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The Discourse of the Oppressed in Literary Texts: The Case of Langston Hughes' and Maya Angelou's Poems

A thesis submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature- Faculty of Letters and Languages- Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of 'Doctorate LMD' in Discourse analysis in the teaching of English

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Dedication

To the apple of my eye, my daughter Darine!

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The journey was not at all easy. The feeling of loneliness and inability of continuation has often overwhelmed me. BUT, thanks to many people, I made it through. My ardent gratefulness is to Allah for putting these people in my path every now and then for a good reason.

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Abstract

Establishing a sense of the self in an oppressive regime is a complex process where one finds himself in a dialectical position between the *self* and the *other*. The social denial of the oppressed subject of all his civic, social, and even human rights begets exigent questions which cannot be answered unless the sense and position of the self *vis-à-vis* the sense and position of the other are established. Resisting oppression, ergo, becomes an insistent need, which requires an adequate medium. Having no access to institutional forms of discourse, African-American writers resort to literary discourse to express resistance of oppressive ideologies and practices acted upon them by the white community. Oppressors enact, (re)produce, and reinforce oppression through discourse. Equally, the oppressed groups resist and reject oppression through the very same medium, discourse. Resting on the assumption that discourse is a mode of action upon the society and upon the other and is a mediator of underlying ideologies, this study, adopting an interdisciplinary approach, aims at exploring how discourse mediates the ideologies of the oppressed in some poems of Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. The thesis is composed of four chapters which provide a review of literature on the theory of the oppressed and critical discourse analysis, a postcolonial reading of the African-American literature, the analysis of the discourse of the oppressed as a mode of action in Hughes' and Angelou's poems and the postcolonial Algerian students of English reception of the discourse of the oppressed in literary texts.

Keywords: Discourse, Oppressed, African-American poetry, Reception

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List of Abbreviations

ADD: *A Dream Deferred*

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

DA: Discourse Analysis

KMUO: Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla

MBU: Mustapha Benboulaid Univerity- Batna

MTS: *Mother to Son*

SIR: *Still I Rise*

WITM: *When I Think about Myself*

WW: *Woman Work*

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General Introduction

Man/ woman, believer/ non-believer, rich/ poor, literate/ illiterate, white/ black, an endless panoply of dichotomies which arrange the world in a vertical manner. They engender challenges for the individuals to live in an equal social reality where one is flung into an assortment of questions pertaining to self-definition and self-conceptualization in an attempt to reach self-assurance *vis-à-vis* the other. The feeling of being unwanted, undesired, inferiorized, marginalized or excluded from the human constellation drives one to fall into the abyss of chaos.

The chaotic world which surrounds one's being is laden with a range of conflicting questions. The conflicts between the real and the idealized states of being result into a dangling identity between what it really is and what the other expects it to be. Thus, one is shoved into rethinking his relation to other individuals who are seen as different.

Implicit in her desire was racial self-loathing. And twenty years later I was still wondering about how one learns that. Who told her? Who made her feel that it was better to be a freak than what she was? Who had looked at her and found her so wanting, so small a weight on the beauty scale? (Morrison, 2000: xi)

What makes Pecola, the protagonist in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (2000), develop a *racial self-loathing*? is the same as what makes her sit: "looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of her ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike" (Ibid: 45). People like Pecola exist when a society is oppressive. Oppressive regimes and societies augment the tension between social groups as far as establishing a sense of the self is concerned.

In reality, the dichotomies set the world in a hierarchical order. People are, thus, classified into top-people and bottom-people. The top-people social groups such as men, the rich, and/or the white, oppress the bottom people such as women, the poor and/or the black.

Subsequently, oppressed people develop a feeling of anxiety, fear, self-hatred, internalized oppression, challenge, rejection and resistance of oppression. Oppression is an acquired ideology that is based on a difference in gender, race, religion, or economic stratum. The more differences one has, the more oppressed he would be. One would raise the question: how is oppression enacted? Oppression takes numerous forms and occurs at different levels. It can be in the form of violence, sexual harassment, exploitation and so forth. Yet, oppression as an ideology is enacted mostly through discourse. Discourse is a daily practice which may carry the ideology of oppression through what is called the *discourse of power*.

The ideology of oppression is based on the ideology of difference. In other words, one oppresses the other when he thinks himself superior to the other due to a difference which could be skin pigmentation, for instance. As one considers the situation, one would find that one's color is a physical difference. An individual is born with a given skin pigmentation which he has no control over, be it black, white, or brown. It is completely a matter of genetic heredity. A white person would oppress a black one because he has already acquired that a black person is always inferior to the white.

Among the social groups who have been through oppression are the African people who were brought to America as slaves. The latter were transported from Africa to America as slaves. They, then, were dangling between being blacks and being whites. They, undoubtedly, refused their horrific situation which lacks the most primitive life conditions. The experience of slavery makes the study of the question of ideology necessary. It is due to the fact that African—Americans were uprooted from their land and thrown into a new land with different cultural particularities.

The clash between their original identity, which they were not able to exercise, and the new values of the intrude identity is but a clash of ideologies: an ideology of oppression and ideology of resistance. In order to express the ideology of resistance, African-Americans needed outlets to their complaints. With lack of access to institutional forms of discourse, African-American *intelligentsia* found it an exigent requirement to resort to literary production as a discourse of resistance. Therefore, the study of the discourse of resistance necessitates the study of the relationship between ideology and discourse.

The oppressors provided representations of the oppressed which are fallacious. The image of the oppressed was distorted by the misrepresentations. In this sense, African-Americans endeavored to redeem their image through rewriting the black identity. For this purpose, a black postcolonial discourse was created. A postcolonial discourse is a discourse which rejects the misrepresentations of the colonizer/oppressor, attempts to represent the colonized/oppressed identity authentically, and aims at voicing the oppressed grievances overtly. This type of discourse is a discourse of the oppressed; it opposes the discriminatory discourse of power, as well. Postcolonial discourse seeks to deconstruct the binaries which define one by who he is not rather than who he really is. Therefore, postcolonial African-American writers seek to bespeak and rewrite the black identity with respect to its peculiarities regardless the idealizations of the whites' standards. Hence, discourse is considered as a mode of action in this study.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) and Maya Angelou (1928) are among the postcolonial African-American writers whose works reveal the ideology of resistance. Although they belong to two different time spans, they both explore the theme of oppression in their writings, each in his/her own way. Hughes and Angelou share a number of similarities and have some differences

as far as the discourse of the oppressed is concerned. In point of fact, Hughes witnessed the experience of slavery while Angelou witnessed the aftermath of slavery. Their position towards the experience of oppression is not the same. Besides, while Hughes as a male is oppressed at one level .i.e., he is oppressed by the white people for being black. On the other hand, Angelou as a female is oppressed at two levels: she is oppressed by men for being a woman and oppressed by the whites for being black. The level of oppression determines the level of resistance. Consequently, the poets' maneuvering of discourse is different.

Hughes celebrates his blackness. He perceives his color as a beauty hallmark. His poems have chiefly two audiences: his people and his oppressors. He invites his people to cling to who they really are and warns them from internalized oppression. He reminds his white audience that black and white people are equal; he tells them confidently that one day they would regret their maltreatments and revise their misconceptions of the black people. Through his poems, Hughes redefines the black providing new perspectives to approach it: he sees power in the black people's miserable past as slaves. He connects to his roots as a source of power. This poet does not complain from pain but he uses pain against his enemy.

Maya Angelou is a proud black woman. Her poems celebrate womanness and blackness. She believes that men and women are equally important. She presents female speakers who stress the role of women in the black world and the role of women in general. Elsie B. Washington calls her "the black women's poet laureate" and sees her poetry as "the anthems of the African-American" (Trivedi 2016: 14). Angelou's poems "reflect the richness and subtlety of Black speech and sensibilities" and are "representative rather individual authoritative rather than confessional." (Ibid: 14-5). Angelou faces pain with joy and faces the oppressors'

idealizations with self-assurance because her “poems are inspired and spoken by a confident voice of strength that recognizes its own power” (Ibid: 15). In her poems, she reshapes the perception of women as she reconstructs the concepts of center and margin. In a male-centered world, she centers the speakers in her poems in a female-centered literary space so as to challenge the gender codes in her society.

At this juncture, it is evident that Hughes and Angelou attempt to create a new definition of the African-American breaking the oppressor-based social codes:

like Hughes who creates a new African American identity, a proud sense of self in his poetry, Angelou speaks out the survival, development, and actualization of African American people confronted by the Anglo-American cultural hegemony with the best of words she can summon (Juan Du 214: 65)

The new perspectives they provide may be the reason why they are widely read.

In this context, the main concern of this thesis is to make clear how discourse is a mode of action against oppression. Discourse mediates underlying ideologies. Through this thesis, the way African-American literary discourse mediates their underlying ideologies of resistance will be explored with emphasis on Hughes’ and Angelou’s poems. In this vein, the questions set forward are:

- 1- To what extent does oppression impact the shaping of one’s identity?
- 2- Does oppression effect literary discourse?
- 3- How do Hughes and Angelou use literary discourse to resist oppression?

-4. How does the Anglo-Saxon Literature Master student at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla and Mostafa BenBoulaid Literature Master students receive the discourse of the oppressed in Hughes' and Angelou's poems?

Experiencing oppression means belonging to a world where some groups take advantage of other groups with nothing in return. It means, as well, that people are not put on the same equal footing. In an oppressive society, two identities- original and new- collide begetting a state of loss, despair, and a tense relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The tense nature of the relationship between the latter and the former results into an identity crisis. An identity crisis is a period when people try to adjust to new changes, but in *lieu* of adjusting to changes they find themselves in a conflictual world questioning values. On this basis, it is assumed that oppression has an impact on shaping one's identity immensely.

Power relations in society are intricate relations and their manifestations are discursive within discourses. Hereafter, discourse is connected to discursive ideologies. Discourse is the vehicle of the underlying ideologies. The discursive ideology stands for the *what* .i.e., the content and discourse stands for the *how* .i.e., the manner. When one produces discourse, he moulds it according to his ideologies whether consciously or unconsciously.

The African-American poets maneuver their discourse to celebrate blackness, reject oppression, and redeem their distorted image. Hughes and Angelou avail literary discourse peculiarities to resist oppression. They use rhetorical devices, imagery and figures of speech to send out the emotional experiences of an oppressed individual and/ or social group. They select prosodic devices which contribute to giving rhythm to their poems and create auditory effects.

