who were perhaps a bundle of talent without ever knowing or being appreciated for the same. The few voices that survived such circumstances such as Phillis Wheatley, Lucy Terry, Frances Harper, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larson, Bessie Smith, Elizabeth Catlett or Katherine Dunham (406) represent the power of such talent. As Jennifer Nash notes, Walker had introduced the concept of 'womanism' during the second wave of feminism which stood for the centrality of love in black feminism and the importance of 'self love' described as:

> Love is central to the very definition of the womanist subject– who feels love for other women ("loves other women, sexually and/or non sexually), for humanity ("committed to survival and wholeness of entire people"), for the spiritual world ("loves the moon, loves the spirit"), for celebration ("loves music, loves dance…loves love and food and roundness"), and, most important, for herself. (8-9)

Therefore, symbolically in Walker's concept while womanism stood for a "vibrant, deep 'purple'", feminism represented a "quiet, muted lavender" (Nash 8). With regard to Angelou's

representations on the "womanist themes" in her autobiographies, Koyana opines that they "bring into relief the ideologies that serve to mythologize women's experience as mothers and wives, as well as, hierarchical divisions that generate conflict and struggle within families" (35).

Significantly, Paula Stewart Brush notes that the autobiographies which were written in between the period of 1960 and 1975 by black women writers are considered to have reflected the serious concerns of racism and sexism that informed their experiences with the major American socio-political movements of the time. She cites examples of some of the autobiographies written during this period such as Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), Ossie Guffey's *Ossie: The Autobiography of a Black Woman* (1971) and Harrisene Jackson's *There is Nothing That I Want* (1974) regarding them as "working class autobiographies" (121) which reveal the experiences of social oppression that occurs at the intersections of race, gender and class.

As the history of black women is intrinsically linked to the economic sphere which defines the quality of their lives, Susan Willis opines that their struggling history can also be considered as "the history of a labor force" (Lewis 123). The Depression in America did not create a major impact in the black communities during its initial stages as they were largely dependent on share cropping and agricultural work but during the Second World War, they had to migrate from the South and find new employment in the ammunition plants and ship building industries. Angelou was herself a witness to the legend of her grandmother Momma who ran a thriving general store during these Depression years saying "What Stamp's General Merchandise Store missed in class it made up in variety" (*Gather Together* 289). In her description of the gradual economic pinch felt by the black communities in the South during the Depression, Angelou wrote thus,

> The country had been in the throes of the Depression for two years before the Negroes [sic] in Stamps knew it. I think that everyone thought that the Depression, like everything else, was for the whitefolks, so it had nothing to do with them. Our people had lived off the land and counted on cotton-picking and hoeing and chopping seasons to bring in the cash needed to buy shoes, clothes, books and light farm equipment. It was when the owners of cotton fields dropped the payment of ten cents for a pound of cotton to eight,

seven and finally five that the Negro [sic] community realized that the Depression, at least, did not discriminate. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 42)

Angelou who was a working class mother found herself struggling for employment like many other black women which had compelled her to step out of her comfort zone and to take up whatever means of livelihood was available to her for survival. Towards the end of her autobiography, Angelou had reflected her conception of the social reality in terms of black women's experiences criss-crossing with multiple intersections. She held the firm belief that black women had always proved themselves to be the most resilient of the lot despite being multiply marginalized throughout the pages of their history

As Lamb and Thompson highlights the three combined factors of urbanization, immigration and industrialization in their discussion of the changes in the American culture underwent wide cultural changes in the society during the early twentieth century which as Sarah Way Sherman notes led to changes in the subjective experience and identities of people. This led to the formations of class divisions in between the period 1865 to 1914 that found a significant reflection in the 'literature' of its time as Christopher P. Wilson suggests which considerably highlighted the intersections of class with race and gender (9). The authors also note that Wilson highlights the prominent aspect of 'class' by further examining or "exploring the means by which social divisions, boundaries, and crossings [are] inscribed in the fictional literature of the period, and how the category of class intersect[s] with other social parameters like race, gender, and ethnicity" (9).

Moreover, given the widespread immigrations that took place in America, Robert M. Dowling described these changing patterns in the American society as the "nadir of ethnic relations" in America (9). Significant works by women writers that highlighted concerns of economy, oppression and the necessity of reforms can be traced to the post American Civil War period. For instances, *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861) or *Waiting for the Verdict* (1867) by Rebecca Harding Davis who wrote on industrialization, racial oppression working classes, economic marginalization and corruption; Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered For Life* (1874) a novel highlighting the sexual exploitation of women particularly seamstresses and women's rights; or

Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* or *Shadows Uplifted* (1892) on abolition of slavery and sexual exploitation of slave women (see Lamb and Thompson 260).

While 'tramping' at the edges of the field of Marxist criticism and its bearings on literature and literary forms through a reading of Terry Eagleton's work *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (2012), it is found that the relationship between art or literature and history to the 'superstructure'− which is defined by "definite forms of social consciousness" (5) is not merely reductive in its relationship but rather 'reflective' of the economic base. Also, traditional Marxist theories are explained by the elements of economic structures of society, conflicting class relations, economic production, material conditions, ideology, class or social consciousness, false consciousness and how these aspects combine in complex patterns to define Marxist perspectives of 'society' as well as its reflections through art and history. Thus, it calls for an in-depth knowledge and a holistic understanding of its tenets in place of a partial or fragmented view before it can be appropriately applied to a Marxist reading of literature.

As Erik Olin Wright suggests in his work *Class Counts* (1997), societies can be historically examined by taking into consideration the functions of class structures as well as the conditions of 'exploitation' further defined by the various "forms of societies in the Marxist tradition" such as "communalism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism" (33). Further, Eagleton cites Georgy Plekhanov's belief that 'social mentality' is conditioned by the social relations of a particular age (5). Wright also highlights the difference between the Marxist traditional view which placed its central focus on the class relations in economic production and the Weberian traditions opened up to the possibilities of class "permeability" (80).

Bart Landry states that the ideal of 'social mobility' was a reality in the America that significantly found a reflection in Horatio Alger's works which popularized the concept of "rags to riches" (5) in the American society. With the growing American economy, there emerged three distinct classes viz. the upper class, middle class comprising white collar workers and a working class comprising blue-collar workers. Thus, 'class mobility' came to exist both as a downward and an upward trend. When an individual makes an attempt to change his or her 'position of disadvantage' to a 'position of advantage' it can be considered as efforts towards changing social location. Moreover, 'class' differences are evident in the visible factors of

settlement, affluence, lifestyle or privileges between the working classes and the middle or upper classes.

With regard to Angelou's experience of being born into the working class family, there are conflicting moments where she had taken pride in the struggles that informed the lives of her people and in certain moments seen to resent the low life that she led at times, wanting to transcend such an existence and completely rejecting the wealth and riches of those in powerful positions as she notes "[w]hites were as constant in our history as the seasons and as unfamiliar as affluence" (*Singin' and Swingin'* 397) with her wishing all the material affluence to be theirs, which she felt they always hankered after, thereby, economically depriving or even disadvantaging the black people. Again, while she had expressed a sense of pride for the economic independence of both her parents, there were also moments when she resented her father, her pedigree as well as the low life that they all led as reflected in one of her poems titled "Amoebaean for Daddy" thus:

> On the Union Pacific, a
>
> Dining-car waiter, bowing and scraping,
>
> Momma told him to
>
> Stand up straight, he shamed her
>
> In the big house
>
> (Bought from tips) in front of her
>
> Nice club ladies.
>
> (179)

In fact, as she had noted in the poem, a sense of regret had made her in certain moments feel like it would have been better for her Daddy to have died before she was even born rather than see him make a fool of himself and turn into a failure in front of her and her grandmother. She had further expressed her initial sense of discomfort and disorientation in her mother's home when she could not bring herself to address Vivian Baxter as 'mother' preferring to call her 'Lady'

instead. Although she had been well provided at her mother's house, yet a strange sense of unease surrounded her- making her feel lonelier as she wrote:

We ate from the good railroad china

And stolen silver spoons

Furniture crowded our

Lonely house.

(179)

While highlighting aspects of the welfare extended to American women with dependent children, Premila Nadesan writes that "welfare mothers were part of a long tradition of organizing among poor black women" (273), however widely black women were subject to the stereotypes of being 'welfare queens', living off the money provided the state to look after their children without any social contribution and continuous reproduction. Black women and welfare mothers in particular did not organize themselves to fight against multiple oppressions that stifled their well-being, however, many welfare rights activists in the mid-1960s took up these issues advocating the individual rights as well as "reproductive rights" (274) for every woman to make their own choices without necessarily conforming to patriarchal notions and stereotyped roles carved out for women.

Around the same time Black nationalists had suggested that in order to enhance leadership among black men, it was important for them to start by taking charge of their homes while their women "contribute[d] most to the race by having children" (273). Gradually, it began to stir the consciousness of black welfare mothers who began to take up these alarming issues that concerned their lives, stemming from their first hand experiences, not as intellectual feminists but certainly as ardent activists. Thus, it clearly elucidates how economic disadvantaging had clearly affected the lives of black women and even as they received welfare, inequalities of race, gender and class continued to affect their economic struggles and well-being in the true sense. Despite herself, with all the financial difficulties that she had met for self-

sustenance, Angelou was determined not to opt for welfare in anyway which also finds an expression in her poem "Bum d'Bump":

I may be the last in the welfare line

Below the rim where the sun don't shine

But getting up stays on my mind

Bump d'bump bump d'bump.

(160)

Ross (1996) suggests that resulting from the intersections of race, gender and class, discrimination becomes overt "involving individual attitudes" (126) and/or covert through "structural inequalities" (126). The 'competition' that drives the goals in an economic context then upsets its interrelation with social institutions by diminishing social control, cultural ethos and values thereby leading to crime and deviance. Here, it may be noted that like the 'Great American dream', this theoretical perspective applies to any other capitalist economy. The social relationships are considered as embedded in the economy (although the reverse is not true) and thus, a weakened economy affects social norms which probably explain the prevalence of crime in society.

In this context, John Gunnar Bernberg takes up the basics of Durkheim's anomie theory which stemmed from his concerns of people's diminishing social and ethical values in an industrial economy. (736). Also American sociologists examine the anomie theory in a new light while also considering how the theory is still significant in the study of crime and deviance. Bernberg wrote that "[i]n essence, then, Durkheim identifies the same cultural characteristics as Merton and later Messner and Rosenfeld identify in the 'American Dream'." Thus, Messner and Rosenfold's Institutional-anomie theory of crime takes into account the social structures together with the capitalist and non-capitalist economies at play, which focused on the attainment of 'goals' without worrying about the 'ways' in which they are achieved as observed in the phenomenon of the Great American Dream. According to the theory, four "value orientations" are considered with regard to cultural ethos, namely "pressure of achieving" with priority on

goals rather than the means, “intense individualism” where competition takes place between fellow members, “universalism” with uniform standards of accomplishments and “monetary fetishism” that is never satiated (736).

Significantly, Fagan and Freeman point out that whether it is legal means of employment or illegal means of engagements, they are both taken as sources of income and earning with the difference that the latter is fraught with risks and serious consequences for lawbreakers. On the other hand, it is also seen that many legally employed individuals covertly undertake illegal dealings managing both well and earning more money. Western and Wilderman highlight an era of ‘mass incarceration’ of African Americans in the 1980s and 1990s resulting from vested political interests instead of the much needed governmental or social attention that was originally intended in Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report of 1965. The report titled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” highlighted the conditions and poverty, unemployment, addiction and violence in the pockets of urban minority ghettos in its study. While examining the data and findings on the rate of incarceration of that era, the authors had also raised pertinent questions on the economy of black families, state of family ties, problems of violence in and outside family circles, socialization of black children, involvement of children in crime and the continuance of crime from ‘one generation to the other’, all as result of the high rates of incarceration among poor urban black families that took place during this period of mass incarceration.