The choice of the speakers' gender, role, race, and physical features help reinforce their self-confident and proud attitude. Hughes affirms: "When I write, the words just put themselves together ... My poems are spontaneous, but I re-work and revise." (Hughes 1940). Maya Angelou also believes in the power of discourse to act upon the others, she says: "I really love language. I love it for what it does for us, how it allows us to explain the pain and the glory, the nuances and the delicacies of our existence [...] We need language."¹

The production of literary discourse entails unavoidably its reception. The process of reading a literary discourse is not static; it is an exchange between the text and the reader. Put differently, a text is revived each time a reader approaches it, he adds to its meaning his own interpretation and brings to the text his experience. A text does not happen in vacuum, it happens in a space where dialectical perspectives meet. Hans Robert Jauss explains that a text awakens expectations and sets its readers in a specific mood of reception; he explains:

A literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read, brings the reader to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the "middle and end," which can then be maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically in the course of the reading (1982: 23)

The reception of the text, then, happens in a continuum of expectations that are rooted in one's experience. The discourse of the oppressed in the selected poems lends the Algerian readers an experience of the *other* which is juxtaposed to their own. The discourse oppressed

¹ <https://dailypost.wordpress.com/2014/05/28/maya-angelou/comment-page-5/> [last accessed 16-04-2018]

infuses certain attitudes in its readers which are manifested as *sympathy* and/ or *empathy*. The attitudes they develop depend on whether the readers allow themselves a *centripetal* or a *centrifugal* reading. A centripetal reader is a reader who implies himself in the text. He puts himself in exactly the same shoes of the speaker. A centrifugal reader is a reader who does not imply himself in the text; yet, he may feel and understand the experience of the speaker.

Algerian readers do share an experience of oppression with the African-American poets. It is not the same form of oppression since Algerians were colonized and African-Americans were enslaved and were uprooted from their lands. The intersection between the Algerian readers' and the African-American writers' profiles may effect the readers reception of the discourse of the oppressed. By the study of the Algerian reader's reception, the idea of associating the information in the text with the information from the readers' socio-cultural environment is centred. In other words, the concern is not what the discourse of the oppressed means for the Algerian reader; rather, it is how the discourse means what it means to the Algerian readers.

For the purposes of this study, a questionnaire was administered to master students at Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla and Mustapha Benboulaïd University- Batna 2 to explore their reception of the discourse of the oppressed in the poems of Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. The objective of the questionnaire is to probe the factors which effect their reception. The hypothesis raised is that Algerian readers would refer to their background as postcolonial Muslim Algerians to react to the texts selected: Hughes' *I, Too* (2012) and Angelou's *When I think about Myself* (1994). It is expected that the gender of the speaker may effect the extent to which the readers sympathize with the speakers in the poems.

One important point to highlight is that the selection of these two universities is purposeful. Firstly, the geographical distribution of the two universities is different. Ouargla University is situated in the South and Batna University is in the North of Algeria. Besides, they are selected due to the ease of access as far as distance and administrative facilitations are concerned. As a matter of fact, many attempts were made to distribute the questionnaire in other universities in other cities such as Elouad, Constantine, Tebessa and Laghouat were made. Unfortunately, there was little response. In some universities, the number of students who answered the questionnaire was less than ten. Moreover, Ouargla can be considered as a gate to the south of Algeria, *viz*, it is not located in the extreme south of Algeria like Adrar or Ain Salah. Therefore, it would be wiser to have it compared to a city with is not located in the extreme north of Algeria like Algiers or Oran.

It is essential to note that the study does not aim at characterizing the discourse of the oppressed or listing its pertinent features. The objective is to survey how discourse mediates discursive ideologies of resistance. Through accomplishing this objective, it can be possible to highlight the gap between the study of literature and discourse analysis. Literary discourse is a terrain where human concerns are confessed; literary works are the embodiment of the individual's and societies' ideologies, complaints, and questions. Discourse analysis is a terrain where the formation of language to fit into and to convey human concerns is analyzed. Additionally, the deciphering of the discursive ideologies beneath discourse manoeuvrings brings about a glance on the Algerian EFL students' reception of discourse.

To realize these objectives, it seems important to contextualize the study within a multidisciplinary theoretical framework. Power relations within discourse are complex and

many-sided. *Ergo*, their analysis requires critical lenses. It is necessary to yield to *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Power relations are a social matter and their mediation through discourse is a linguistic- though not only linguistic- matter. Critical Discourse Analysis links social and linguistic theories. The study subscribes to this approach because the latter takes also into consideration that the relationship between social action and discourse is the interaction. That is:

how texts are produced and interpreted, depends upon the social action in which they are embedded; and the nature of the text, its formal and stylistic properties, on the one hand depends upon and constitutes 'traces' of its process of production, and on the other hand constitutes 'cues' for its interpretation. (in Coffins 2001:100)

The intricacy of semantic connotations and loads in the poems of Hughes and Angelou and the multi-faceted nature of their discourse make it paramount to make appeal to other theories like postcolonialism and feminism. As a postcolonial reader of these texts, the researcher should be equipped with theories which spot light on the disposability of discourse to the oppressed as well as the oppressor to act upon the world and upon each other. Feminism and mainly postcolonialism allow a reading of discourse as a discourse of resistance. The theories used in the thesis are not a personal choice. They are, indeed, determined by the corpora and the objective of my research. On this basis, the theories will allow a better reading of the discourse of the oppressed in terms of understanding the phenomena of resisting oppression. Accordingly, it is crucial to organize the study into four chapters.

Chapter one reviews literature on the theoretical discussions of and writings about the theory of oppression, its forms and its levels and its relationship with the theories of critical discourse analysis. Its objective is to lay foundation for the rest of the thesis. The concepts of the

oppressed in relation to the oppressor as well as the analysis of discursive ideologies are discussed through critical discourse analysis.

Chapter two, entitled *A Postcolonial Reading of the African-American Literature*, is devoted to the discussion of the African-American literature from a postcolonial perspective. Postcolonial concerns are related to the concerns of the African-American literature. The objective of the second chapter is to prove that African-American literary discourse is a postcolonial discourse through highlighting the postcolonial concerns in a number of African-American literary works.

Chapter Three, *African-American Literary Discourse as a Mode of Action*, is rather an attempt to demonstrate how Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou use discourse to reject and resist oppression. It is basically the researcher's reading of the poems under study. Within the researcher's reading, the attempt is to illustrate how discourse works at different levels to mediate ideologies, convey experiences and emotions.

Chapter four surveys the reception of EFL students at KMU and MBU of the discourse of the oppressed. The description of the sample, questionnaire, analysis of results and their interpretations are to be found in this chapter entitled, *The Post Colonial Algerian EFL Students' Reception of The Discourse of the Oppressed*.

What justification can be given to the choice of the study of the discourse of the oppressed in African-American literary texts? The study is not a pioneer study to explore the discourse of the oppressed in Hughes' and Angelou's writings; yet, every reader brings up to the text his/ her own interpretation with reference to his broad identity and individual identity.

The researcher's broad and individual identities do not correspond to those of the poets under scrutiny. However, it is not compulsorily to be neutral as a reader of the discourse of the oppressed. Howsoever assiduous is the attempt to remain a neutral reader, one's personal stock of experience including gender, nationality, geographical distribution, prejudices, preferences, and needs intrude into one's readings whether consciously or unconsciously.

With all this baggage, one, as a reader, cannot remain passive before the phenomena in the texts as they stimulate one's experiences and my worldviews. Along the same vein, Holub contends that: "The literary work is neither completely text nor completely the subjectivity of the reader, but a combination or merger of the two" (1984: 84). The involvement of the reader with the text is what brings life to it as Iser regards:

the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or with the realization of the text [by the reader], but in fact must lie halfway between the two. The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader...The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader (1974:274-5)

Chapter One

The Mediation of Oppression through Discourse

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Introduction

Differences between races, genders and social strata exist and have existed since ever. To quench the curiosity about the reasons these differences exist, one may find the answer that they are means to legitimize and decriminalize the advantages one group gains at the expense of another unfairly treated group. Oppression prevails in the societies where the ideology of difference is adopted.

Oppression as an undeniable practice is not separable from discourse. It is due to the fact that oppression is an everyday social practice and so is discourse. The manifestation of oppressive and discriminatory practices takes two forms: observable or behavioral and mental or cognitive¹. The realization of both is reinforced by discourse. The relations between the members of a society and their status can be determined through discourse in a sense that the lexis, the tone, the intonation, and other discourse elements one uses, intentionally or unintentionally, are based on his conception of the other.

Any communicator wants to be understood. In their writings, authors experiment - intentionally and/or intentionally-on discourse to achieve their desired effects on the reader in a sense that they maneuver their discourse so as to exteriorize their underlying ideologies. Examples in literature whereby authors concretize their discursive ideologies

¹ Oppression can be behavioral which means it is manifested through the observable behaviors of a person, for instance, husbands' reprehension towards their wives, rich class's exploitation of poor laborers. It can as well be cognitive or mental that is it cannot be observed but it is at the level of one's mind. Both forms are interrelated because when oppression is cognitive, it is translated and made observable through one's behaviors and actions; at the same time, in order for oppression to be behavioral and observable, it must be fueled and reinforced by the cognitive aspect. What pushes the rich man to exploit the poor laborer is his discursive belief that the laborer, due to his poverty, is his own property upon whom he can act freely.

are numerous. To mention but a few, one encounters the use of diction in Alice Walkers' novel *The Color Purple* (2000) which mirrors oppression acted upon women by men, the description of unequal and biased opportunities in education in the Jewish community in Mary Anton's *The Promised Land* (1912).

To be more concrete, history is sufficiently illustrative of oppressive practices all along the time and over the world; for instance, black people in ancient Arab history were enslaved, African- Americans, too, Muslim minorities are marginalized in some non-Muslim countries, women are underestimated, people with disabilities are considered incomplete and so forth. Also, people are oppressed due to their differences in affiliations, race, and/ or gender. The Jews, for example, are a historically persecuted group. They were denied their rights until the 'establishment' of the so-called Israel² and then they turned to oppress Palestinians basing on their race and religion. A great number of girls in suburban places do not join schools; they are banned from learning by their own parents owing to being females. It takes a doer, an undergoer, a difference and an ideology to enact oppression.

² Using the term establishing does not imply any recognition of Israel as a state but as a historical reality that they occupied and settled in a land.

I. 1. The Verticality of the Social Structure

Establishing a sense of the self in an oppressive regime, state, or society is a multi-dimensional, reflexive, experiential process (Weigert 1986: 42). It requires “the knowledge and emotion shaped by the individual’s role and social position” (Ibid). Therefore, it involves a dualistic perspective based on the relationship between the self and the other. Since the self and the other are countervailing pillars of the dichotomy, tension is created: tension of establishing an identity and conforming to the social norms so as to grant acceptance from the other (Gignac 1996).

Within the requirements of establishing identity and subscribing to societal norms and gaining social acceptance, a hierarchical structure of society is generated. Thence, there is a top versus a bottom people, a majority versus a minority, a superior versus an inferior class, and eventually an oppressor versus an oppressed.

I. 1.1. Oppression between the Doer and the Undergoer

Subsuming people into such dichotomies determines which group will *do* oppression and which one will *undergo* oppression. Groups who benefit from oppression are usually referred to as dominant groups, agent groups or oppressor groups (Hardiman et al. 2007; Kirk & Rey 2007; Tatum 2003 in William 2012). Groups who receive oppression and thus have less power are referred to as subordinant groups, targeted groups or oppressed groups (Hardiman et al., 2007; Kirk & Ozakawa Rey, 2007; Tatum, 2003 in Ibid). Therefore, oppressed people are usually thought of as a minority.

A minority is usually understood as a group of people who are numerically few compared to a larger group to which the minority is mostly opposed. Yet, it is preponderant to mention that the term minority is treated neither mathematically nor statistically but rather sociologically. Marger pinpoints that a sociological and mathematical one are absolutely not the same (1985) because a group of people can be numerous while it is considered as a minority. Thus, a sociological minority is a group of people, be it of a small or large number, which is different from the supposed to be superior majority in terms of ethnicity, race and political, economic or religious belongings.

As a result, these minorities are thought of as inferior and the oppressors dehumanize and oppress them due to these differences (Freire 1970). Hence, the oppressed minority is deprived of all privileges and rights that the oppressor group has by means of the vertical³ social structure. In the prescribed vertical structure, the oppressor is put at the top and the oppressed is put at the bottom of the social pyramid. This social order begets death, despair and poverty, therefore, it is unjust. While this classification grants the former a full human living, it compels the latter a feeling of known incompleteness (Ibid: 2).

Any denial of the existence of dehumanization fails before historical facts recorded and the logic. Paul Freire further explains that the recognition of dehumanization

³ The vertical social structure (vertical transcendence) represents the society in whose structure people are categorized hierarchically basing on differences in gender, race, ethnicity, color, etc. On the contrary, the horizontal social structure does not categorize people basing on differences; rather, it reinforces equality among all people. In fact, substituting verticality of the societies with horizontality has become a universal demand so as to abolish all forms and manifestations of discrimination.

is justified by having humanization as a central human concern and vocation (1970). One hears and watches every day the news of organizations and political parties thriving to stop the disrespect of human rights and the negotiations about the independence of some supposed to be minorities; were there no dehumanization, no one would be concerned with humanization. Then, both humanization and dehumanization are viable possibilities “within history in concrete, objective contexts, [...] for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompleteness” (Ibid: 42). To wit, having people who feel oppressed longing for “freedom and justice, and [...] struggle to recover their lost humanity” (Ibid), indicates axiomatically that there is “injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors.” (Ibid: 45)

Any attempt from the part of the oppressor to reduce the tension and “*soften*” their abusive power leads to a false generosity. The false generosity engenders a feeling of *false charity* (Ibid: 45). The feeling of the false charity breeds a rather stronger recognition of being oppressed. Thus, false generosity should be substituted by true one which springs from the rebellious struggle against the causes of false charity. A rebellious struggle consists in proving the ability to transform those thought-to-be extended hands needful for help into working hands hence equally human hands. Freire raises a number of questions endeavoring to emphasize the importance of restoring true generosity by the oppressed themselves; for, according to him, there is no better candidate to do so:

Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but

through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. (1970:45)

False generosity creates as well a sense of dependence on the oppressor. The oppressed is likely to depend on the latter to conceptualize his own image – the oppressed-for him. That is to say, the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, the self and the other, is a relationship of *prescription* (Ibid: 46). The latter prescribes an image of and for the former. The oppressed finds himself bound to this prescribed image which represents by all means the impositions of one upon the other. Therefore, the two poles of the relationship become, in addition to being an oppressor and an oppressed, a *prescriber* and *prescribee*. Concisely, the oppressor provides the oppressed with, as it were, guidelines of behavior and being which is a *de facto* being like. The oppressed, fearing of autonomy and responsibility, conforms – whether consciously or unconsciously- to these guidelines.

I. 1.2. The Nature of Oppression

Despite the already suggested definitions of the oppressed, the terms have not, so far, been clearly set concerning what to take as oppression or an oppressive practice. As it is above-mentioned and with reference to history and logic, oppression is a *fait accompli* insinuating that it has taken and is taking various forms at different levels. It is ripe time to elucidate what oppression is and what are its forms and levels.

The only common ground on which one can stand to define the concept of oppression, taking into consideration its various forms and levels, is that it always takes place owing to differences existing between human beings and human groups. Oppression,

as complicated as it is, has been the concern of many researchers (Hardiman et al., 2007; Kirk & Ozakawa Rey, 2007; Tatum, 2003, Moane 1999, Pharr 1996, Young 1990, Miller 1986, Frye 1983), and the literature about it is very rich. It is not pretended, thereafter, that this section will contribute to the enrichment of the literature; rather, it is meant to lay a conceptual and theoretical foundation to the term considered as a kernel in the study.

In *IN THE TIME OF THE RIGHT Reflections on Liberation* (1996), Pharr makes the connection between politics and oppression in a sense that the groups benefiting from oppression have their own political agenda and personal interests. Her view to oppression is also linked to woman and gender. Miller's studies of oppression are similarly related to woman and feminist issues. Moreover, she also looks at oppression from a psychological aspect; she shares this aspect with Young (1990).

Simon Weil regards oppression as “[...] the second terrible horror of human existence.” after rape because: “It is a caricature of obedience” (in Young 2000). Oppression is a transaction, regardless whether it is conscious or unconscious, of obedience between a subordinate group and a dominant one. The dominant group must be obeyed blindly, for they are in a superior position. They are the ones in control of decision making, welfare, economy, politics, and even making meaning. The oppressors build meaning of the world and impose it on the oppressed subject. To exemplify, they decide that a poor black man cannot work in a position requiring mental and cognitive skills

because his IQ⁴ is lower than a rich white man's. They attribute physical-effort- based jobs to the poor black man.

Power and oppression are the resultant of a vertical social conception of sexual, racial and class differences. They are manifest through both material and ideological dimensions. Oppression as a practice mirrors the differential division of society.

By the same token, oppression and oppressive practices and ideologies are those practices and ideologies which result in classifying the world hierarchically, *viz.* they are practices and ideologies which view the world vertically rather than horizontally. Put differently, any practice which sets the self/the other as superior or inferior to the other/the self is oppressive. People are, subsequently, either marginalized or alienated from the human constellation

I. 1.3. Typology of Oppression

Oppression does not take only one form; it, on the contrary, occurs in a variety of forms. It is an everyday practice acted, produced and reproduced by a number of people around the world for different reasons and purposes; hence, it cannot be circumscribed to one form or type. Youngassumes that oppression has five faces meaning forms which she lists in her article: *The five Faces of Oppression*(2000).It is significant to adumbrate these

⁴ "IQ /aɪ'kjuː/ noun [C or U] ABBREVIATION FOR intelligence quotient: a measure of someone's intelligence. *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* 2007.

five faces which are *exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence*.

I.1.3.1 Exploitation

Exploitation refers to abusing people's labor, i.e., using people's labor without providing appropriate and fair compensation in return. The incomes which the exploited people receive are way lower than what the exploiters gain as profits. Einstein links exploitation to capitalist economic relations, he says:

Oppression and exploitation are not equivalent concepts [...] exploitation speaks to the economic reality of capitalist class relations for men and women, whereas oppression refers to women and minorities defined within patriarchal, racist, and capitalist relations [...] oppression is inclusive of exploitation but reflects a more complex reality(Einstein 1927: 22-3)

So, exploitation uses capitalism whereby a group of people abuses the efforts of another group for their own advantage. This unequal relation between the exploiter and the exploited creates what Karl Marx calls the “haves” and “have-nots”; those who *have* wealth and those who *have not* wealth.

Exploitation is a major theme in Orwell's *Animal Farm (1945)*. All the animals in the novel are exploited by Jones but are unaware of being exploited, for this reason Old Major insights the animals to rebel against Man who is the only blamed for the animals' slavery. Soon after the rebellion and changing the name of the farm to *Animal Farm*, Napoleon and Snowball, two pigs, become the leaders. By the passage of time, Napoleon exploits animals subtly and the share of food which they receive in return for their work

becomes less. Napoleon is an example of Man's exploitation of laborers providing an unfair and low income compared to their laborious efforts.

I.1.3.2. Marginalization

Marginalization refers to the state in which a group of people are considered as 'marginal' in any social practice. To further clarify, it refers to putting a group of people in a lower position than others basing on a difference in gender, race, class, etc. Marginalized people are considered as non-productive and less skillful members of society. Subsequently, marginalized groups are excluded from the social practice.

Marginalization often occurs basing on differences in racial identities. Blacks are mostly marginalized by the whites, aboriginals by Australians, to mention but a few examples. It may also occur basing on gender differences; women are denied access to jobs requiring physical effort in many regions in the world. Poor classes of societies do not participate in decision-making actively enough.

In Chopin's *Desirée's Baby*, the male protagonist, Armand Aubigny, a rich noble white man insists to marry Desirée, a girl whose origins are unknown. He loves her intensely but his intense love grows into hatred and negligence once their first child is born. The child is of a dark skin color; Armand accuses Desirée for being the reason of this dark color since her origins are unknown and divorces her. The act of divorce after the intense fairy love is an indicator that black people were marginalized and unaccepted in the American society.

These minority groups are sometimes not only marginalized but also alienated. Alienation is a more extreme case of marginalization because the marginalized subjects are considered only as less important, inferior or simply marginal, i.e., far from the center while alienated subjects are conceived as non-existing and not belonging to the human constellation at all.

I.1.3.3. Powerlessness

The state of powerlessness is a state of being dominated by a more powerful group of people. The powerless feel that they have no power to ameliorate their horrid situation. They take orders from the ruling class, accept their devastating state and status silently and never participate in decision-making. Even though they are denied education, job opportunities, welfare and appropriate life conditions, they rarely think of revolting against the dominant class because they are made to believe that being powerless and relegated to a lower situation is by nature legitimate.

Powerlessness is more dangerous than marginalization and exploitation because the powerless become no longer conscious of who and what they really are and supposed to be. Powerlessness flings them into the abyss of losing themselves; their state does not allow them to know that they lost themselves. Oliver Sacks comments that: "If a man has lost a leg or an eye, he knows he has lost a leg or an eye; but if he has lost a self – himself - he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it"(1985:35). A man (a human being) cannot realize his real identity once it is unconsciously instilled in his mind that he does not have a proper identity, even worse, he cannot have his proper identity.