In highlighting crime and crime control, Jeff Ferrell notes that ‘cultural criminology’ takes up both traditional and postmodern approaches to gain a better insight into power structures and politics of crime, subcultures and marginalities, legal measures and social control apart from the complexities of media or even cultural constructions together with its ascribed meanings. As one of its methodologies, ‘ethnographic research’ lends illuminating insights from the field particularly in the study of criminal subcultures. It also incorporates Weber’s idea of criminological “*verstehen*” which takes into consideration a researcher’s freedom to take a subjective view and an equal stance (instead of a hierarchical position) in order to examine ground realities and criminal circumstances (400). Other methodologies also include analyzing textual representation of crime and deviance ranging from literature, history, news reports; sources of popular culture such as films, television, popular music, comics and the internet.

Thus, Ferrell pins down crime as (a subversive form of) culture or cultural practice, while also examining popular culture and its widely circulated constructions of crime or deviance also referred to as "cultural criminalization" (405).

The present chapter in drawing the intersections of race, gender and class foregrounds the representations from the autobiographical texts that highlight the ways in which intersections of race, gender and class inequalities result in crime and deviance in the larger society particularly involving the marginalized black, men/women who are poor or struggling at the lower rungs of social ladder, with black women occupying the most disadvantaged position. Thus, Barnes aptly suggests that, "racial discrimination intersects with other differentiating characteristics- such as gender, class and sexual orientation- as a basis of oppression" (1864).

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Chapter VI

Conclusion

"Those factors were facts, but there is always a truth deeper than what is visible"

(*A Song Flung up to Heaven* 1091)

W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of the Black Folk* (1903) had articulated the question: "How does it feel to be a Problem?" referring to his own people, the oppressed blacks in America who continued to suffer the lasting effects of racism, slavery and oppression that unquestionably affected their consciousness and identities (qtd. in Hall 38). This points to an undeniable fact that the black consciousness had developed in complex ways given the intensity and extent of their struggles and experiences, their long endurance and resistance that defined the necessity of change for the better as also noted in the words of Marin Luther King Jr. who had said– "We, who die daily in large and small ways, must take the demon death and turn it into Life" (*The Heart of a Woman* 674). Angelou was a person who would never give up on her activism for the Black cause owing to her firm belief in the importance of human rights, human dignity and the strength of the black community that could never be denied or underestimated, which is why she wrote, "[t]hrough the centuries of despair and dislocation, we had been creative, because we faced down death by daring to hope" (*All God's Children* 1051).

The dramatic shift from her Southern hometown to the restless city life as a young girl had left her disoriented, where she had to conform to the pressures of living, to thrive on her talents, establish herself amidst widespread prejudice and apply her presence of mind at all times in all kinds of situation or in other words constantly push her limits, drive her own potential and test her skills of survival. Her tough experiences in the city had practically taught her the lessons of life and had given her an insight into the unseen troubles of her mother and the realities of countless black women in America. The circumstances of life that she had found herself in had never bestowed Angelou with the comforts of an easy and a secured life; she had to always manage with the limited resources at hand and arrange all her needs by virtue of her intelligence and the dint of her hard work which made her feel:

> Until recently each generation found it more expedient to plead guilty to the charge of being young and ignorant, easier to take the punishment meted out by the older generation (which had itself confessed to the same crime short years before). The command to grow up at once was more bearable than the faceless horror of wavering purpose, which was youth. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 209)

In this regard, Deborah King notes that survival for black women 'almost always' meant making the best of their limited set of resources or opportunities that were available for them, becoming adept at performing multiple roles all at once while also tackling multiple oppression that happened to cast its weight in each of these roles. In time, black women not only came to accept such oppression as part and parcel of their experience but also began to resist the same.

In case of both Bailey and herself, their first feelings of displacement following the separation from their parents at a tender age, transported to be raised in the racially segregated South, living in the urban black ghetto as adolescents, witnessing "collective displacement" (*Caged Bird* 163) post World War II, being treated like misfits in the larger white dominated society, stepping into the fringes of the underworld, experiencing the dangers of criminal and deviant life, trying to make sense of their constantly changing life experiences, switching various roles to prove themselves as anything but failures and struggling hard to fit into the adult world while they were still too young– both the siblings had to undergo extremely difficult and unsettling experiences while growing up. In fact, they represented the realities of countless black children and the black youth in America who had led similar lives in the Depression era and the period after the Second World War.

Angelou on principle did not believe in depending on anyone for her needs; rather she had always believed in being self-sufficient and helping herself as well as helping others in need selflessly. In her personal essay titled "Mother's Long View" (2009), Angelou's description of her adolescent years as a struggling mother to her five years old son, managing a modest arrangement with an elderly landlady and living within her budget stands in sharp contrast to her mother's fortunes, her new lavish home and a life of relative comfort finds a place. Although Vivian Baxter always welcomed both mother and child to live with her yet Angelou was content

with the life that she had carved out for herself without ever clinging onto her mother for support.

However, the one thing that she had always valued and counted on- was the constant practical advice that her mother would offer her as she says, "[m]y policy of independence would not allow me to accept money or even a ride from my mother, but I welcomed her wisdom" (54). The same quality of self-reliance particularly with regard to work and self-finances, is noticeable in both her grandmother Henderson who had a thriving store in the years of Depression with the entire black community depending on her goods and ration as well as her mother Vivian Baxter who was a prosperous business woman in the booming American economy who sustained herself well despite the occupational risks and challenges that she had to deal particularly with her gambling businesses.

Where it concerned making her own decisions, Angelou had always followed her "first mind" (*Heart of a Woman* 793) as her brother had always advised her. While at times her quick decisions worked for her, there were also times when rash or impulsive decisions often landed her into serious trouble. However, she had always accounted for her troubles, taking responsibility for her share of (often) self-created problems by trying to fix them on her own. Thus, a few lessons that she had learnt from her own bunch of experiences was to cut her losses and make amends while there was time, if she was to move ahead in life instead of being stuck in situations. Moreover, given the pace of urban or city life, the limited opportunities that were available for black women and the compulsions of taking up odd jobs for a living, Angelou could not afford to make regrets or be too 'selective' as she had to focus on her livelihood, self-sustenance as well as prioritize her responsibilities towards her child. Thus, she had come to observe the trajectories of mostly young black men and women saying: "[f]ew, if any survive their teens. Most surrender to the vague but murderous pressure of adult conformity. It becomes easier to die and avoid conflicts than to maintain a constant battle with the superior forces of maturity" (*Caged Bird* 208).

Angelou's personal fall into the world of crime and deviance reveals the leaning of circumstances that often created a rift between her personal integrity and professional demands, her moral principles and her practical compulsions, her sense of dignity and her need for

survival. There were times when she felt that the circumstances of her life had come to be structured in such a way that she found herself contradicting her own personal beliefs and helplessly acting according to the demands of situations, at times being compelled or even motivated into certain choices and many-a-times finding herself in trouble despite meaning well. From her earlier introverted nature to her 'transforming' persona as an extrovert, she admits the changes that she felt within herself saying, "I had managed in a few tense years to become a snob on all levels, racial, cultural and intellectual" (*Gather Together* 27). Also, many a times, she felt torn between her own values and practical necessities, stuck in moments of crisis and indecision, suffering ambiguities and being puzzled with thoughts, fighting loneliness and being a complete stranger even in the midst of company during these difficult experiences when life had just initiated her into its long struggles.

However, it was not only the circumstances of her life that were solely responsible for her being entrapped in her subversive roles owing to the fact that she often invited troubles or rather what she refers to as "catastrophe[s]" (*Caged Bird* 218) upon herself given her own 'disposition' or sense of curiosity towards exploring the unknown, her impulsive nature of rushing into situations, her emotional vulnerability of being easily taken into confidence and her sense of restlessness of taking up new opportunities around her instead of waiting for them to arrive, which could also be described as a rush-in-the-blood or rather a sense of 'desperation' of her younger days. Thus, her entanglement with the world of crime and deviance were both situational as well as dispositional in nature. Also, Angelou was not opportunistic in the exploitative sense rather her desperation stemmed from her need to be self-sufficient and to make ends meet. By nature, she was a happy-go-lucky person and much too emotional who suffered the "hindrance of romantic blindness which was [her] lifelong affliction" (*Singin' and Swingin'* 396) to ever be hardened in her sensibilities despite her urgent needs that waited to be fulfilled.

In the context of 'opportunity', Osgood et al. in their article "Routine Activities and Individual Deviant Behavior" (1996) take up the situational approach of crime and deviance that is further integrated into the theoretical concept of routine activity which holds that "crime is dependent on opportunity" (638). The authors try to study the links between various types of deviant behaviour with a range of routine activities (as is also highlighted in the work done by

Felson) and opine that 'motivation' in a certain situational context or striking 'opportunity' leads to deviant actions. They also note Briar and Piliavin's emphasis on the "inherent" situation that strikes a note of similarity with Matza's (1964) idea that deviance results from a certain "drift" or in other words a tendency to engage in deviance without necessarily giving up "conventional values" (638). Moreover, through their empirical study the authors state that a non-structured life gives way to independence and hence indulgence in deviant activities particularly in the company of influential peer groups and the absence of guardians or social control.

Therefore, it was a 'combination' of chance and circumstances, choice and decisions, motivation and opportunity that had led her into the fringes of the underworld together with the shaping influences of her family, humiliating experiences, racial oppression, social inequalities and life in the black ghettos that had considerably altered and determined her sensibilities during her juvenile years. Neither was she initiated into the subcultures by anyone she had known nor did she ever plan to step into the fringes of the underworld in any way and in fact, she had never entertained such thoughts or experienced such thoughts crossing her mind, given her sense of pride as well as her prudence.

In a metaphorical sense, her experiences at the fringes of the underworld could be described as the erratic experiences of a young girl stepping out in a desperate search of a life-saving opportunity but suddenly ending up in the wrong direction owing to a moment's distraction in all her curiosity without assuming the dangers ahead. Angelou had never planned or chalked out her life or even fancied short routes to success when she had started out in her struggles and she had learnt much early in life that black men and women were always made to feel like they were not carved out for success in a world where whites always stood as the privileged majority. Rather, it was the turn of events, the compelling forces of situations combined with her own impulsive choices that had ultimately led her towards the subversive path.

Moreover, it was also her inexperience, at times her ignorance and her sense of naivety that often resulted in her close brush with the law, where she did not have a defined idea of what was legally considered as 'crime' and the factors that defined 'deviance' as well. With the responsibility of shaping her own future, Angelou at the age of seventeen had simply followed

her instincts and impulses often learning the lessons of life in the hardest of ways. Her own story was not much different from that of her mother's who was "born black and poor, to black and poor parents" (*Mom & Me* 1) revealing how poverty and low life affected generations of black men and women. In fact, the larger black ghettos languished in a cycle of poverty, spelling hopelessness in the lives of the blacks and particularly the black youth who knew that their sufferings would never be alleviated and that their lives were devoid of any form of hope in such a prejudiced society.