The disempowered groups find themselves blindly conforming to the prescribed stereotype created by the dominant class. Powerlessness, hereafter, leads the powerless to oppress themselves; once a slave feels that he is so powerless that he cannot even talk about the oppression he receives, he internalizes oppression. Internalizing oppression creates the culture of silence wherein the oppressed are silenced and not allowed to talk about their grievances(Freire 1970)

I.1.3.4 Cultural Imperialism

Cultural Imperialism or cultural domination is adopting and subscribing to the norms, mannerism, beliefs and values dictated by the oppressors' culture assuming that it is the only 'right' culture. In this form of oppression, the oppressed are designated invisible, for there is no consideration to their own values, beliefs and norms. Hinson & Bradley advance that: "Cultural dominance refers to the way that one group's experiences, cultural expressions and history are defined as superior to all other groups' experiences and histories."(2006: 04)

The cultures of one society are, hence, ordered hierarchically in that there is a superior culture which dominates other groups'. The individual identities and social group identities are not recognized when cultural imperialism exists. All the 'inferiorized' groups are defined through clichés. Cultures apart from the dominant class' are not accepted and deemed exotic. Although it is not necessary to compare a culture to another in terms of what it is best, the oppressors find it imperative to disregard, relegate and denigrate the culture of the other, oppressed:

It is not necessary for anyone to say: “my group’s culture is superior;” it simply has to be treated as universal — representing the best in all of humanity. It is considered ‘normal,’ which means that all others are either ‘strange,’ or ‘invisible’ or both (Ibid)

I.1.3.5. Violence

Sometime, belonging to a given social group results in making one vulnerable to fear of violence threats. The justification of these threats of attack is belonging to a specific social group. Violence is not only physical but may take other forms such as verbal or sexual. It is the most explicit form of oppression.

There is a great number of examples of violence in all its forms and everyday life is pregnant with violent practices. The intimidation of protesters against the ruling regime is one of the most obvious instances of violence. The sexual and verbal harassment of women is additionally a widespread phenomenon in the world; a form of oppression which is enacted and reproduced in everyday life. The threat that women are exposed to due to their gender engenders the feeling of being unfairly oppressed. Women and other social groups who experience verbal or sexual harassment are always prone to physical attacks.

Violence and intimidation are used as means of control over the oppressed groups. The dogs in Orwell’s *Animal Farm* are used to intimidate the other animals and threaten them to death if they do not obey Napoleon’s orders. The animals follow his orders against their wish owing to fear of violence and death.

I.1.3.6. The Other Face of Oppression: Internalized Oppression

Questions as per who if not *the other*, as different as *the other* is, might be an oppressor are legitimate at this juncture. In actual fact, the oppressor can be the self who acts upon the self. One form and consequence of oppressive practices and ideologies is to have the oppressed believe in the stereotypes the oppressors make about them. When a woman believes she is inferior to man because simply she is a woman, she inherently oppresses herself by herself. In Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), the protagonist of the novel longs intensely to have blue eyes which she believes are denotative of beauty. She submits to the belief of her oppressors that she and her Black people do not have sufficient beauty to be loved and do not have sufficient criteria to be humanized. The oppression she receives from the whites impels her to metamorphose questions on what makes her uglier than wanted white girls into desires of being a white-like.

In brief, discriminatory practices reproduced and ideologies embraced by the other are causative factors of internalized oppression. Pheterson argues that internalized oppression is “[...] the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society.” (1986:146). He further elaborates that it consists of a number of factors like “self-hatred, self concealment, fear of violence and feelings of inferiority, resignation, isolation, powerlessness, and gratefulness for being allowed to survive.” (Ibid)

Seemingly, internalized oppression works on the cognitive level more than the behavioral one because dominance penetrates from the external to the internal. Pheterson adds: “internalized oppression is the mechanism within an oppressive system for

perpetuating domination not only by external control but also by building subservience into the minds of the oppressed groups.” (Ibid) Internalized oppression grants that oppression becomes systematic at both the cognitive and the behavioral levels.

I. 1.4. The Systematic Nature of Oppression

Oppression, at its core, is based on the notion of difference as Nimhata states “Oppression can be in the form of armed struggle, economic disparity, racism, casteism, religious intolerance, slavery, lynching and other societal reservations, including gender bias” (2011:1). Namhata explains how oppression takes a variety of forms as it happens due to a variety of differences. People are divided into two poles, those who will benefit from oppression and people who will be targeted by oppression. This division is grounded in the concept of social groups.

It seems crucial to refer to Hardiman, Jackson & Griffin’s who consider oppression as: “A system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships and operates intentionally and unintentionally, on the individual, institutional and cultural levels.” (2007:58) This definition bears within it the notions of difference, social group membership, and the levels of oppression. These three notions are highly significant in the interpretation of the discourse of the oppressed. They explain why oppression exists, upon whom it is exerted, and at which level it is acted. They enable one to know more about the background of the oppressed groups and the extent to which each group is oppressed. These notions are recourse to better apprehend the process of systemizing oppression.

I.1.4.1. I.1.4.1. Social Groups and the Systematization of Oppression

Categorizing people basing on differences precipitates social groups. A social group is a group of people who have in common physical features such as skin pigmentation and hair texture, economic, social and cultural features (Ibid:56). The physical and social features are usually linked to race, for instance, African-Americans share the dark color and the thick hair texture. The economic ones are related to the stratum to which one belongs like the working class, the poor, the nobles. The cultural characteristics are linked to religious beliefs, values and norms for example, the Sunni, The Shiite Muslims, the protestant, the catholic Christians, the gothics, the gypsy to mention but a few.

Social groups give birth to social identities. The latter encompass more than one social group; therefore, they are broader than social groups. Sunni and Shiites are two social groups which fall in the Muslim social identity; the homosexual is the social identity that comprises the gays and lesbians.

Categorizing people into social groups permits the compartmentalization of the groups who will benefit from oppression and those who will be targeted by it. It is important to note that an individual can belong to more than one social group at the same time. In some cases, belonging to more than one social group puts one in the position of the oppressor and the oppressed. To illustrate, an African-American man or a Jewish American is a member respectively of the African-American or the Jewish American social group and of the male social group. They are, *ipso facto*, subjugated to oppression as African-

American or Jewish by the American society and simultaneously an oppressor of women as men.

Conversely, belonging to more than one social group might increase the potential of being oppressed (Williams 2012). Williams adds: “When this occurs, the effects are not simply cumulative or additive; they are multiplicative” (Ibid:20).⁵ Mullaly (2002) opines that having a broad identity, belonging to more than one social group, multiplies the effects of oppression; he illustrates this multiplication in the following equation:

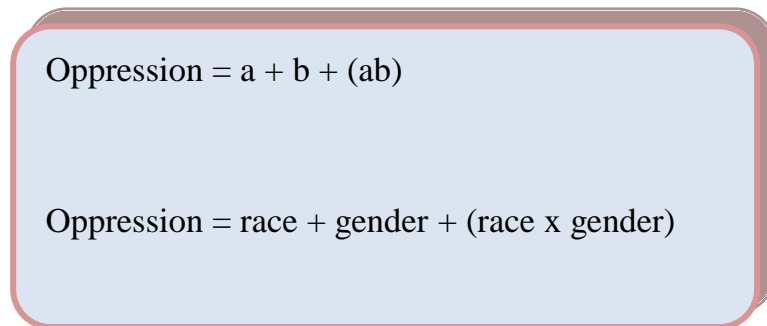

$$\text{Oppression} = a + b + (ab)$$
$$\text{Oppression} = \text{race} + \text{gender} + (\text{race} \times \text{gender})$$

Figure 1: Mullay's Equation 1⁶

According to this equation, belonging to broad identities can be disadvantageous as well. On the contrary to the African-American man, an African-American woman is double oppressed for being African-American and for being a woman. One can account for the situation of the African-American woman using Mullaly’s equation:

⁵ (See also Moane, 1999; Young, 1990)

⁶Mullaly (2002: 154-5)

$$\text{Oppression} = \text{African-American} + \text{Woman} + \text{African-American} \times \text{woman}$$

Figure 2: The Double Oppressed African-American Woman

The more the social groups memberships are, the more multiplicative and complicated the situation grows. It is indispensable to yield to Mullaly's second equation to elucidate how the effects multiply when one belongs to a broader identity.

$$\text{Oppression} = a + b + c + (ab) + (ac) + (bc) + (abc)$$

$$\text{Oppression} = \text{race} + \text{gender} + \text{class} + (\text{race} \times \text{gender}) + (\text{race} \times \text{class}) + (\text{gender} \times \text{class}) + (\text{race} \times \text{gender} \times \text{class})$$

Figure 3 : Mullaly's Equation 2⁷

Referring to literature to project the second equation on the oppressed, one finds once more The Bluest Eyes protagonist, Pecola, as a good example:

⁷Mullaly (2002:155)

$$\text{Oppression} = \text{race} + \text{gender} + \text{class} + (\text{race} \times \text{gender}) + (\text{race} \times \text{class}) + (\text{gender} \times \text{class}) + (\text{race} \times \text{gender} \times \text{class})$$

$$\text{Oppression} = \text{African-American} + \text{woman} + \text{poor} + (\text{African-American} \times \text{woman}) + (\text{African-American} \times \text{poor}) + (\text{woman} \times \text{poor})$$

Figure 4: The Multiplicative Effective of the Broad Identity

I.1.4.2. The Operation of Oppression through the Personal, Institutional, and Societal Levels

In order for oppression to be systematic, it must operate not only on the individual level but also on the institutional and cultural levels. The terms used to distinguish the levels of oppression are not quite identical among most of the theoreticians; however, Mullaly (2002), J. Katz (2003), and Hardiman et al. (2007) agree that oppression has three levels: a personal/individual level, an institutional/structural level, and a societal/cultural level.

The personal/individual level refers to the stereotypes, attitudes, behavior, actions which are consciously and/or unconsciously surmised by individuals. At this level, both prejudice and discrimination are constituents of injustice and inequality (Blumenfeld, & Raymond, 1993; Pincus, 1996 in Williams:2012). Yet, to have an oppressive system, oppression must occur on larger scales: institutional/ structural and societal/cultural levels.

By institutional/structural level, it is meant that oppression occurs at the level of institutions, i.e., governmental, legislative, educational, and judicial. So, all the laws,

processes, and practices which contribute intentionally and unintentionally to the reinforcement of oppression by codifying and legitimizing its practice through formal societal structures are means of institutional/structural oppression (Hardiman et al., 2007; Mullaly, 2002).

The third level, societal level, is broader than the previous two. It takes a larger scale as it implies beliefs, values, norms, thought patterns, and discourses which perpetuates the reinforcement of oppression. At this level, oppression is justified by cultural norms rather than legitimized by legislative texts and formal institutional structures. Were it not existent, individual and institutional oppression levels cannot be as dominant as they are.

. The following figure clarifies the interrelationship between the three levels:

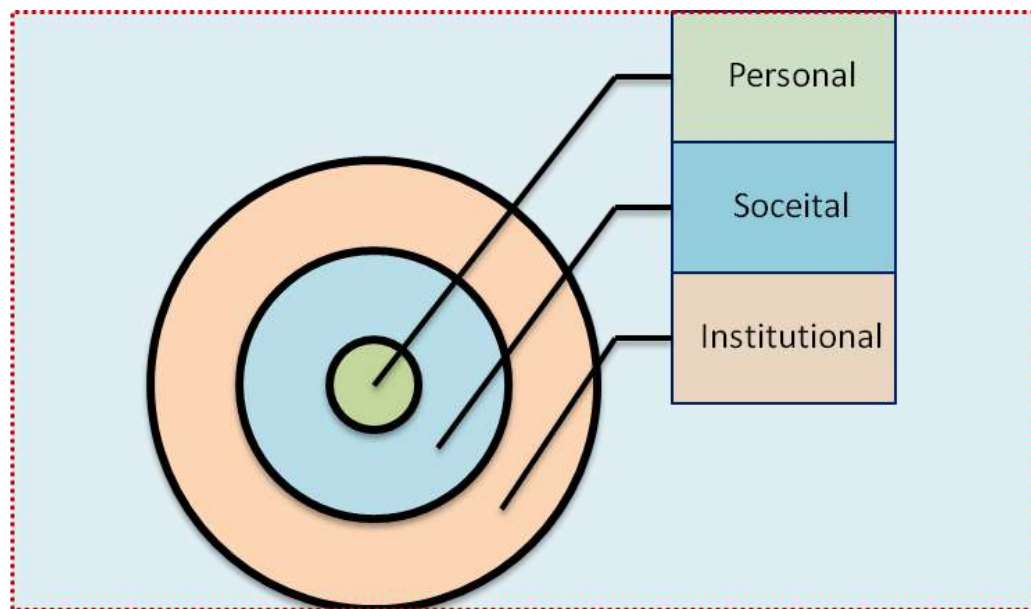


Figure 5: The Operation of Oppression on the Three Levels

The three levels intersect and are interdependent. One influences, reinforces and awakens, and is influenced, reinforced and awakened by the other. The cultural oppression is derivative from the institutional one as it guarantees legislative legitimatization from formal societal structures. The institutional oppression is derivative from the individual since it is individuals who make decisions. Individuals cannot make discriminatory and oppressive decisions unless they take the societal and cultural support for granted.

I.2. The Mediation of Racism and Sexism through Discourse

What else could discourse be rather than mere words, pictures, gestures, drawings, and so forth? How could discourse then be racist or sexist? Describing discourse as racist or sexist may suggest that it is a social or political ideology or a belief. Can one think of discourse as an ideology or belief? In other words, can discourse be abstract non-observable as are ideologies and beliefs? As a matter of fact, discourse can be as racist and sexist as actions can be even though it remains mere words, pictures, gesture, etc. Van Dijk posits that: “although discourse may seem just “words” (and therefore cannot break your bones, as do sticks and stones), text and talk play a vital role in the reproduction of contemporary racism.” (2008:102). He adds that “Without knowledge of racism, we do not know how discourse is involved in its daily reproduction.” (Ibid: 104). He stresses, then, that racism (and eventually other forms of social inequality) are reproduced daily through discourse. It is crucial, consequently, to account for racism and sexism as forms of social inequality and how they are mediated through discourse.

I.2.1. Race and Racism

It sounds at first more like a dull and over-exhausted title. Why should one bother what is race and racism? Everyone knows what is race and racism. One cannot easily confirm the hypothesis that everyone is acquainted with the meaning of these two terms. After a second thought, it seems harder than imagined to determine what race and racism really refer to. If it is to signify anything, then it signifies that although one knows the terms, he is not aware enough of their implications in real life.

Racism is an 'ism' concerned with race is a right-away-signification the term may suggest to one's mind. Whereas it is not totally wrong, it is not totally right, either. It is right because it has truly to do with race but it is wrong because it is not an established and always conscious practice to mean that it is rather implicit than explicit. Defining racism is quite a delusive process where one may stumble between limiting it to discrimination based on racial differences or even on other differences. It is owing to the difficulty and the little consensus about the concept of race itself that defining racism is such a complex task despite the rich literature on race (Alba, 1992; for discussions on the meaning of race, see Anderson and Fienberg, 2000; Appiah, 1992; Fredrickson, 2002; Jones, 1997; Loury, 2002; Omi, 2001; Winant, 2001).

Race can be defined from a biological as well as a sociological perspective. It is, thence, an inalienable need to precise the perspective from which race is defined before defining racism. Since the interest of the study is the relationship between social order and discourse, race will be dealt with from a sociological orientation. Reisigl & Wodak explain the concept of race as:

a social construction. On the one hand, it has been used as a legitimising ideological tool to oppress and exploit specific social groups and to deny them access to material, cultural and political resources, to work, welfare services, housing and political rights. (2001:02)

The affected groups adopt the idea of race alternatively to construct a positive self-identity upon which they base their political resistance so as to gain autonomy and independence (Miles 1993:28).

Blank et al (2004) adopt a characteristic definition for how to distinguish a race rather more than how to perceive a race. They postulate that people assign significance to distinctive physical characteristics related to skin pigmentation, hair texture and other features. These features become significant and comprehensive only when they are used routinely by people seeking racial categorization. The end of this categorization is not to classify people according to their and their ancestors' physical distinctive features. Instead, this classification stimulates perceptions, thoughts, attitudes, behavior and nature of the relationship toward the other group.⁸

To make race bound to *embodied social significations* necessitates a socio-cognitive approach (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Loury, 2002). In the realm of this approach, race is a construct based on observable physical characteristics (e.g., skin pigmentation) that have acquired socially significant meaning.⁹

⁸ (for further discussion see Hollinger, 2000; Loury, 2002; Smelser et al., 2001).

⁹(See Banton, 1983; Loury, 2002; Omi and Winant, 1986 in Blank et al, 2004).

Racism, hereafter, is “[...] a complex societal system of ethnically or "racially" based domination and its resulting inequality.” (Van Dijk 2008:103) (See also Van Dijk 1993).Essed adds:

racism must be understood as ideology, structure and process in which inequalities inherent in the wider social structure are related, in a deterministic way, to biological and cultural factors attributed to those who are seen as a different ‘race’ or ‘ethnic group’. (1991: 43)

She also emphasizes that racism is a process because it involves social practices(1991:44). They are everyday practices because ideologies and structures cannot be thought of in isolation from everyday practices. These practices create and confirm the structures and ideologies. They also play a paramount role in changing social, economic, and political conditions in society (Reisigl&Wodak 2001:7).

Everyday practices result in everyday racism which Essed explains as:

a process in which (a) socialised racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately definable and manageable, (b) practices with racist implications become in themselves familiar and repetitive, and (c) underlying racial and ethnic relations are actualised and reinforced through these in routine or familiar practices everyday situation.(1991:55)

If race is perceived from a socio-cognitive perspective, racism has, inevitably, a social and a cognitive sub-system (van Dijk: 2008). Social discriminatory practices which occur at a local –micro- level and relationships of power abuse by the dominant groups and institutions at a global –macro- level of analysis (Ibid) belong to the social subsystem. The practices, in the social sub-system, are observable practices and they “form the visible and

tangible manifestations of everyday racism” (Ibid: 103). Discourse production can be among these social practices since those dominant groups, which are the ‘know-it- all’ and ‘say-it-all’ in society, “are an example of groups involved in power abuse or domination.” (Ibid:103).

These practices do not come of nowhere and are not innate, for no one is born racist. They are, on the contrary, learned, acquired and inherited over the time. They are, hence, based on mental negative and prejudicial representations on the relationship of US with THEM, viz. the superior with the inferior race. It is not to suppose that every racial practice is intentional or conscious but to clarify that it is rooted in "mental basis consisting of biased models of ethnic events and interactions, which in turn are rooted in racist prejudices and ideologies".(Van Dijk 2008:103). These mental representations constitute the cognitive sub-system.

Discourse is an overarching manifestation of the cognitive subsystem since “racist mental representations are typically expressed, formulated, defended, and legitimated in discourse and may thus be reproduced and shared within the dominant group. It is essentially in this way that racism is "learned" in society.” (Ibid:103). Using terms such as *Negro*, *Nigger*, *Goon*, and *Wog* to address a black person is an illustration of racist discourse.

The concept of racism is tackled in a great deal of literary works mainly those written by authors who belong to minority groups. Ralph Ellison demonstrates how white people reproduced racism in their discourse in his Novel *The Invisible Man* (2014). The

protagonist of the novel bumps into a white man because of darkness. He goes on giving no attention to this ordinary accident, but surprisingly he finds his picture with the heading: “*An invisible man bites a white man*” in the Daily News the next day. The deliberate use of the adjective *invisible* to refer to a visible black man is derogatory and reflects a racist ideology.

I.2.2. Sexism

If racism is the act of ‘infriorizing’ a race to the other, then, sexism is infriorizing a sex to the other. Sexism refers to prejudice, practices, and ideologies which regard women as subordinate and inferior in status and worth to the other men. This definition echoes André Michel’s conceptualization of sexism:

While racism entails the use of discriminatory images, attitudes, behaviour and stereotypes against a certain ethnic group, sexism entails the practice of various forms of discrimination based on sex. A person can be called 'sexist' if his or her thoughts and behaviour patterns are to some degree consciously infused with sexism. (1986:15)

Having felt relegated by the other, the term sexism was first introduced by feminists in their struggle to draw the society’s attention that women are not inferior to men. Women have been for ages the subject of sexism. Termed otherwise, they have been the oppressed and men have been the oppressors.

Sexist practices and ideologies are no less oppressive than racist ones. They not only undermine women but also exhibit. “[an] attitude which demeans, excludes, under-represents and stereotypes people on the basis of gender”(Ibid:15). Similar to racism,

sexism occurs at micro and macro levels. It, as a consequence, has a social sub-system. Then, racism and sexism share the same platform except for the differential factor causing discrimination and so oppression.

One cannot neglect the fact that women are still stigmatized despite all the feminists' ceaseless efforts to eliminate sexism; they could, to some degree, reduce the prejudicial practices but could not so far exterminate sexism thoroughly. Men and women should not be put in an adversarial dichotomy; instead, they should be treated merely as people. Michel argues that men and women are not opposite sexes, each sex has its own significant role, which should not be secondary compared to the other's.

One way through which sexism manifests itself is discourse production. Men and women construct meaning and world view through masculine eyes. A good example is the use of the generic pronoun, *he*, to refer to human being or even using *Man* to refer to both women and men. Spender posits that language is sexist because men have the dominance over the meaning of what it encodes; therefore, the used language represents the male perception of reality(1980). For her: "Males, as the dominant group, have produced language, thought, and reality. Historically it has been the structures, the categories, and the meanings which have been invented by males" (Ibid:140).

In addition to the generic use of masculine pronouns and the use of the male generic 'man' to refer to the human species, traces of sexism in discourse are summarized by Pérez –Sabateras follows:

- The morphological marking of many female-referring agent nouns (actress, usherette).¹⁰
- The availability of more sexually pejorative terms for women than men.
- The use of job titles ending in ‘-man’ and considered to be ‘generic’ terms.
- The asymmetrical use of first and last names. Women are more often called by their first, men by their last, even when they are of equal rank (It is interesting to point out that we speak of Thackeray, but routinely speak of Jane Austin).
- Women make more use of vocabulary related to sewing and cooking, men to mechanics and sports¹¹.(2015:189-90)

These traces are based on studies of Spender (1995) and Doyle (1998)¹².