Therefore, most blacks in the urban ghettos turned towards the easiest means of finding professional engagement in the underworld or its fringes, to earn their living by resorting to criminal and deviant activities, accepting its inherent dangers and many entering the underworld with the aim of 'asserting' themselves as powerful anti-forces in the face of white oppression. In this context, Fagan and Freeman (1999) note that criminologists often miss out the fact that crime can also be critically examined as a (subversive) form of 'work' and also as a lucrative means of making money that tends to lure many into the underworld.

In the black ghettos, involvement in crime and deviance were considered as yet another means of work or employment where there were no other means of legitimate work to be found. Perhaps, this explains the sense of tolerance that pervaded the black ghettos given their collective understanding that they were all struggling to survive the same oppressive forces that had crushed their aspirations for a better future and had shattered their dreams of a better life. However, it is found that the easy acceptance or tolerance of such criminal and deviant activities as gambling, prostitution, pimping, smuggling, drug peddling, boot legging, assaulting, murdering, vandalizing, rioting, violence to mention a few had also affected their own community. Also, Hawkins F. Darnell in *Violent Crime* (2003) highlights the conditions that lead to 'internecine violence' within one's own community thus,

> Yet, it is also true, as Fanon (1967, 1968) has argued, that under conditions of prolonged and profound subordination, perhaps especially in societies where "race" marks lines of social cleavage, much of the violence of the oppressed tends to turn inward against members of their own group. (see Darnell xviii)

Angelou herself had begun to realize that 'black oppression' was as real and pronounced as white oppression just as she learnt that violence was not only created by what she often defined as 'white hatred' but also existed within her own community in the marked form of internecine-violence i.e., blacks against blacks. In this regard, the migrating patterns concerning the minorities of the American population to the cities explained the stiff 'competition' for survival and sustenance. The economic changes had brought about drastic changes in the black consciousness that was gradually seen to move towards 'self-centered perspectives' which had further altered their approaches to life, to their everyday struggles and experiences in a hostile environment.

In this context, Crenshaw in "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" (1991) mentions that apart from crimes such as 'gang violence' or 'homicide' even 'domestic violence' within the black household amounted to "black-on-black crime" (1255). Interestingly, Nash in her article "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love Politics and Post-Intersectionality" (2011) highlights the importance of the concept of "black-on-black love" (3) forwarded during the second wave feminism which focused on 'self-transformation' through the process of 'self-discovery' that had opened up a new perspective taken up by critics like Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Traci West and Chela Sandoval.

The hostility of the blacks against the whites is explained by their 'history' of bitter experiences with racial prejudice, spatial segregation, psychological alienation, social inequalities and multiple forms of oppression down the centuries which collectively resulted in blacks being treated as unworthy and undeserving of the rights as equal citizens in their own land, the land that their ancestors had helped to build as Angelou often mentioned. Such experiences that affected and altered their day-to-day experiences had left an indelible mark on their collective consciousness, a lasting impression that was almost impossible to be wiped out from their psyche (which had developed in a complex way) as is also represented through the individual experiences of Angelou, in the way these experiences had shaped her perspectives, her personal transformation as well as the changes in her subjectivity. Moreover, Edgar and Sedgwick (1999) note that the individual or 'moral' consciousness is drawn from an established

"normative order" (64) which shape and determine the larger consciousness collective. Such 'hierarchical orders' necessitate a critical re-evaluation in order to question its established norms, its disadvantaging practices, to address issues of 'identity' as well as to accommodate progressive change. Thus, Angelou in defense of the collective psyche of her people wrote,

> In America we danced, laughed, procreated; we became lawyers, judges, legislators, teachers, doctors and preachers, but as always, under our glorious costumes we carried the badge of a barbarous history sewn to our dark skins. It had often been said that Black people were childish, but in America we had matured without ever experiencing the true abandon of adolescence. (*All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* 947)

Angelou held the opinion that any form of prejudice stifled 'human rights' and in her words– "confuse[d] the past, threaten[ed] the future, and render[ed] the present inaccessible" (*All God's Children* 1009). However, she was certainly not without her own share of prejudice given her nudging sense of suspicion and mistrust that always lurked in her mind even through her common interactions with whites. Significantly, it is Vusumzi Make who for the first time had made Angelou realize in a personal conversation that 'essentializing' anything with regard to the black community to counter the ways of the white folks also amounted to 'reverse racism' which in fact had never occurred to her earlier. At the time same, even through her most humiliating experiences Angelou did not harbor any form of 'racial hatred' against the whites, the kind that she had witnessed among the whites through the course of her life- starting from her childhood and her adolescence that bridged her way into her own racial experiences of adulthood. In fact, there are several moments of reflection in the course of her narration where she engages in 'self doubts' with regard to her quick examining of the attitudes of white people, suspecting their motives and meanings, probing their intentions and watching out for any form of innuendos in their expressions and interactions with her.

Moreover, Make tells her from his own long political experience that most 'black' revolutionaries, radicals and activists did not vie for 'change', rather "[t]hey wanted exchange" (*Heart of a Woman* 787) in their own self interests which explained that everything was not as it seemed and that harbouring any form of bias or preconceived notions was only a spell of disillusion in one's consciousness. A black conman had once told Angelou that "[a]nything that

works against you can also work for you once you understand the Principle of Reverse" (*Caged Bird* 171) referring to his strategies of using white prejudice to manipulate and turn situations in his own favour. However, if racial prejudice between whites and blacks persisted both ways whether in the form of reversal, revenge, retaliation or any other practice it would only aggravate race relations and racial tensions all the more as Smith aptly notes that 'prejudice' forms the root of binary discourses- which needs to be addressed and deconstructed.

Although 'racial tensions' or 'racial anxieties' among the blacks who were compelled to live under the shadow of the powerful whites were as old as the history of slavery in America yet race relations had emerged as a major social discourse only during the1960s and 1970s. Smedley notes that the concept of race stands "as the dominant form of identity in those societies where it functions to stratify the social system" (690). Thus, it is not surprising to find Angelou's autobiographies covering these decades starting from the 1920s to the 1960s as immersed in these serious concerns of identities, inequalities, oppression and injustice that had long stunted the collective progress of the black people and had denied their potential, often compelling them towards opting for alternate means of survival as well as revenge by striking back at the oppressive systems through crime, deviance, violence and aggression.

Thus, in this regard, Brown suggests that 'racial hierarchies' tend to lead towards "nihilistic tendencies" among the blacks, "extreme racial paranoia" among whites and "delusional denial tendencies" among both blacks and whites (662). Nihilistic tendencies are generally driven towards self-destruction and are characterized by serious behavioural patterns such as extreme deviant behaviour with possibilities of suicidal tendencies; anti-self issues as characterized by the adoption of white standards and mannerisms also referred to as "deracination" (298) in order to find white approval; long term suppression of anger that often finds a vent through violent outbursts; extreme racial paranoia that has serious psychological implications; and delusional denial which is defined as a means of living in denial of the established racial stratification. Thus, the enduring racial disparities and stratification experienced by blacks and other minorities considerably affects their mental well-being in various ways where some of the major factors that determine their mental health condition are:

family, social status, employment, identity, marriage, stress etc., that also differ according to race, gender, class and age.

While the Civil Rights Movement is considered to have "built a new moral topography" (Knowles 177) in American consciousness, the Black social-political movements such as the Black Power Movement had considerably fostered a sense of black pride given their long history of oppression which Van Horne defines as encompassing "nearly 12 generations of chattel slavery, followed by almost 5 generations of de jure Jim Crow" (368-369). In fact, its relevance still extends to the twenty first century, with international movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) that considerably draws inspiration from the Black Power Movement and continues to fight institutional racism to the present day.

Significantly, W.E.B. Du Bois in the essay "The Conservation of Races" had reiterated the importance of fostering a sense of unity among the black people of America who had a remarkable contribution to their nation than was ever acknowledged. Du Bois had highlighted the importance of becoming their 'own agents of change' and rising from their long sufferings of oppression, alienation, marginalization and fragmentation towards determining a brighter future for the future generations. Therefore, he stated the significance and purpose of 'black unity' as,

> "…not united merely to protest and pass resolutions, but united to stop the ravages of consumption among the Negro [sic] people, united to keep black boys from loafing, gambling and crime; united to guard the purity of black women and to reduce that vast army of black prostitutes that is today marching to hell; and united in serious organizations, to determine careful conference and thoughtful interchange of opinion the broad lines of policy and action for the American Negro [sic]" (109).

While discussing the conflicts of the 'double-consciousness', Du Bois had opined that it was the sheer 'strength' of the black personality or individual that enabled him or her to 'negotiate' his or her position and self-identity instead of turning insane with its weight as he wrote: "a double life, with double thought, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretense or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism" (Hall 38).

Angelou in her article "I Dare to Hope" (1991-1992) mentions how a 'detachment from morality' in the assertion of power as well as its manipulation for selfish interests was politically described as 'Machiavellian'. The means of using unethical or immoral, unfair or deceitful means to achieve one's personal or socio-political goals of power defined the ideal figure in a political situation. She felt that Nicollo Machiavelli's treatise *The Prince* (1532) that was considered relevant in the time of the European Renaissance also defined the contemporary American democratic system with its complex network of power and politics that informed their everyday lives. Thus, the Black community held the obligation and collective responsibility of being in charge of their own progress. She also believed that they had to call on their own leaders to be equally accountable for their part in the collective Black struggle while reaching out to those who struggled for Black progress and even those who had long given up their hopes of a better future entering into the "drug-filled" and "hate-filled cesspool" (24).

Caroline Knowles in *Race and Social Analysis* (2004) defines the ways in which everyday interactions between the blacks and the whites, creates experiences that were found to form a certain "*occupied subjectivity*" (93) while also referring to Howard Winant's observation that the struggle for justice not only takes place at the outward socio-political level but also in the "interior terrain of the individual" (11). Thus, hooks significantly opines,

> The context of silence is varied and multi-dimensional. Most obvious are the ways racism, sexism, and class exploitation act to suppress and silence. Less obvious are the inner struggles made to gain the necessary confidence to write, to re-write, to fully develop craft and skill─ and the extent to which such efforts fail. (8)

While grappling with the conception of 'subjectivity' that stems from the experiences that define the 'self', Donald E. Hall notes Friedman's ideas of society that shifts from what he refers to as the "vertical" mode defined by rigid hierarchies to the "horizontal" referring to the "negotiable-agency driven" mode in his work *The Horizontal Society* (1999). According to Friedman, the norms and traditions of conventional societies or "the forms and traditions that trapped the individual in a cage of ascription" (2) are now challenged and transcended by an individual who chooses to define his or her sense of self or subjectivity. Thus, Hall in highlighting the subtle difference between identity and subjectivity writes:

> …[O]ne's identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short-or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being, while subjectivity implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity, at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity. (3)

The concept of subjectivity is increasingly preoccupied with concerns of multiple social roles, consciousness and identities thereby forming "*subjectivities*" (110) as found in Audre Lorde's idea of "multiple selves" (110) and hook's idea of "multiple black identities" or even black experiences (qtd. in Hall 111). In fact, hooks in her essay "The Politics of Radical Subjectivity" (2015) discusses how the 'oppressed' often assume their 'role as subjects' in the course of their struggles without stirring the possibilities of "creative, expansive, self-actualization" (15).

Significantly, the development of 'gynocriticism' during the second wave of feminism had in a significant way brought women writers and their works to the fore which had long remained undervalued by the male literary canons until the establishment of the Virago Press in 1973 that had revolutionized the entire literary scenario and changed the gender biased perceptions towards the importance and value of these important works by women through its unique and widely circulated publications. Thus, Fiona Tolan, in "Feminisms" notes that the American critic Elaine Showalter had significantly taken up the concerns of gynocriticism in her work titled *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) who through her discussions on both known and unknown women writers had questioned the biased literary standards and perspectives towards literature by women that deprived them of achieving their creative potential, sense of fulfillment as well as their rightful place in the literary canons (see Waugh 328).

While discussing the position of gynocritics like Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Mary Poovey with regard to the eighteenth and nineteenth century women writers, Allen Graham in *Intertextuality* (2007) describes the experience of women writers who suffered an "anxiety of authorship" (147) as Gilbert and Gubar had argued. They were doubtful and skeptical of being "precursors" (147) of writing. They struggled to articulate their experiences under the shadows of patriarchal norms and ironically had to assume 'male pseudonyms' in order to write. By extending such histories to the understanding of women's

writing, gynocritics had significantly opposed any form of stereotypes such as the "angel in the house" or the "dangerous 'other' witch, madwoman or whore" (145). In this context, Graham cites Gilbert and Gubar's opinion with regard to the importance of women writers coming-to-text thus,

> [P]recisely because a woman is denied autonomy− the subjectivity− that the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture (whose emblem might well be the pen) but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing. (145)

Rutledge M. Dennis in a significant discussion suggests that the concept of 'marginality' is closely associated with the concept of 'identity' as our lives are largely defined by "identity shelves" (5) or rather constructed binaries which also can be and in fact, needs to be revisited and redefined. Further, Robert J. Dunne provides another interesting observation on marginality where a distance from the social center could also be 'chosen' by a group rather than be imposed or a 'given' stating thus,

> Individuals and groups will often be found to prefer being oriented toward local centers, rather than the societal center, i.e., they may create flow restrictions in order to establish some autonomy from the societal center. Marginality may sometimes, or to some degree, be voluntary. (qtd. in Dennis15)

In the same context, while discussing the aspect of the 'subaltern' at length Graham Riach takes up Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) which states that the marginalized or the subaltern are unable to articulate themselves due to the fact that those who occupy the powerful center either speak on their behalf or silence them completely. Riach however, opines that perhaps, replacing the term "speak" with the term "heard" 11) in the title of Spivak's essay would be more apt, given the shifting concern of whether the marginalized 'speak' or are 'spoken for' to the concern to the concern of whether they are actually 'heard'. Moreover, even as Spivak highlights the double marginality of subaltern women in the third world developing countries, this can also be extended to the marginalized women in the first

world countries, as in the case of the American minorities particularly 'women' who suffer multiple marginalization at the behest of the powerful. Further, in highlighting the concerns of marginalities, liminal positions and peripheries, Homie Bhabha in his preface to *Location of Culture* (1994) places his concerns thus,

> [W]hat it means to survive, to produce, to labor and to create, within a world-system whose major economic impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your country, or your people. Such a neglect can be a deeply negating experience, oppressive and exclusionary, and it spurs you to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery. (xi)

Thus, Minority Scholars act as necessary catalysts of social change in their role of stirring the consciousness of the minorities towards addressing such neglect, disregard and delineation instead of accepting their marginalized positions as Barnes notes "[s]ocial –political reality can be understood only if a plurality of voices articulates different points of view; understanding suffers when some voices are silenced" (1870). In addition, to the emergence from the position of marginality, Bhabha also uses the metaphor of "stairwell" to describe the "in-between" condition of identities also referred to as 'liminality' or 'interstitiality' that creates a bridge or allows movement between constructed hierarchies as he adds,

> [T]he hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and the passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (5)

Angelou's own cultural exchanges and experiences of having lived and worked in Africa, of having interacted with people of various tribes, clans and cultures had significantly provided her with a broader insight on the larger black experiences, the socio-political scenario as well as the commonalities of shared human experiences with regard to the larger black struggle. These experiences enable her to significantly trace the broader socio-cultural ties while also gaining enriched perspectives on the black American diaspora in Africa. It also provides her with the

scope of reexamining her own personal and political convictions, becoming an agent of change while also being enriched by the cultural exchange, dedicating herself to the progress of the black struggle and realizing her love for her country through her layered experiences that further defines her subjectivity and her sense of identity. Hernandez Truyol (1997) thus aptly notes that "it is necessary to develop a politics that extends beyond the mere recognition of identity and intersectionality to accept, accommodate and embrace the multiplicity of identity" (409). This brings in the relevance of Critical Race Theories and Intersectional Studies that lend considerable insight into a holistic understanding of the black condition in order to make an informed approach towards the central concerns of the study i.e., crime and deviance.

Several times in her autobiographies, Angelou had referred to the tale of the Brer Rabbit which carries the lesson on how the weak could triumph over the powerful if they applied their presence of mind in difficult situations, in moments when the "seemingly weak animal with the sharpest brain outwits its well-armed adversary" (*All God's Children* 1018). The Brer Rabbit tales were very much a part of black folklore which became popularized through Joel Chandler Harris' *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1881). Elon Kuhlii and Beverly Kuhlii define the figure of Brer Rabbit as the traditional "hero-trickster" (96) who despite being one of the weakest beings in the animal kingdom outwits the powerful figures of Brer Bear, Brer Wolf and Sly Brer Fox. These folktales were traced to the slavery period when black slaves found a way of amusing each other with these stories that consciously veiled their experiences of oppression. In time, these tales were replaced by "John and Ole Boss Tales" and "Bad Nigger" tales regarding which the authors opine that "[a]s long as there is an environment of disparity in America, the underclass will need Brer Rabbit tales to cope up with or mask its displeasure with the inequities of the system" (97). Like their witticisms, these folktales stemmed from their concerns of survival while also forming significant modes of black survival across generations. In the same strand, McMurray opines that Angelou understood the significance and value of the work of an artist that defined "survival" itself which is received in the echoes of her own belief in the philosophy of "survival with style" (111) as an artist and as an individual.

Autobiographies too have a "therapeutic function" (425) whereby such inner fragmentation provides the scope of healing and finding a sense of fulfillment and completeness

as Hodges opines that– "self-fragmentation may itself be the first step toward the self-unification" (425). Thus, the sense of fragmentation and alienation that Angelou experiences in her initial experiences of city life often makes her feel trapped within her own being, being perplexed and disoriented with her sense of self, yet never falling into despair and transforming all her challenging experiences into life's lessons. Significantly, with regard to the presence of 'race consciousness' in black autobiography bell hooks notes:

> In contemporary society, White and Black people alone believe that racism no longer exists. This erasure, however mythic diffuses the representation of whiteness as terror in the Black imagination. It allows for assimilation and forgetfulness. The eagerness with which the contemporary society does away with racism, replacing this recognition with the evocations of pluralism and diversity that further mask reality, is a response to the terror, but it has also become a way to perpetuate the terror by providing a cover, a hiding place. (qtd, in Brush 192)

Further, hooks discusses how the black psyche is haunted by various forms of terror which when expressed meets the accusation of reverse racism "evoking victimization" (192). The importance of confronting, addressing and correcting or "unbrainwash[ing]" (Stewart 181) race consciousness as well as the dip in the balance with regard to social inequalities is utmost necessary. It is important to be 'mindful' of the intersections that affect black life and their qualitative experiences particularly with regard to black women who stand as the most oppressed in the American society.

Through the study it is found that 'race' forms the pre-dominant discourse throughout her autobiographies that extensively shape all the other discourses. Angelou had significantly captured the alarming concerns of race in the form of first hand experiences as well as the narratee's constant intellectual engagement, nagging concerns, affected behaviour or interactions with blacks and whites in the textual representations while taking into account the experiences of the wider context of the black community and the larger black race as well. And thus, her narratives unravel the times in which she lived, a century that was considered the 'nadir of race relations' while magnifying the lives of the black people, to address the ways in which they came

into terms with their multiple disadvantages at the margins and the conditions that shaped the patterns of crime and deviance in society.

Peter Kivisto highlights a significant essay titled "Behind Our Masks" (1950) written by Robert E. Park which reflected the imposed definitions of racial categories and the everyday experiences of wearing "race like a mask" (148). Such realities not only stifled the individuality of coloured people but also created much anxiety and conflict. Further, Frantz Fanon's seminal essay "The Fact of Blackness" (1952) delves into the workings of post colonial institutions as well as the ideologies that determine the ways in which racial prejudice operate and condition the experiences of natives or the blacks. Fanon discusses the lasting impressions on the black consciousness when he mentions the damage done to their sense of self and their experiences. He notes that blacks inevitably tend to display two different set of behaviours while interacting with fellow blacks and (superior) whites. Thus, while pointing at the sense of unknown guilt, anxiety as well as an inferiority complex in the black consciousness, he also refers to the unsettling white man's gaze thus,

> And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. (327)

Thus, Fanon significantly states that is important to "*consciousnessize*" the "unconscious" while probing into the condition of inferiority complex found in the black consciousness (80). Moreover, Fanon compares his own sensitivity to that of a "sensor" (99) where it concerns his own sense of blackness while examining the inner workings as well as the psychological conflicts of the black individual. He writes that 'colour' must not "be felt as a stain" (63) in any way as this tends to draw the black individual into a constant tussle with his or her sense of identity as well as self-worth. Further, he also examines the aspect of racial jealousy in terms of the enviable physical and biological attributes of blacks, where the white man perceives black sexuality as a threat as he notes: "[i]sn't lynching the black man a sexual image? We know how sexualized torture, abuse, and ill treatment can be" (137).

The experiences of black women as described in the autobiographical texts reveal how they were often guided by the compulsions of their socio-economic conditions to strive for 'survival' as their primary need before they could alter their lives for the better, sometimes even at the cost of deferring their dreams and aspirations. As Angelou had noted, the difference in the suffering of black women was the fact they were oppressed from all quarters i.e., white men and women as well as black men. Most black women endured what Williams refers to as "spirit murder" (Floyd 816) which describes the state of torture and turbulence that they underwent through their daily negotiations with racism and racialized systems which were well in place informing and affecting their everyday experiences.

Black women suffered from a troubled sense of being constantly examined and judged by white standards. In fact, owing to the complexity of their experiences, black women had developed a multiple consciousness which was informed by multiple identities and positions. Therefore, Brunson and Miller note, "[f]eminist scholarship demonstrates that race, class, gender inequalities cannot be understood in isolation to one another" (533). Also, with regard to women and crime, Steffensmeier and Allan note that in comparison to male offenders, "a higher level of provocation" has a considerable effect on women and crime where they have a past of being wronged or rather "victims as children or adult" (467).

Hazel Carby in "White Woman Listen!" (1982) highlights how the experiences of black women not only concern the ways in which they were made invisible throughout the pages of history but also the strategies by which they were rendered visible as and when convenient. She defines the reality of race relations that places white women in a higher position of power over black women and thereby insists on the importance of writing or inscribing "herstory" thus,

> It is only in the writings by black feminists that we can find attempts to theorize the interconnection of class gender and race as it occurs in our lives and it has only been in the autonomous organizations of black women that we have able to express and act upon the experiences consequent upon these determinants. (445)

While she opines that black women have long been subjected to various means of patriarchal oppression by men of "different 'colours'" throughout her works, Carby emphasizes the importance of situating the experiences of both black and white women in the context of their

race relations as well as the importance of taking into account the experiences of other minorities (447). Therefore, Black women need to reclaim their history from the margins and as Nayar notes deconstruct the idealization of patriarchal family, the strategies employed to silence them, resist the devaluation of labour, of being conceived as givers by law of nature, the politics of rejecting their sexuality as well as questioning the ideals of a 'happy family' that ignores or veils the concerns of inequalities, oppression and injustice.