One of the most obvious sexist uses of discourse is that people generally tend not only to use the suffix *-man* as generic but to use the noun *Man* itself to refer to humanity in general. The label *Man* is used to refer to both man and woman when they are both included, as it is a reference to the entire human race. Respectively, the following

¹⁰It is crucial to note that English compared to other languages uses these suffixes less. The feminine and masculine cases are more apparent in Arabic and French than English.

¹¹ The sexist reference like in the fifth point mentioned by Sabater concerning the vocabulary related to the gender

¹² For further studies on language and gender see (West, Lazar & Caramarae 1997; Lakoff 1975; Spender 1980; Lopez & Morant (1995), Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013; Coates 2004)

examples: *Man needs to sleep enough time during the day* and *Man contributes to the destruction of Mother Nature* refer to the human being who needs to sleep enough and to the human race that contributes to the destruction of nature. The previous examples show the substitutability of *Man* for both human being and human race. *Man* is used as a pre-modifier to refer to both sexes, for instance, *man-kind*, and *man-made*. These two words can be replaced by human kind and artificial (Michel 1986).

Another foregrounded trace of sexist discourse is the generic use of the pronouns *he*, *him*, *his*, and *himself*¹³. People are accustomed with using these pronouns to refer to a person regardless the gender. The pronoun *he* is commonly used in the academic writings. Yet, it is rare to find the pronoun *she* instead of *he* it is believed that the correct use of language is using the masculine pronoun to include both man and woman.

Some Job titles also consist of the suffix *-man* even though they may not refer only to an actually male person. These titles might include examples like *fireman*, *salesman*, *congressman* and *chairman* although recently *chairwoman* has been introduced, in a time a less sexist discourse could be pronounced through the use of fire fighter instead of fireman, salesperson instead of salesman, and congress member instead of congress man.

¹³ A reader of this passage would consider the work as sexist because of the use of the pronoun *he* in the thesis to refer to both man and woman. But, it is necessary to remind the reader that it is already mentioned in the general introduction that the pronoun *he* is used to refer to both sexes only for the sake of succinctness and not in any way to demonstrate a sexist discourse or attitude.

The existence of a sexist discourse implies the very existence of discursive mental conventions, discursive prejudices and discursive ideologies to dictate that women are *less* able, skillful, intelligent and less worthy than men. It is undeniable that language structures cannot be sexist because they are only unites for a code, but the inherent implications they suggest are reflexive of sexist language use which is in itself reflexive of ideologies.

The figure below clarifies more how sexism is enacted and (re)produced through discourse:

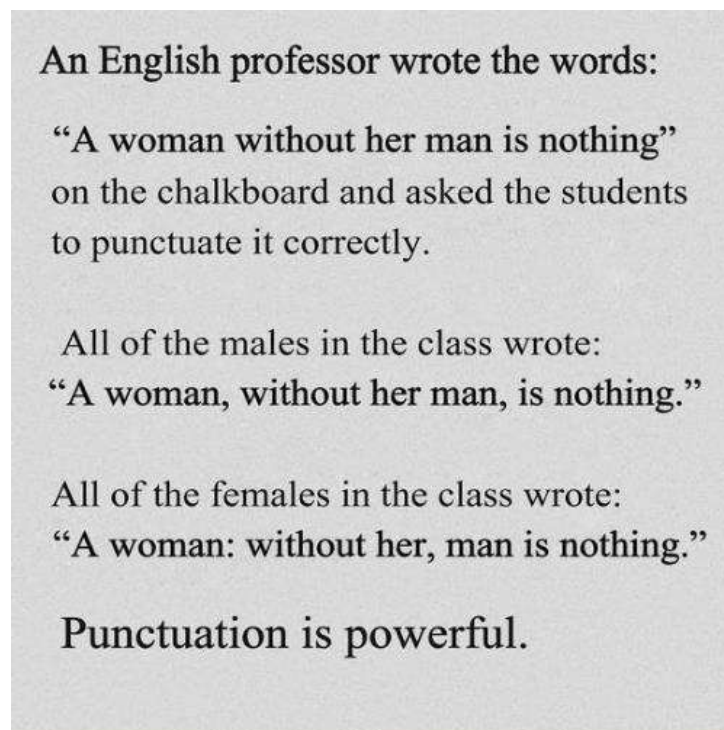


Figure 6: Sexist Use of Discourse¹⁴

¹⁴<https://me.me/i/an-english-professor-wrote-the-words-a-woman-without-her-2804398>

The underlying perceptions of one sex by the other have been revealed by their discourse at the level of punctuation. Women consider themselves as everything for a man and men believe they are everything for a woman; viz. women are incomplete without men and vice versa. It is possible that the objective of this exercise was to assess students' mastery of punctuation but it has revealed more than a linguistic aspect, a discursive ideological one.

The previous paragraph is about two sexist different positions based on the perception of one sex of the other. It is legitimate because Hans Robert Jauss views the text "from the perspective of the reader or consumer" and treats it "as a dialectical process of production and reception (Robert C. Holub 1984: 57) As a woman reader, I have demonstrated a sense of solidarity with women unconsciously through, always, starting with them before men. Were it not for the sake of proofreading, I would not have realized that. It might be a discursive ideology that I was not aware of before but that was reproduced through discourse.

Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple* is a good example about how the choice of discourse elements at the lexical level translates one's discriminatory practices:

What that mean? he say.
I say, Until you do right by me, everything you touch will crumble. He laugh.
Who you think you is? he say.
You can't curse nobody. Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all! (2012:102)

What else could be worse and more stigmatizing than being perceived as nothing and nothing at all? There is only one thing which is to be considered as nothing because of

differences of color, economic status, physical appearance, and gender. None of these differences are under the control of the individual. Such stigmatizing and eliminatory practices infuse identity crisis when one falls into a spiral farrago of questions gravitating around being who, what and for what purpose in the human constellation. Shug allows himself to ask Sofia: “who you think you is?”(Ibid) and to label her as nothing, nothing at all because she is black, poor, and woman. He permits himself to categorize Sofia as inferior to him and to all other human beings owing to characteristics that she owns but has not chosen.

All the previously-mentioned forms of oppression (See Section 1.3.1 above) fall under the umbrella terms of racism or sexism because what leads to oppression is mainly the difference in gender and race. So, one may exploit or marginalize another person on the basis of his/ her gender or racial identity, for example native Americans were alienated by Europeans basing on their race. Women in Saudi Arabia were not allowed to drive cars until 2017¹⁵ for the simple reason that they are not men although women have proved their ability of and skill in driving in all the other regions of the world.

Hereafter, oppression, racism, sexism are made ostensive¹⁶ through discourse. The production of discourse can be depictive of discursive oppressive, racist and sexist

¹⁵<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/09/26/Saudi-Arabia-King-Salman-orders-driving-licenses-for-women.html> [last retrieved: 22-11-2017]

¹⁶although oppressive ideologies may be sometimes made deliberately ostensive through the discourse of dominant groups, it is not meant by ostensive here Sperber and Wilson’s ostension in which a communicative intention is made deliberately manifest but that they

practices and ideologies. So, through discourse oppression in all its forms can be reproduced. On the other hand, discourse can be a mode of action against oppression as is the case in some literary and political discourses. Therefore, the recognition and interpretation of intentions require the analysis of discourse.

I.3. Discourse as the Mediator of Discursive Ideologies

Albeit discourse is a fertile term which continues to be defined and redefined, there is little agreement on what discourse is and what it is not. Perspectives to define it are quite a few. This is owing to the fact that discourse now has become used in a variety of fields: psychology, anthropology, sociology, critical and cultural studies. Ergo, the term receives operational modifications and theorizations continuously.

A broad definition to the term can be Hoey's: "any stretch of spoken or written language that is complete in itself" (1983:5) Hoey has not restricted discourse to being spoken or written but has conditioned the stretch of language with being complete in itself to be considered as discourse. Widdowson binds discourse to context and communicative purposes (2007). He claims that "discourse refers to what a text¹⁷ producer meant by a text and to what a text means to a receiver" (Ibid). To wit, a text is produced to serve a

are apparent and deducible through discourse although oppressive ideologies may be sometimes made deliberately ostensive through the discourse of dominant groups.

¹⁷Widdowson uses the term text to refer to discourse whether spoken or written.

communicative purpose and one recognizes a text as an actual use of language as soon as s/he realizes that it has a communicative purpose.

One recognizes a notice to be a text when s/he realizes that it was produced to warn smokers from smoking indoors, for instance. A tourist guide is recognized as a text when giving directions and background of the place to new comers is recognized as its communicative purpose. Widdowson also postulates that the text should always be related to its context against which a text is interpreted (Ibid).

The more one works on limiting the notion of discourse, the less focus s/he gets. Therefore, any attempt to go deeper into the debates about discourse may well lead the study astray its scope. For this reason, definitions of the term will be limited to those which bridge discourse to social practice and discursive ideologies.

Fowler links discourse modes to one's representations of the world: "Different modes of discourse encode different representations of experience; and the source of these representations is the communicative context within which the discourse is embedded." (in Hawthorn 1992:48). Accordingly, discourse is a medium of representing the world. Fairclough mentions that discourse includes representations which are reflexive, i.e., of one's own practice and of the other's practice (1975:5). He adds to representing, signifying the world and constructing the meaning (Ibid).

Fairclough sees that discourse is a mode of action upon the world and particularly upon the other(Ibid). For instance, discourse can be a mode of oppressing the other or of resisting against oppression. If Albert in *The Color Purple* says: "Who you think you is?

You can curse nobody. Look at you. Your black, you're poor, you're ugly, you're a woman, you're nothing at all!", he is oppressing Celie whereas when Maya Angelou says *Still I rise*, she is resisting oppression. The tone, being an element of discourse, in Claude McKay's most famous poem *If we Must Die* (1928) is very sharp and challenging, it portrays the rebellious, fighting and fearless spirit of the oppressed black people at the epoch:

What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,

Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"

The underlying beliefs, world representations and ideologies, have been made explicit through discourse.

The question is whether discourse is individual or global. Michel Foucault asserts that he has treated discourse as statements but has been modifying his treatment over the course of time: "treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (1972:80). Regarding discourse as "*all statements*" is useful if one is to utilize the term at a theoretical level.

However, regarding discourse as "an individualizable group of statements" assists in treating (a) discourse (s) instead of discourse; Mills comments on this definition:

[it] ..is one which is used more often by Foucault when he is discussing the particular structures within discourse; thus, he is concerned to be able to identify discourses, that is, groups of utterances which seem to be regulated in some way and which seem to have a coherence and a force to them in common. Within this definition, therefore, it would be possible to talk about a discourse of femininity, a discourse of imperialism, and so on.(1997:7-8)

Treating discourse as individualizable statements allows assigning certain structures of discourse to certain social structures. In spite the fact that the adjective individualizable may suggest that it is the use of discourse by an individual, it also can mean the use of discourse by a social group sharing the same peculiarities or objectives behind using discourse. As such, it enables one to speak of the discourse of power, of feminism, of the oppressed and so forth.