With regard to the social control structures and processes of socialization, Colvin and Pauly consider the factors of family, neighbours, groups, schools, institutions, work-places among others as influential in the reproduction of class relations through social conditioning often influencing the patterns of delinquent behaviour. David Matza and Howard S. Baker and Edwin Lemert who had further developed the labeling theory from the works of Frank Tannenbaum in the 1960s and 1970s had significantly noted that, "societal reaction to deviance can produce further deviance" owing to social perceptions and the pressures of being labeled criminal, deviant, delinquent, mentally ill, strange or weird, or by any other negative characteristics" (Chriss 41).

Thus, social labeling and in fact social stigma makes it difficult for criminals and deviants to reintegrate themselves in society often resulting in their reverting back into the world of crime and deviance. Such a phenomenon is referred to as "secondary deviance" and such repetition of a criminal or deviant act is known as "recidivism" (41). Chriss also notes Dilton's 'Controlology' or study of social control which holds that more than concentrating on crime and deviance, it is necessary to seriously take up social reactions to the same thereby "shift[ing] focus from individual response ability to societal response ability" (41).

Further, Chriss makes a significant observation regarding the considerable tolerance towards crime and deviance as well as disregard for the law and law enforcers according to "the code of the street" in the urban ghettos which also form pockets of "concentrated disadvantage" (127). In fact, even Angelou notes the same in her autobiographies where she significantly notes thus, "the fact that the pimps and panderers didn't harass the lesbians, bespoke the tolerance in the black community for people who chose to lead lives different from the norm" (*Gather Together* 257). Apart from noting the common problems of joblessness in the ghettos, Sandra

Smith also notes that owing to their long term unemployment and the apprehension of black men "bring[ing] the street to the job" (Chriss 129) i.e, resorting to deviant acts in the work place most blacks are without stable jobs.

Bernberg in "Anomie, Social Change and Crime" (2002) opines that it is the factor of 'competition' that drives the goals in an economy and upsets its interrelation with the social institutions by diminishing social control, cultural ethos and values thereby leading to 'crime' and 'deviance.' Further, Ulmer and Ulmer in "Commitment, and Deviance, and Social Control" (2000) note the presence of 'corporal communities' that not only impact but also determine situational actions, examples being: "neighbourhoods, workplaces, organization, networks, and race or ethnic communities" (318). They consider that 'deviance' functions as a trap for deviants possibly due to reactions from within their deviant circles and due to societal labeling or even social stigma. Angelou who had skirted the dangers of life in the underworld and returned to her mother like the prodigal daughter had expressed her gratitude to her mother given the fact that she had stood like a shield for her daughter as she wrote:

> She liberated me from a society that would have me think to myself as the lower of the low. She liberated me to life. And from that time to this time, I have taken life by the lapels and I have said, "I'm with you, kid". (*Mom and Me* 71)

In this context, Welch et al. in "Social Integration, Self-Control, and Conformity" (2008) discuss the ways in which self-control is linked with social integration as well as the two distinct forms of constraints i.e., internal constraint- that is closely related to social control and external constraint− that is concerned with social integration (75). They highlight some of the common behavioural patterns analyzed in this regard such as 'negative opinions' that tends to affect one's sense of identity, status and acceptance in social-circles; leading to emotional suffering, punishment, and consequences of non-conformity etc. that occur when a socially integrated individual violates social conventions.

Significantly, Humphries and Wallace takes into account the processes of racial segregation, marginalization and exploitation of the working classes in the ghettos by also examining the Marxist views on crime which links the "processes of accumulation to spatial

organization" and also the "relative economic development of a city, in turn, to a city's crime pattern" (191).

As noted in the chapters, some of the pressing concerns of social inequalities are highlighted through the problems of racial stereotyping, racial segregation, gender biases, poverty, sexual exploitation, unequal opportunities, unaddressed rights and legal injustice as well. The autobiographies contain multiple references to the matrices of race, gender, class and power relations while also lending detailed insights into the ways in which the 'black psyche' is shaped and sensitized by their everyday experiences, realities, struggles, choices, decisions etc., together with the complex process of coming into terms with their 'sense of self' in a racially oppressive society. Therefore, through an exploration of crime and deviance in the autobiographical texts, the study attempts to examine and establish the ways in which these are informed by the inter-connected multiple intersections of particularly race, class and gender which invariably inform black experiences thereby also lending a detailed insight into the functioning of oppressive systems and structures through which the powerful justify their modes of oppression, as well as, their dominant position. While taking into account the social systems, structures, practices and social experiences, the study also highlights the contexts of post World War II and the period of Civil Rights Movement in order to provide a situated understanding of the American society with its discourses of 'crime' and 'deviance'.

Both Critical Race Theories and the derivative Intersectional Studies reveal the ways in which the concerns of race, gender and class intersect with each other and inform social experiences as well as forms of social structuring such as racism, patriarchy and classism that functions hand-in-hand as systems of power, hegemony and continued oppression. Although the concerns of race, gender and class may not necessarily have an equal impact in shaping certain social experiences yet leading black feminists and scholars note that these are characterized by the "notion of *simultaneity*" (Landry 11), as well as, 'multiplicity' forming both 'simultaneous' and 'multiple experiences' where these intersections occur. Thus, Landry draws from the concepts of scholars like Rose Brewer and Deborah King who opine that the intersections of race, gender and class are not merely 'additive' in nature i.e., in the form of double or triple inequalities or oppression but are rather 'multiple' by nature in the way these define the nature

and range of human experiences (12). Carrasco further notes that the theories of the vast body of scholarship i.e., Critical Race Theories may not necessarily be applicable or suitable to all contexts, owing to the fact that the identities of particularly 'race' on which it is primarily centered may not be as easily identifiable or well-established in a context that is different from America.

Robert Barnes mentions that Race theorists do not conform to the notions of established histories that tend to overlook the historical struggles of the black community thereby aiming towards the process of combining their practical experiences of being continuously oppressed and marginalized with 'neo-activism' in order to usher progressive changes in their own community and the larger American society. Further, Tony Brown highlights the significance of Critical Race Theory (CRT) which stresses on the central relevance of race in the American laws and policies that cannot be simply brushed aside as it informs the everyday realities and challenges lived by blacks. Thus, the Critical Race Theorists propose that white racial stratification has serious implications on the black experience and everyday life; the race problem serves the interests of the whites which literally makes it extremely difficult to change the same once and for all; the concept of race is constructed and reproduced; owing to the severity and realizations of the black experience, blacks are legitimate in articulating the truth of their experiences; and the central emphasis of race critical theories on 'social justice' above all other academic or scientific purposes (294).

The study through its effort to mesh these critical insights with a detailed reading and interpretation of the autobiographical narratives also finds that when the problems of Crime and Deviance are dissected and delved into, it further reveals the concerning roots of these social pathologies which are matted in the form of the complex intersections of race, class and gender. Thus, Critical Race Theories in taking up the "intertwining of racism, poverty and systemic racism" (Saito 228) also raises the importance of social and legal justice as well as human rights. It not only reveals how institutions reinforce and reproduce racial prejudice and inequalities but also intervenes to fight against such injustice with the firm conviction that changes are possible. Race critics and legal scholars play a significant role in addressing, examining and bringing about possible changes in the established social systems that are conveniently structured around

the factors of racial hegemony and social disadvantaging. Thus, Angelou examines these social inequalities which in Lupton's words form the "many deep scars across the face of America" (11), stemming mainly from the "the racist cancer" (Hodges 429) that hinders the progress of a people, in her autobiographies.

David Theo Goldberg significantly mentions Gunnar Myrdal's use of the term 'underclass' in his work *The American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944) to refer to the economic condition of those sections of people who either had no means of livelihood or were underemployed following the industrial era and who owing to prejudices of the economically powerful were seen in an unfavourable light and largely taken for granted. The social perceptions towards the underclass that included, "women on welfare, vicious street criminals, drug pushers and addicts, hustlers and urban gangs, winos and the mentally deranged homeless" (238) were considered as "unmotivated" (238) and unaffected by their own lives as a result of which it was assumed that nothing much could be done to alter or improve their conditions. Further, Goldberg who mentions that the concept of underclass had eventually acquired "racialized connotations" (238) also highlights William Julius Wilson's identification of the two major conditions that is seen to affect the underclass resulting from their prolonged unemployment, lack of work experience and knowledge of prerequisite skills which is explained thus,

> This dislocation has two main effects: The 'concentration effect' results in a large number of single parent families, the unemployed, and criminals ghettoized into a relatively small and intense urban area with diminishing social services. The 'isolation effect' leaves these people cut off from the ameliorating influence of a middle class, black and white, who have fled for the suburbs. (239)

Thus, Glenn Loury aptly mentions that crime in black ghettoes is rooted in the experiences of "social deprivation" (137) and "spatial isolation" (137) which is further made worse by the racial disparities in the process of 'incarceration'. Loury who states that "…an ideology of racial subordination accompanied the institution of African slavery, and this racial ideology has cast a long shadow" (137) also suggests that it is important to take issues of race into consideration while framing national policies. This is in owing to the social reality of simply pushing criminals

or offenders behind prison bars which becomes a convenient way of asserting 'control' and worse maintaining racial stratification even as it does not solve the larger social problems at hand.

As discussed by Ferrell in "Cultural Criminology" (1999) defines crime as (a subversive form of) culture or cultural practice while also inspecting popular culture for its widely circulated 'constructions' of crime or deviance also referred to as "cultural criminalization" (405). Unnever et al. posit that the representations of 'stereotypes' and 'images' in the mass media often drill in the perceptions of race and crime into the popular consciousness, thereby shaping hostility in the white consciousness. In fact, they mention the term "racial animus" in reference to the consciousness of the prejudiced whites who tend to "conjure up the image of the typical criminal" (7) in the figure of the African American male.

Significantly, they cite Kinder and Sanders as well as Barlow who highlight the projected imageries of angry black young men engaged in criminal and deviant activities that are often "fueled" (7) by news reports as in the instance of the Harlem race riots of the 1960s. The authors also note what Barlow (1998) had identified as the changes in the media projections of race and crime from the modes of "traditional racism" to be replaced with "modern or symbolic racism" through "coded discourses about race" in media coverage (7). Further, they also mention Wood and Chesser who had categorized four main stereotypes surrounding African Americans as "loud", "aggressive", "lazy" and "quick tempered" (7). These negative stereotypes of black men became a means of pushing them outside the moral periphery of the white middle class norms.

In this regard, the authors further mention Hurwitz and Peffley's report (2005) that the whites (particularly conservatives) who insisted on the control mechanisms of the criminal system even devised "subtle racialized code[s]" while also denying their own racial biases, for an instance, among the various codes that they had devised the code or term− "the inner city" (8) referred to the inner city black criminals. Further, in their reference to the presence of the disturbing white 'racial animus' that forks into the categories of racial stereotypes and racial resentment cite Taman and Sears (2005) who had discussed the four main convictions of the dominant whites in this regard. The whites held the conviction that racial discrimination no longer hindered the progress of blacks; their 'laziness' accounted for their lagging behind in

terms of success and such reasons no longer justified their claims on racial grounds. Thus, creating policies in the interest of African Americans were no longer valid (10).

Acker (2006) reinstates that the "inequality regimes" in relation to the complex forms of inequality at various levels- historical, social, political and cultural also need to be 'challenged' not just as factors of "oppression but also of power" (Belkhir and Barnett 171) much as Francis (1999) suggests the possibility of a moral regeneration in the American society. Similarly, Winant (2000) too posits an optimistic approach where it concerns progressing beyond the race concept in the opinion that it is possible to challenge and triumph over all the constructed "stratification, the hierarchy, the taken-for-granted injustice and inhumanity that so often accompanies the race concept" (183). The concerns of CRT are inextricably linked to American law and jurisprudence while it also is politically significant. Thus, its integration into the legal frameworks of America shall further create meaningful exchanges as well as revisions that are directed towards progressive change in the legal and social systems. thereby addressing the social realities of crime and deviance.

The Underground reveals itself like a parallel universe with its motley characters. The city with its dark side of the underworld lurked in the shadows in almost a liminal state itself, where it had both a 'presence' and also an 'absence' from mainstream society. This murky world of crime and deviance had taught Angelou much about the value of leading a principled life while she found herself lurking in the shadows of the underworld. She presents how crime and deviance stems from the crippling effects of social inequalities and how these not only act as modes of protests of the helpless and the disadvantaged but also operate as a means of power. However, it only worsens their circumstances where they find themselves entrapped in a continuous pattern of crime leading to crime, or deviance further leading to deviance or even secondary deviance that continues through generations. Thus, Angelou's narratives do not engage in romanticizing crime, rather they lay open the festering sores, the social realities of the subterranean criminal underworld which required attention and healing.

Through the course of the study, it is arguably felt that criminals or deviants are not strangers and are an extension of ourselves whom we recognize in us, in our extremities even as we may deny these aspects in our public or even private lives. To attempt an explanation of the

same, just as language contributes to our recognizing others or otherness, our 'face' too forms an identity marker as well. To cite a simple example criminals or deviants hide their 'faces' when their criminal activities or deviant actions are exposed publicly as the 'face' is a major identity marker. In fact, sometimes even the socially or morally 'upright' in society tend to disguise or create false identities in order to hide themselves or their real faces as well. Thus, treating criminals and deviants like 'strangers' is always with reference to our proper selves because one is always 'strange' in a relative sense. Possibly then, criminals, sexual violators, terrorists are all in a way relative extensions of our (extreme) selves as well. Moreover, when a criminal is proven guilty the law subjects the criminal to punishment but the law does not regard any criminal as an 'absolute' criminal which leaves further scope for reformation.

While discussing the developmental factors and changes in deviant or criminal behaviour through the life course Macmillan in the article "Violence and the Life Course" (2001) notes both the micro and macro aspects of study in Life-course research thus,

> Researchers who study development and the life course often focus on the dark side of human relations. Macro-level conditions such as wars, recessions, and depressions, as well as more personal experiences such as divorce, unemployment, poverty, and dislocation have all been central aspects of life course inquiry. (1)

Macmillan mentions Elder's (1974) study of children during the Great Depression which revealed that the 'crises' had a long term effect on their impressionable minds, which accounts for the fact that 'age' emerged as one of the significant variables in this area of research (5). The author further notes three keys areas of life course viz. mental well-being or psychological distress, crime and deviance, socio-economic and educational achievements in the development of children and adolescents. According to Life-course findings, violent victimization experienced during early childhood has long-term impact on mental health often resulting in early patterns of offending which continues into adulthood as is also explained by "cycle-of-violence" (8). Therefore, it is essential to responsibly address these aspects that have serious implications in determining the aspects of crime and deviance through the trajectory or course of life.

In highlighting desistance from crime and deviance through the life course Uggen and Kruttschnitt in their article "Crime in the Breaking: Gender Difference in Desistance" (1999) take up the emergence of 'desistance research' that had significantly followed the much debated life-course theories. Desistance research is divided into two major aspects behavioural desistance and official desistance, the former recording the change from criminal to non-criminal behaviour and the latter with regard to the law. In its early stage, desistance from crime was considered to have developed due to age and maturity, fulfillment of deprived needs and social integration, biophysical and psychological changes, marriage and employment etc. However, the authors note that the behavioural patterns of peer groups as well as available opportunities in the crime market, also determine the participation of both male and female in criminal offenses. Further, Lanctot and Blanc examine the existent gender gap in crime and deviance that also forms a consistent finding in empirical research and studies. Thus, the concepts of deviance syndrome, survival strategies, trajectories and desistance with regard female offenders or deviants together with an insight into the relevance of feminist theoretical perspectives contribute sufficiently towards the understanding of crime and deviance particularly with regard to women criminals and deviants. In the area of research, both life course and desistance findings provide longitudinal and analytical studies particularly in the area of crime and deviance.

Significantly, Chriss in *Social Control* (2007) mentions that 'institutional racism' exists in the criminal justice system as much as the social systems or institutions that accounts for the "racial profiling" or "race-based policing" (101) in America with regard to crime and deviance. On this note, Young in highlighting the unresolved issues that had rolled down the pages of history also argues that, "[t]hose who are interested in using law to empower people must ask- after years of civil and human rights laws– what accounts for the persistence of racial and gender discrimination and oppression" (453). Similarly, Brunson and Miller (2006) take up discussions on the negative impact of racial biases in 'urban policing' as well as 'deviant behaviour' of the police where it concerns even minor offenses committed by both males and females in black neighbourhoods.

They note that apart from the gendered practices, the behavioural patterns of the police are different in both the cases of poor urban localities to middle or upper class neighborhoods.

Black youths as well as adults are seen to be the constant targets of the police in sharp contrast to white youths. Another extreme end of the problem is the factor of 'under policing' that is defined by the lackadaisical attitudes of police in discharging their duties as well as sexual misconduct by the police particularly in the case of black women offenders and other poor minority women which continues to be an unresolved problem with regard to urban policing. In a similar context, Glenn Loury in "Crime, Inequality & Social Injustice" (2010) provides relevant insights into the racial inequalities in the American criminal justice system by bringing to the fore the increasing prison populations. Loury opines that incarceration does not simply solve the problem of crime, as it is a fact that a new crop of criminals or deviants always tend to emerge thereby replacing the incarcerated criminals. It is observed that incarceration also operates in a cyclical pattern in the poor urban neighborhoods in which particularly the 'male members of families across generations, experience incarceration at some point of their lives due to criminal activity or law breaking.

Further, in the article titled "Docile Bodies? Chemical Restraints and the Female Inmate" (2000) Auerhann and Dermody bring to the fore an important issue regarding the administering of psychotropic drugs to prison inmates mostly for nonmedical reasons in order to exercise control and restraint on all prisoners drugging inmates in common interest of safety. This conveniently checks against the overcrowding of those incarcerated in prison systems thereby requiring less vigilance and staff on duty. These issues have also been raised and tried in the American judiciary with the law, making rare exceptions in drug administration instead of overruling the practice completely. Also, it critically examines the overdoses of drug administration, questioning ill or hidden motives of drug administrators, overprescribed drugs, side effects, withdrawal symptoms and long term effects. They also take up first hand narratives of female prisoners in pre-trial detention, the effects of drugging that can deter or prevent them from actively participating in their own trial or defense.

In this context, Tasha Galardi in "What I Learned: Learning from the Inside Out" (2009) describes her first-hand experience of interacting with prison inmates as part of a student team of Oregon State University during a National-Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program which had provided new insights into the factors that often determined the criminal bent of mind which

could range from experimentation to boredom. Also, while validating the relevance of Becker's theory of deviance Galardi makes a pertinent observation, "[a]ll humans carry the potential to make someone else an "outsider", it seems, even those thrown out of mainstream society themselves" (83) and emphasizes on the importance of 'prison reforms' in order to reintegrate criminal offenders towards contributing positively to the society after they complete serving their term.

In highlighting the necessity of further integrating theories of criminology and deviance into sociological 'practice', Ronald Akers in "Linking Sociology and its Specialties" (1992) notes that it is necessary in order to highlight its relevance as well as to make a counted difference towards the understanding of crime and deviance. Akers clearly elucidates the importance of a symbiosis between sociological theory and practice and quotes Hans Zetterberg who had stated, "Nothing improves theory more than its confrontation with practice" (26). In terms of the practical relevance of the present study, it is found that crime and deviance in the American context brings along with it a range of aspects to be studied, analyzed, addressed and advocated through positive intervention and practice. Some of these aspects that are found to have emerged from the study on crime and deviance are issues of control and conformity, choices and compulsions, motivation and opportunity, human psyche and behavioural patterns, social stereotypes and stigma, circumstances and causality, crisis and identity, disorientation and disintegration, socio-political and economical contexts, transitions and trajectories of criminal/deviant life, prison and legal systems to mention a few.

Significantly, Gregg Barak in "Class, Race, and Gender in Criminology and Criminal Justice" (2004) discusses the significance of newly examining aspects of crime and criminal justice which are informed by post-modern, post-structuralism, post-Marxism as well as post-feminism perspectives that readily take up issues of race, gender and class. The four methods of studying these three variables are: quantitative studies, time and place studies, ethnographic studies and social-construction studies. Also Barak suggests that research approaches need not be confined to these alone and in keeping with the integrative approach it is also necessary to integrate different 'criminologies' that lend relevant insights into the field. Social construction studies of crime and criminal justice in particular draws from theoretical perspectives of other

disciplines such as symbolic interaction theory, labeling theory, and cultural studies etc., to inquire or examine the pertinent aspects of race, gender and class. Barak mentions Anderson and Hill Collins' idea of "matrix of domination" (92) and suggests the necessity of detangling such multiple complexities of power structures that severely impacts race, class and gender.

In the introduction to Angela Davis' *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* (2016), Frank Barat poses relevant questions on the possible ways of "sustaining" (xii) consistent radical activism that transcends across national or international borders and boundaries, at the same time believing that most of the 'solidarity movements' across the world− all struggling for a cause tend to fall-out owing to easy surrender and fear of the power of opposing forces. Davis further describes the enduring systems of oppression in America that continues to influence the lives of black people even in the present era opining thus,

> Although Black individuals have entered economic, social, and political hierarchies (the most dramatic example being the 2008 election of Barack Obama), the overwhelming number of Black people are subject to economic, educational and carceral racism to a far greater extent than during the pre-civil rights era. (2)

Thus, Davis expresses her belief in the importance of mass participation in both understanding the importance of and sustaining significant struggles towards freedom which is possible. Robin Kelley in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002) states the necessity of "imagining a radically different future and engaging in struggles to bring visions into being" (qtd. Farah Griffin 172).

With regard to her own share of struggle for freedom, Angelou alone had defined her own identity instead of being defined or labeled by anyone else, emerging as an evolved persona through those eventful years of her struggles, radical activism and diverse experiences. Despite confronting racial oppression, she had also emerged as one of the leading black voices to speak against racial injustice; irrespective of her marginality as a black woman, she took charge of her life standing up to new challenges of survival; and regardless of her exposure to the dangers of the world of crime and deviance, she emerged stronger in her desire to rediscover herself. Although she had always missed the protection of her grandmother Henderson or her estranged

brother Bailey who had long been her emotional support through her childhood yet in time she had matured as a person, eventually learning how to fend for herself, provide for her family and also to follow in the paths of her intuition and intelligence. Even as she faltered and stumbled, she finally stood on her own.