Lastly, treating discourse as "... as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements." permits the treatment of "the rules and structures which produce particular utterances and texts" (Ibid). That is, it allows the treatment of relationship between the producer of the discourse and the discourse produced.

Foucault's and Fairclough's views to discourse are significant and of direct implication in this study because treating discourse as a mode of representation, reproducing and resisting social inequalities and as individualized group of statements and as a regulated practicepaves the way to answering the research questions raised about the relationship between discourse, its producers, and their discursive ideologies. To further explain, it displays how Hughes and Angelou through literary discourse represent their

world views and experience and fight against their austere status prevailed by oppression. It is, as a consequence, imperative to analyze their discourse.

I.3.1. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (henceforth DA) is by definition the analysis of discourse. But, one needs to be clear and exact as far as what to analyze in discourse and for what purposes.

Celce-Murcia & Olshtain state that discourse analysis is "...the study of language in use that extends beyond sentence boundaries."(2000:4). DA takes inquiry beyond clause-bound 'objects' of grammar and semantics to the level of analyzing 'utterances', 'texts' and 'speech events'. By doing so, DA foregrounds language use as a social action and as tied to social relations and identities, power, injustice, etc. Therefore, language becomes a matter of social practice in *lieu* of mere abstract linguistic structures. This is perhaps the reason why early discourse analysts had looked at and focused on spoken discourse as material for the analysis.

Discourse analysis, to Stubbs, is distinguished from other linguistic studies because it

- (a) aims at analyzing language beyond the boundaries of sentence and utterance,
- (b) is concerned with the interrelationship between language and society and
- (c) with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication. (1983)

Stubbs argues: "The term discourse analysis is very ambiguous. I will use it [...]to refer mainly to the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse."(1983:01). So, DA is the linguistic analysis of any stretch of language whether spoken or written. He further explains that:

Roughly speaking, it refers to attempts to study the organisation of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study *larger linguistic units*, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with *language use in social contexts*, and in particular with *indiscourteraction* or dialogue between speakers. (Ibid: 01)

In the same vein, Platridge stresses that the focus of DA is " knowledge about language beyond the word, clause, phrase and sentence that is needed for successful communication."(2006:1). DA looks at the relationship between language and the social and cultural context in which it is used. It also considers how different views of the world and different understandings are presented through discourse. Furthermore, it examines the influence of the use of language by the relationship between participants and how social identities and relations are effected by the use of language. To sum, it studies the construction of world views and identities through discourse (Ibid:02).

It is already mentioned in the previous section that discourse is a medium to construct views about and representations of the world, that is a mode of action upon the world and upon one another. Moreover, the above definition unveils that discourse is also effected by the relationship between participants. DA investigates how all of these processes and actions occur via discourse.

One other approach to analyzing discourse in relation to power and social inequalities and injustice is *Critical Discourse Analysis* (henceforth CDA). CDA is a multidisciplinary approach to discourse. It draws on both social and linguistic theories (Fowler 2013: 178). Leewen (1993:193) explains that: “Critical discourse analysis is, or should be, concerned...with discourse as the instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality” in Toolan 1997:85). That is, CDA has as relevant concerns power and control as well as social construction of reality through the medium of discourse. Not far from this characterization of CDA, Fowler argues that in CDA, the starting point- unlike other approaches to discourse and language- is social issues or problems rather than linguistic features and phenomena (2013). CDA endeavors to examine how these social issues are inherently represented in discourse.

I.3. The Analysis of the Discursive Ideologies through Critical Discourse Analysis

Why does discourse analysis have to be CRITICAL? Is DA not critical? Or, is it not critical enough? Toolan answers his own question: “why the emphasis on ‘critical’? that to label the approach critical means that one admits that under normal conditions, we are not aware of the causes and effects underlying our social practice in general and our use of language in particular (1997) (see also Bourdieu 1977). The nature of CDA is emancipatory being interested in power relations and examining specific discursive situations where power, dominance and inequality are foregrounded (Fowler 1997). This is not to claim that by studying the discursive interactions, CDA classifies participants as

heroes and *villains* (Van Dijk 1993) but to cast light on our powerfulness/powerlessness in discourse through unearthing these relationships.

CDA is, as a result, *problem and issue-oriented*, van Dijk (1997) surmises. He also presumes that any theoretical and methodological approach is appropriate to CDA provided that it induces an effective study of social problems and forms of social inequality such as sexism, racism and colonialism (Ibid). To contend that CDA is problem and issue-oriented does not imply that CDA does not consider all levels of discourse such as grammar, style, rhetoric, schematic organization, etc. (Ibid). It only means that it links that to this, content to form: "...CDA focuses on (group) relations of power, dominance and inequality" and how they are "[...] reproduced or resisted by social group members through text and talk." (Ibid)

Put differently, to approach language through CDA, one focuses on the role discourse plays in the (re)production and/or resistance of power, dominance and inequality. To sum, CDA work is about understanding how underlying ideologies are revealed through discourse and how they influence discourse. Consequently, syntactic and lexical style, rhetorical figures, tone, intonation and other morphological, phonological, syntactic and semantic variables (in the case of poetry, they constitute the writer's choices) will manifest the subtle enactment of oppression and social inequalities. This point can be put concisely in van Dijk's question: "what models and social representations link social group dominance with the choice of specific discourse forms?"(2001: 262)

Van Dijk's question echoes the main research question raised in this study which is "How do Hughes and Angelou use discourse to resist oppression in their poems?". While what matters in van Dijk's question is how oppression is enacted, produced and reproduced through discourse, what matters in this study is how this enacted, produced and reproduced oppression is resisted through discourse.

Crafting on that, CDA sees language as a form of social practice. Fairclough believes that the most common form of social behavior is using language(1989). Viewing language as a social practice demands the integration of social theories with linguistic ones. It also entails an interrelation between discourse, producers and processors of discourse and discourse as an element of the social action. Fairclough (1992:10-1)says in this regard:

The relationship between social action and text is mediated by interaction: that is, the nature of the interaction, how texts are produced and interpreted, depends upon the social action in which they are embedded; and the nature of the text, its formal and stylistic properties, on the one hand depends upon and constitutes 'traces' of its process of production, and on the other hand constitutes 'cues' for its interpretation. (in Coffins 2001:100)

The following figure is adopted from Fairclough's Diagram (1989) and attempts to illustrate how these three dimensions are interrelated.



Figure 7: The Interrelationship between Discourse and Discursive Ideologies and Social Practices

The nature of the relationship between the three components of this diagram is inclusive and it goes from the individual level to the common and shared one. While discourse, speaking mainly of discriminatory discourse, can be individual, it is inevitably learned and absorbed from the social, more common and less individual, discursive ideologies and practices. Thereafter, these practices become social daily practices which are shared among the dominant groups.

Critical Discourse analysts advance that there is a link between the content transmitted and the forms of discourse chosen by the producer. So, there are different levels on which analysis of discourse can be carried on. Van Dijk claims that: “Discourses have many different structures, which also may be analyzed in many different ways depending on general approaches (linguistic, pragmatic, semiotic, rhetorical, interactional,

etc.) or the kind of genres analyzed” (2008:104). Basing on his claim, CDA does not have only one fixed “way¹⁸” of analysis; yet, the ways of analyses differ according to the approach adopted, genre analyzed and the objectives of the research and analysis.

Any text or talk, discourse, can be analyzed at one or more of the following levels which van Dijk lists in his book *Discourse and Power*:

- Nonverbal structures: A racist picture; a derogatory gesture; a headline size or page layout that emphasizes negative meanings about "Them."
- Sounds: An insolent intonation; speaking (too) loudly.(2008:105)

These two levels of analysis analyze the non-linguistic elements of discourse but which remain very important in reflecting the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed groups. Recently a very famous company of cosmetic products diffused a commercial which shows that by using its products a woman can be more beautiful¹⁹. The advantage its products provide is that it turns a woman from a black or brownie into a white woman. The image of standardized beauty which marginalizes women with less fair

¹⁸ By way, it is meant an approach of analysis. Van Dijk uses the term way because this is how these approaches of analysis are customarily referred to. However, he regards that there is no problem in describing them as methods of research (Van Dijk 2008:03)

¹⁹ The company soon removed the commercial from social media due to the refusal which it received and the boycott campaign followers launched. It is why it was impossible to provide the direct link to the commercial. Yet, below are some links which record the commercial with different commentaries of the racist ideologies diffused through the latter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKlrbVycAeM> [last accessed: 20-10-2017]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdmUu0txO3I> [last accessed: 20-10-2017]

<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/beauty/dove-ad-that-shows-a-black-woman-turning-herself-white-sparks-consumer-backlash-20171009-gyws7d.html> [last accessed 20-10-2017]

skin pigmentations is oppressive and reflects the conceptualization of some whites of the other colors. The images diffused belong to non-linguistic elements of discourse, but still show a discriminatory non-verbal discourse.

- Syntax: (De-) emphasizing responsibility for action, for instance by active vs. passive sentences.
- Lexicon: Selection of words that may be more or less negative about Them, or positive about Us (e.g., "terrorist" vs. "freedom fighter") (Ibid):

The word terrorist has been often associated with Islam recently. Muslims are generally referred to as terrorists in many countries in the world in a time other social groups are referred to as victims of their terrorism or peace makers. In colonized countries, the freedom fighters are labeled terrorists by their colonizers.

- Local (sentence) meaning: for instance, being vague or indirect about Our racism, and detailed and precise about Their crimes or misbehavior (Ibid):

To veil their crimes, racist and oppressor groups, in general, rarely give direct and well explained accounts for their stigmatizing practices; conversely, they give more minutely detailed and dramatized accounts for the other's misbehaviors.

- Rhetorical devices: metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, euphemism, irony, etc. — again to focus attention on positive/negative information about Us/Them (Ibid):

Imagery and other rhetorical devices have a direct effect on the hearer's / reader's emotions and feelings. They can be used to embellish their image of the oppressors as well as to tarnish the oppressed image.

Conclusion

This chapter is rather an attempt to lay a theoretical foundation to the study. It is to provide a set of definitions to the pivotal terms which will be employed in later chapters. The terms defined and explicated are not a haphazard smorgasbord but rather an interrelated set of concepts. The light has been shed on discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis as approaches to language aiming at, though not explicitly, pinpointing the differences between the two. It is crucial at this juncture to emphasize that this study shall subscribe to CDA as an approach to the corpora analysis. The corpora will be looked at from the van Dijk perspective on the relationship between discourse, power, dominance, inequality and ideology considering discourse as a mode of action.

CDA solely remains, however, insufficient for the requirements of this research and since it allows and even necessitates inter and multi-disciplinarity, other theories of literary criticism which are postcolonial theory, feminism and reception theory will be resorted to. It is also noticed that this chapter treats all concepts with little reference to African-American history or literature which is the focus of this thesis. This generalization is justified by the fact that it would be confusing both to the reader and to the researcher to confound the peculiarities of the African-American social group and literature with these concepts. However, it is important to highlight that the term oppressed in later chapters of this study is used to refer mainly to the African-American social group and/or literature represented by the two poets Hughes and Angelou.