Thus, Hagen in *Heart of a Woman, Mind of a Writer, and Soul of a Poet* (1997) remarks that, "Angelou skirts the edge of the underworld, but her innocence and openness bring out the good in unsavoury people, and they keep her from personal harm. Her life is actually enriched by her encounters with the fringes of society" (74). Notwithstanding her struggles, her growing fortunes or her acquired sophistication in the course of her life, Angelou had always cherished the little things in life and relished in all that was good. For an instance, even something as simple as her mother's delicious red rice could make her want to "cut down on dangerous habits like smoking, drinking, and cursing" ("Mother's Long View" 54). By nature, Angelou could be described as a warm person, generous, trusting, intelligent, gullible, carefree, romantic, emotional, creative and multi-talented with traces of her mother's charm and her grandmother's prudence. Through, the transitions of her life, which also influenced her metamorphosis as a person wrapped in a process of self discovery, Angelou had emerged as a stronger individual who inspired others like her embodying the triumphant human spirit even under the most testing of circumstances.

Just as her friends James Baldwin, Julian Mayfield and Paul Marshall held strong opinions on the "political responsibilities of writers" (*Song Flung up* 1130), Angelou as a writer had not only accomplished such a responsibility by stirring the kind of "oppositional critical consciousness" (Christopher 84) among her people but had also articulated her moral responsibility as a humanitarian to inspire all human endeavours towards progressive change. The Harlem Writers Guild had a lasting influence on her and had inspired her to be a 'harbinger of change'. In an interview for BBC News (2014), Angelou admits that she had been as "militant" in her political stance as a socio-political activist as the Harlem Writers Guild. In fact, Helen Cixous in her essay "Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) asserts the importance of breaking the shackles of bondage and oppression that hinders women from writing and articulating themselves thus,

> As a militant, she is integral part of all liberations. She must be farsighted, not limited to a blow-by-blow interaction. She foresees that her liberation will do more than modify power relations or toss the ball over to the other camp; she will bring about a mutation in human relations, in thought, in all praxis: hers is not simply a class struggle, which she carries forward into a much vaster movement. (882)

Angelou had a true revolutionary spirit and firmly believed that people had a significant role to play both individually and collectively towards ushering positive change in their situated contexts. She had firmly believed that all Americans were to answer their conscience regarding the significant questions that Fannie Lou Hamer had long raised:

> What do I think of my country? What is there, which elevates my shoulders and stirs my blood when I hear the words, the United States of America: Do I praise my country enough? What is there about my country that makes me hang my head and avert my eyes when I hear the words the United States of America, and what am I doing about it? Am I relating my disappointment to my leaders and to my fellow citizens, or am I like someone not involved, sitting high and looking low? As Americans we should not be afraid to respond. ("Fannie Lou Hamer" 84)

In an interview with Audre McCluskey (2001) Angelou had shared her ideas on the various hurdles and challenges that the black artist often had to overcome in their creative endeavours, mentioning that to her- life as a committed artist and a social activist were not much different from the other. She had expressed her firm conviction that the presence of equity, equality and balanced opportunities together with the freedom −as equal citizens was crucial in the progress of the young black men and women in the country who were brimming with talent but were without the necessary scope of realizing the same. To her talent was like "electricity" that which "we do not thoroughly understand it or where it comes from, or where it goes, however we use it" (Interview with Dillon 632).

Angelou was a bundle of talent herself given the range of her literary and creative interests, which were mostly self-nurtured rather than formally schooled. Somehow, through the constant search in the 'classifieds' for her future and her remarkable fortitude with which she

lived up to the unexpected challenges of life, despite all the odds had also reflected the kind of courage that her mother Vivian Baxter had instilled in her. Angelou had known all along that she belonged to a crucial period in the socio-political history of America that stood witness to the black struggle for freedom and justice. Through her contributions both as a writer and an activist, she had inspired hope and courage among her people who had suffered a long history of oppression and particularly among the younger generations who she believed held the promise to a brighter future. Thus, she had said- "[u]nfortunately, fortitude was not like the color of my skin, given to me once and mine forever. It needed to be resurrected each morning and exercised painstakingly" (*Gather Together* 379).

In her essay "I Dare to Hope" (1991-1992), Angelou thus wrote, "[w]e need to haunt the halls of history and listen anew to the ancestor's wisdom. We must ask questions and find answers that will help us to avoid falling into the merciless maw of history" (23) and in articulating the aspirations of her people, she had both traversed and transcended the challenges of the black experience in a significant way. The special significance of her autobiographical narratives may be noted in the fact that her treatment of the thematic concerns in these writings further reflect the 'universality' of human emotions and experiences, the inherent strength of human endurance and power of the human spirit, her zest for life and a firm belief in humanitarian values.

Even in the most compelling circumstances, Angelou had confronted her share of crises with tremendous courage and faith in her ability to 'find' or even 'create' solutions to the troubles that came her way. Through all the struggles, setbacks and challenges of life, she had learnt to overcome all the odds in her way (at times even at the risk of courting dangers), emerging all the stronger and wiser as an individual. 'Life' itself had schooled her into imbibing the best from all the lessons that it had to offer and to further inspire others towards the same. Thus, Angelou had long determined that the story of her life would not be another forgotten narrative of a black woman but one that would always continue to inspire countless individuals across the world to create a difference in their own lives and the lives of others in their own significant way. If one had to define her authorial intention, it would be best captured in her own words:

I thought if I wrote a book, I would have to examine the quality in the human spirit that continues to rise despite the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Rise out of the physical pain and the psychological cruelties.

Rise from being victims of rape and abuse and abandonment to the determination to be no victim of any kind.

Rise and be prepared to move on and ever on.

(*A Song Flung up to Heaven* 1166).

True to her exuberant spirit, she had taken up the challenge of jotting down her autobiography at the age of forty capturing almost four decades from 1928 to 1968, tracing an eventful journey right from her early childhood years that she spent in the racially segregated South to her days of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, evolving both as a writer and a socio-political activist. Thus, Angelou had come a long way from shedding her initial inhibitions of writing her story to finding her own voice, from being a reticent young Southern girl to being a leading spokesperson for justice and human rights in America. She embodied a spirit of adventure welcoming new learning experiences and opportunities into her fold. Angelou exuded a strong sense of self, her roots, her people– constantly reasserting what she stood for and reinventing herself with diligence and sheer optimism. She was always keen on acquiring and inspiring newer insights on the black experience as well as the larger human condition. The need for 'self discovery' and 'self realization' finds expression in her personal writings and reflections as she also wrote in "Living Well and Living Good" (1993):

> Because of the routines we follow, we often forget that life is an ongoing adventure…Life is pure adventure, and the sooner we realize that, the quicker we will be able to treat life as art: to bring all our energies to each encounter, to remain flexible enough to notice and admit when what we expected to happen did not happen. We need to remember that we are created creative and can invent new scenarios as frequently as they are needed. (66)

Stamant notes that, "[a]s scholars have suggested, many of Angelou's texts foreground a search for home through the motif of journeys" (103). In the metaphorical sense, the theme of 'journey' in her autobiographies is also symbolic of her inner journey or quest towards discovering her sense of self, gaining wisdom from her experience, testing her strength, discovering her talents, pushing the limits of her abilities, surviving difficult times, resisting oppression, celebrating the spirit of adventure and rejoicing the gift of life with unwavering courage and determination. Angelou at the onset of her narratorial journey had posed the rhetorical question: "What you looking at me for? I didn't come to stay." (*Caged Bird* 1) to imply her self- consciousness and her defensive position with regard to her personal journey. However, at the tail end of her autobiographical journey, she had also expressed a sense of fulfillment and a better understanding of the very transition of her journey owing to which the repetition of the same words "What you looking at me for. I didn't come to stay" (*Song Flung up* 1167) which eventually reads like a gentle expression (in the absence of its earlier interrogative tone). The subtleties in these expressions may also be read as the transition from her initial stages of insecurities to her more matured phases brought about by her journey(s)─ as a narrator and as the protagonist of her own work.

To arrive at an ideal balance in life was never her obsession and yet Maya Angelou had an inner vision that failed to cloud her mind in the most crucial moments of her life as she says, "[l]ife had a conveyor belt quality. It went on unpursued and unpursuing, and my only thought was to remain erect and keep my secret along with my balance" (*Caged Bird* 219). Precisely, this quality of being able to rise up from the mire of pain, suffering, odds, obstacles, fury and frustration and being able to inspire others, to 'rise up' from a life 'devoid of hope' to a 'life of fulfilling challenges' had made Angelou an 'icon' of inspiration and evergreen hope. Thus, William Andrews et al. describe Angelou as a "humanist and a protean personality" (19) who not only stood as an exemplary figure in the pages of American literary history but also as an inspiring personality who exemplified the possibilities of self-transformation, self-definition and self-empowerment through her own story. Also, Dolly McPherson highlights Angelou's efforts "to preserve and celebrate humanity" (qtd. in Balachandran 189) despite her grasping the complexities of human experiences and the efforts of creating changes in the lives of people so that they may be inspired to live more enriching, fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Angelou had thrived through the most difficult of experiences and challenges and what may have broken another person simply failed to have shattered her. Although she had chartered into the dangerous territory of the underworld which thrived on the vulnerability of black men and women yet she had also managed to escape from its periphery. Thus, in highlighting some of the major findings with regard to Angelou are as stated below:

- Angelou's journey is redemptive and her emotional growth as a person is incredible where she liberates herself from the most bitter of experiences in her life. Although she meets lot of vicious people and falls in trouble with their sinister plans against her, yet she 'liberates' herself by forgiving them.
- Angelou reveals that 'vulnerability' is not weakness; it takes a lot of courage especially for a black woman who is subject to all kinds of harm and criticism to let down her defenses and reveal the truths of her criminal and deviant experiences.
- Angelou's journey presents her metamorphosis in which she emerges as a better person looking back at her life-changing experiences, from her being the sensitive child to the unsavory experiences of a rebellious teen, her adventures as a carefree woman to her spiritual stability with age that captures both the highs and lows of life.
- Angelou is not afraid to 'fail' and even when she 'falls' she gathers herself admitting her mistakes. She emerges stronger than before in a world does not admit failure and is quick to judge the fallen, the criminal, the deviant and those who do not fall under the orderly currents of life.
- Angelou's 'resilience' and 'adaptability' against all odds is remarkable. The ability to constantly strive towards being who she wanted to be against who she had failed to be speaks of her adaptability. She adapts to all that is uncomfortable and almost always steps out of her comfort zone for better or worse and most significantly takes responsibilities for her decisions.
- Angelou does not in any way apologize for her difficult past. While she accepts it as a part of her, with the benefit of hindsight she also revisits and reexamines her actions or decisions in the past but nowhere does she express any repentance for her decision.
- Angelou reveals the lasting impact that 'cynicism' has on the mind when one is faced with a hostile world at an early age. Her murky experiences in the underworld, the

problems that she faced while growing up reflects the necessity of a nurturing environment and the importance of counselling at the crucial stages of life.

- Angelou had an unfailing capacity of always looking at the positive side of life.
- Angelou's entanglement with the world of crime and deviance were both situational as well as dispositional in nature. Also, she was not opportunistic in the exploitative sense rather her desperation stemmed from her need to be self-sufficient and to make ends meet.
- Angelou's inexperience and at times her ignorance and naivety had led her into the world of crime and deviance, where she (like many others like her) did not have a defined idea of what was legally considered as crime, deviance or tort. Owing to these blurred lines she had faltered often as the victim and also as a perpetrator.
- Angelou gains a better understanding of the rampant crime and deviance in the black society and gains an insider's view of the circumstances that made a person criminal or a deviant. Being in their shoes makes her more sensitive to the emotional upheavals and challenges of their lives and has an almost humanizing effect on her.
- Angelou's inherent goodness prevails and triumphs throughout her journey. She was the kind of person who had brought out the best in the criminals and deviants of the underworld. Despite her brush with the world of crime and deviance, she does protect her inner core. This finds support in the citation of Matza's (1964) idea by Osgood et al. in "Routine Activities and Individual Deviant Behaviour" that deviance results from a certain "drift or in other words a tendency to engage in deviance without necessarily giving up "conventional values" (638).
- Angelou through her experience of crime and deviance highlights the importance of social progress and justice for the black people. She had realized that America who treated black people as second class citizens was not interested in the quality of black lives. However, instead of suffering in silence she asks all the difficult questions that the black people were taught not to ask and therefore highlights the burning concerns of the marginalized and those struggling their demons at the periphery.
- Angelou's difficult experiences of crime and deviance had resulted in her firm conviction that black people had to call on to their black leaders to reach out not only those who

struggled for Black progress but even to those who had long given up their hopes of a better- future entering into the "drug-filled" and "hate filled cesspool" in her own words ("I Dare to Hope" 24).

- The sense of fragmentation and Angelou experiences in her initial experiences of city life often makes her feel trapped within her own being, being perplexed and disoriented with her sense of self, yet never falling into despair and transforming her life's challenges into life's lesson. This points towards her eventual self-integration.

While the African American community stood at the crossroads of change they were seemingly united in their common struggles, compulsions and complexities of their individual experiences. Mostly of these complex or complicated experiences led them towards alternate or rather towards criminal and deviant routes of struggle, power and sustenance. Thus, some of the findings with regard to the African American people as represented in Angelou's autobiographies are as follows:

- The black criminals or deviants were treated as the outsider of the already marginalized black society in order to maintain the existing social order but the irony is that they were very much a product of the same society. Theirs was a history of being exploited as slaves, treated as property or merchandise, as fugitives, as non-citizens, outlaws and criminals yet these were the people whose forefathers had toiled extremely hard towards building the nation.
- The hostile social environment, the absence of legitimate opportunities, discrimination in institutional systems including the legal system and continuous rejection had aggravated the levels of 'seriousness' and 'longevity' of crime and deviance in the society which further accounted for criminal recidivism or secondary deviance and how it eventually proved to be a vicious cycle affecting generation of families particularly in the urban black ghettos.
- The black ghettos and neighbourhoods were the festering sores of the American society almost cancerous in nature which was in desperate need of healing owing to which social reformation should have been a priority for the American government with regard to its urban black population. The plight and the condition of their lives revealed years of white oppression, ignorance and injustice at all levels. The is emphasized in the autobiographies

in which Angelou represents the collective voice of her people to alleviate their long struggles and sufferings.

- With regard to both black men and women, the risk-taking capacity (even at the cost of their lives) was heightened especially when it was extremely difficult for poor blacks to continue living within their means and their limited scope of survival as in the case of criminal and deviant characters in the narratives.
- The black urban population in the 1940s till the 1960s is found to have been under tremendous pressures of survival, stressed between conformity and defiance, a straight life and the life of crime or deviance. It was an extremely difficult position to be in and the white people had little or no idea of these issues. They hardly considered it a priority to gain an insight into the larger black condition or to look beyond the comforts of their privileged lives.
- The migrating patterns concerning the minorities of American population to the cities explained their 'stiff competition' for survival. The drastic economic changes had primarily brought about changes in the larger black consciousness that gradually began to move towards 'self-centered' perspectives.
- The 'mountain of racism' (to reiterate the words of Malcolm X) is indeed found to be the root or the predominant cause of the disadvantaged position, poor condition and prolonged suffering which is found to simultaneously intersect with all other social inequalities.
- The autobiographies reveal black criminals and deviants not as a problem population as they were generally perceived by the dominant society or as another name or number in the criminal records but rather as 'subjects' of a society in turmoil, thereby highlighting their side of stories and giving them a space/voice.
- The resilience of the Black Americans and their consistent fight against defeat and denigration also speaks of their certain sense of preparedness for life and their commitment in taking up the black cause with all its challenges and complexities.
- Black criminals and deviants are found to be unaffected or indifferent about social labeling and social stigma within their community as Angelou notes that a sense of tolerance, an unspoken understanding and a 'shielding sponge' quality prevailed in the

black ghettos. She mentions how the blacks took care of their unwed adolescent daughters, cared for their old grandparents instead of sending them to old age homes, made room for their step-fathers and step-mothers, accepted their criminal or deviant children as their prodigal sons and daughters, never disregarding criminal acquaintances, welcoming everyone in their home and hearts; being most generous and kind even in the midst of crises.

- However, even as the old Southern community feeling had remained intact in the urban Northern ghettos (whether its members were into the criminal or deviant life or not), their sense of unity had started fraying at the edges. This is evident in the fact that crime is depicted to have taken an inward route with growing incidents of black-on-black crime in the black community.
- In the experiences of black women, sexism was prevalent in the Underworld as well. Moreover, the commitment of black women criminals/deviants to their families was relatively stronger than their engagement to the world of crime. Thus, criminal patterns and behaviour were relatively different for black male and female criminal or deviant.
- The narratives reveal the presence of an organized world of crime that operated through criminal networks and gangsters which ran parallel to the legitimate, orderly and institutionalized systems of power.
- The criminal underworld that operated like a silent killer through various categories of crime and deviance that had not only permeated human relationships but had begun to threaten the moral fabric of the American society which explained the moral degeneration of the black society during this time.
- The whites blamed blacks for the plight of their poor socio-economic conditions; they created and reinforced stereotypes of blacks being lazy, indifferent, crazy and inherently criminal by nature thereby looking at them with a sense of suspicion as well as superiority.
- In the white imagination, the underclass in America was presumed to have a pre-disposition towards crime and deviance. This further led to the prevalence of stereotypes, social labels and stigma which accumulated into deeply entrenched beliefs.

- The dominant white Americans had perceived black people as potential dangers thereby treating them as 'outlaws' or as 'criminal suspects'. Even today the prevalence of such deeply entrenched racial perceptions result in blacks being victims of racial profiling, legal scapegoating and bearing charges of over criminalization (and they are singled out as a major menace in the American society) as a result of which for an instance, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and activism continues to date.
- White crimes against blacks (that were unaccounted for) were to assert their racial superiority and to keep the entire black race in its place as recorded for an instance in the inhuman acts of the all-white Ku Klux Klan through several centuries or even the covert institutional practices.
- On the other hand, it is seen that Black Americans had never denied their hostility or their antagonistic position against whites. They in fact 'justified' their counteractions against injustice even if it meant their involvement in crime and deviance against the whites in the form of revenge, retaliation, violence and through their self-devised ways of beating whites at their own game.
- The urban black population resorted to crime and deviance in the absence of legitimate ways of establishing themselves, of finding proper means of work and sustenance, having no access to a better life, of being subject to long-term social injustice and owing to the complexities and compulsions of their lives. It was not like they were any less intelligent, abled or talented it was just that they did not find a way or scope to realize the same.
- In the autobiographies black men are shown to feed their heightened sense of egoism; highly ambitious on achieving their material needs or altering their lifestyles, risking their lives and leaping into the power game which also explains their eventual state of being hardened in crime finding themselves more and more entangled in the dangerous traps of criminal networks. However, black women are shown to drift in and out of the criminal networks as they mostly are shown to operate at the margins of the underworld.
- While the reasons for involvement of both urban black poor men and women in crime/deviance is found to be the same; the underworld for black men was their ultimate option, alternative or scope with its competitive as well as lucrative market. It was a network through which black men could assert their power and also defend themselves

against white supremacy. They believed in leading dangerous lives even at the expense of losing it rather than serving under a white man.

- Although blacks admitted to interracial violence yet they were found silent on their involvement in 'internecine violence' probably because they took it for granted. It is possible that the complicated networks through which black criminals operated had entangled and entrapped them in such a way that they were compelled to turn violent against 'anyone' who seemed like a potential threat while crossing their paths. Crime in all its complexity begets crime and thereby extends itself to its extremes.

Angelou represents the inequalities of race, gender and class in such a way that facilitates the reader to see through the influence and function of socio-economic systems on social consciousness and long-term social injustice on crime and deviance. The lack of fair and equal opportunities for black Americans is presented as a continuum of the historical injustice, disadvantaging, deprivation, exploitation, harassment and hatred that ultimately tends to result in the stunted progress of the African American people.

Therefore, in conclusion it may be stated that as reflected in the autobiographies of Angelou, 'Crime' and 'Deviance' in the context of the social conflict and disturbance in the black urban segregated spaces in the larger American society are found to be a serious manifestation of the chequered black experiences. The autobiographies unravel these experiences in its entirety taking into account the offshoots and outbursts of long-term 'multiple oppression' made more acute and widespread by the 'lack of social progress' and the 'absence of social justice' specifically combined with the 'social inequalities' of race, gender and class that plague their everyday realities as well as their hopes of a better future.

The limitations of the thesis rests on the fact that this volume of work has mainly focused and taken into consideration the autobiographical series of Maya Angelou, her interviews, anthologies of personal essays and documented videos from the wide range of her literary works. The study highlights critical perspectives on crime and deviance as it remains an unexplored area of study or research by critics and scholars alike. Thus, it is hoped that the thesis will stir newer insights in this area and lead to newer directions. The researcher hopes that it shall widen the horizon and create new pathways to be traversed by other researchers who are interested in exploring the aspects of crime and deviance in literature, black literature and various literary

forms together with the autobiographical genre. The present work may therefore highlight some of the significant areas of study that have been less explored as far as the diversity of Maya Angelou's writings are concerned.

Further, given the growing importance of trans-national studies in academic institutions across the globe there is certainly a huge potential for the writings of Angelou to be taken up by Universities and academic institutions in and across South Asia. The treasures of her literary work stands as a source of inspiration to people across the world and if taken up by the academic institutions for both study and research, it will certainly inspire young minds to gain much from her writings just as she had hoped. In fact, some of the universities in India does prescribe Angelou's first autobiography in their syllabi at both the college and university level. There is enough scope of introducing Angelou's reflective writings particularly her essays and her poetry as part of courses in English Literature, Woman's Studies, Gender Studies, Ethnography, Performance Studies among other disciplines. Some of the areas that may be suggested for future studies are: Ethnography, Literature and Crime, Women and Crime in Literature, Social Change and Crime, Identity and Violence in Black Autobiographies, Comparative Studies of Black Autobiographies, Tracing Critical White Studies to mention a few. Also, some of the works that can be identified as Children's Writings by her can be taken up as part of specialized courses on Children's Literature.

Angelou had not only inspired people to realize the strength of human 'endurance' but also to test the potential of human 'resilience' when it came to call and her eventful and exemplary life was a testimony of the same. She had emerged all the wiser from the varied experiences of her eventful life and through her writings and lessons in living, inspired people to celebrate the beauty of life and the gift of the amazing human spirit. Angelou had indeed established herself as an empowering persona and an exemplary figure with the charms of a 'phenomenal woman' who relished the thrill of the name– "spelled double-you oh em a en" (*Song Flung up* 1116) which when spelt also had an 'amen' ring to it. Thus, the legacy of Maya Angelou continues to enrich, inspire and empower millions of people across the world.

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