The relationship between oppression and discourse is undeniable for people use discourse to enact, produce and reproduce oppression and similarly oppressed people use discourse to reject and resist oppression. Both oppression and discourse are everyday social practices whose relationship is subtle but existent requiring the analysis of discourse to become more evident. CDA has been shown to allow the analysis of power relationships in society through discourse with very considerable emphasis on the discourse of power and the manipulation of the oppressed people.

Chapter Two

*A Postcolonial Reading of The African-
American Literature*

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, colonialism has its effects on the colonized subject. It, “for better or worse, provoked social, cultural, economic, and political changes.”(Halimi 2014: 31). The colonized people found themselves floundering with the new salient culture mainly that it has become immersed in their lives substituting and reducing, gradually, their original culture, beliefs, and values to a secondary position. However, the new situation cannot be put under the umbrella of acclimatizing with changes, for the question is beyond “people adjusting to change” (Ibid:31). It is more about the new relationship between *the colonizer/colonized* or what Ashcroft names *the changer/changed* (1995). As effect of oppositionality¹ between *changer* (oppressor) and *changed* (oppressed), change is a remarkably recurrent theme in postcolonial literature.

Postcolonial literature denotes either the literature written by writers who belong to previously colonized countries and territories or literature written after (denoted by the prefix *post*) independence and end of colonialism. Further, postcolonial literature is written as a reaction to the colonialist literature, in which the colonized subject is depicted as subordinate to and of less value than the colonizer. In fact, postcolonial literature is a medium “to resist colonialist perspective” and “a reshaping of dominant meanings” (Boehmer 1995:03). Whereas the colonized subject was silenced and *otherized*, postcolonial literature came to give them voice to reconstruct the distorted image and regain their lost self-esteem.

¹ Ashcroft et al define postcolonialism as “the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being” (1995: 117)

“*Black or white? Black and white? What to be? What am I?*” these existentialist questions fling the individual into an identity crisis where one cannot know his status and value in the society. Hughes accounts for the role of the elites among the blacks, who had to *submit* to the prescribed image to simply feel as American and human as the white. He opines that *Negros* should not desire “to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible.”²

The unequal and ‘unstable’ relationship between the white Americans and African-Americans has led³ the latter, as an oppressed group, to question the goods and/or evils of its effects. Notably, The African-Americans’ identity was affected most. The oppressed ones have been, eventually, led to an identity split; the African-American individual has become obliged either to encapsulate himself into *only* his African-American black identity, to accept to be a white-like, or, at least, a *mélange* of the black and white.

To be able to interpret power relations critical discourse analysis is likely to be the appropriate approach but to be able to perceive the questions that the oppressed raises, postcolonialism is probably the appropriate theoretical framework. Hence,

²“The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926). Available at: http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/mountain.htm [last accessed 27-06-2017]

³ The present perfect tense is used here because I see that the problem of discrimination still exists in USA. Newspaper, TV shows, online videos show that racism has not concretely ended. One can refer to articles as the following to confirm:

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/06/growing-up-black-in-america-racism-education> [last accessed: 07-11-2018]

https://aplus.com/a-grain-of-saul/racism-in-america-is-real-what-to-do-about-it?no_monetization=true [last accessed 07-11-2018]

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44158098> [last accessed: 08-11-2018]

All these articles are published during the current year (2018) which implies that racism as a social plight still exists in the USA.

Critical discourse analysis and postcolonial theory provide bifocal lenses to scrutinize the discourse of the oppressed.

II.1. Post Colonial Theory

Beyond the concrete consequence of colonialism and imperialist expansion such as casualties and deconstruction of infrastructure, there are subtle ongoing consequences which last for a longer term than the physical end of colonization. Actually, the impact of colonialism/imperialism did not stop at a political end but went further to imposing dominating culture(s), beliefs, standards and values.⁴

Ashcroft et al pinpoint that the colonized is subject to a state of chaos since there still exists one form of the colonizer's domination over his language, culture, and identity even after independence. They further state that the ties to the colonizer are not thoroughly cut once independence is gained (1995). The colonized needs a form of expression which he found in literature to speak out his grievances and plight. Literature is used as a form of cultural resistance. Barbara Harlow (1987) confirms that:

The struggles for national liberation and independence have not only sought socio-economic control and cultural domination but have also produced a significant corpus of literary writing, both narrative and poetic, as well as a broad spectrum of theoretical analysis of the political, ideological and cultural parameters of this struggle. (xii)

⁴ The colonizers always attempt to legitimize their colonial expansion through hiding behind the curtain of their so-called mission "civilizing the uncivilized". The theory of Darwin of selection (Social Darwinism) was the fuel of the colonizers' belief in their supremacy. Darwin argues that: "There is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it varies however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected." (*The Origin of the Species* 1861:12). Besides Social Darwinism, Herbert Spencer's ideology of *the survival of the fittest* has fueled the justification of the colonial expansion.

Thence, both postcolonial literature and criticism are lenses through which one can explore and examine the relationship between two opposing poles: *colonizer/changer/oppressor* against *colonized/changed/oppressed*.

Much of the postcolonial criticism is rooted in Franz Fanon's books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) in which he sheds light on the situation of the colonized African. His works are influenced by Aimé Césaire's. Fanon's theory gives more comprehensive data about the relationship between the black and white men. Edward Said is another eminent postcolonial theoretician. His book *Orientalism* (1978) is considered iconic, and has an intense impact in this field. Edward Said coined the binary opposition *Occident* and *Orient*. He discusses how the occident regards the orient in derogatory way. He says:

To believe that the Orient was created—or, as I call it, 'Orientalized'—and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. (1989: 05)

Said explains *Orientalism* as: "Western style for dominating, restructuring having authority over orient" (1989: 03). It is the historical and ideological process through which the various western discourses, including the literary ones, construct falsified images of the *orient*. Said explains that the image produced by the occident about the orient is always negative; Arabs and/or a Third-World community are deemed to be lazy, savage, animal-like, narrow-minded, and unable to acquire or learn new skills or participate in ordinary everyday life activities (1989). Their function is, at best, to serve a more developed European or Western as it is the case of the black Caliban who is subjugated by his white master Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

(1987). The lexical items deployed to describe Caliban are of a negative and suppressive nature: savage, deformed slave. The name ascribed to him itself is said to be an anagram of the word *cannibal* (a person who eats human flesh). Prospero and Caliban embody the binary opposition of colonizer/oppressor and colonized/oppressed. Said's theory may seem to be linked only to the *Orient* but its repercussions are found in almost all the postcolonial studies where there is a similar experience of oppression and where the other is always seen by the west's distorting eye.

One of the outcomes of postcolonial theory is the binary oppositions *the self/ the other, man/woman, white/colored and center/ margin*. The relationship between each of these two dichotomies is complicated and has been approached from numerous perspectives. Accordingly, postcolonial theory looks at the postcolonial writers' representations and criticism of reality, language and ideological control. Authors like Chinua Achebe, Dennis Lee, Margaret Atwood, Calixthe Beyala, Jean Rhys, Giannina Braschi, Najib Mahfouz, to mention just a few, are the major foci of postcolonial reading and criticism. Additionally, it looks at the colonialist writers' representations of the colonized subject (Ashcroft 1995) because even though an author may be unaware of his racist thoughts, his discursive ideologies are embedded in his language. Bahaerh Ghaderinezhad comments on the relationship between language and ideology: "Ideology plays a critical role in shaping or framing the language" (2015:879)

II. 1.1. The Concept of Postcolonialism

The term postcolonialism has originally been used to designate the period of post independence by historians (Sawant: 2012). With the passage of time,

postcolonialism has acquired more than a temporal and a chronological connotation. Starting from the late 1970s, literary critics have slightly modified and redirected the significance of the term to imply the effects of colonization and its implications on cultures and societies (Ibid). Sawant adds that “The Post - colonial Literature and theory investigate what happens when two cultures clash and one of them with accompanying ideology empowers and deems itself superior to other” (Ibid).

It is unavoidable to talk about Leela Ghandi who stresses that there is a distinction between postcolonialism and postcolniality (1998). In his thesis, Halimi confirms that postcoloniality “refers to a condition [...] linked to realities which are concretely lived and experienced by peoples who had undergone colonial occupation in the past” while “Postcolonialism is, therefore, seen as an object to conceptualize and to think on the one hand over past and on the other hand over the sequels left by this historical fact on the political, cultural, social, and economic life of the countries in question.”(2014: 41). He also clarifies that “Postcolonialism takes into consideration three historical periods: the pre-colonial, colonial, and the post colonial one. In other terms, the origin, the causes as well as the consequences engendered by the colonial fact are all examined.” (Ibid: 41), yet postcoloniality refers to a state of being which is actually lived by a colonized group.

In their *Post-colonial Studies Reader*, Ashcroft et al argue that there is no document which covers all the views and theories concerned with postcolonialism, on the one hand. On the other hand, despite the variety of these views, there are mainly two prominent views: one which sees postcolonialism as an “amorphous set of

discursive practices” and another which sees postcolonialism as merely referring to the historical period after colonialism and independence (Ashcroft et al 1995).

II. 1.2. When is the *Postcolonial*? A Theoretical Debate

Childs & Williams raise the question “When is the post-colonial?”(1991:01) at the beginning of their book *An Introduction to the Post-Colonial Theory* inquiring about what the prefix “*post*” in post-colonial refers to. Literally, it means after⁵ colonialism; the period which follows the end of colonialism and the independence of a country. This understanding of the term can be problematic because it may be difficult to precise “after whose colonialism?” and “after the end of which colonial empire?” (Ibid)

Childs’ & Williams’ question echoes Ella Shohat’s: “when exactly, then, does the postcolonialll begin?” (Cited in Loomba 1998: 08). Colonialism has never ended and has always been there in history; Loomba, hereby, proclaims that the children of previously colonized people live in different places in the world which implies that: “the whole world is postcolonial.” (1998: 07). Loomba’s point of view is not different from the one of the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*: “More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of

⁵ "post- /pəʊs t -/ /pou s t -/ prefix

after or later than

postgraduate

postoperative

He took a post-lunch nap". (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2007)

colonialism.” (2004: 01). Ergo, the answer of Child & Williams’ question might be quite relative, for there are no clear time delineations.

It is, therefore, risky to limit the definition of the term post-colonial to historical periods of time or to a specific colonial empire:

Isn't it unacceptably Anglocentric or Eurocentric to be foregrounding the mid-twentieth century and the end particularly of the British and French Empires? What about, for example, early nineteenth-century Latin American and the Spanish and Portuguese control? or the late eighteenth century and the independence of the United States of America? Clearly, there has not been just one period of colonialism in the history of the world (Loomba 1998:01)

As a consequence, it would be more meaningful not to associate the term with historical and geographical implications but it should rather be associated with the aftermath of the colonization.

II. 2. The Relevance of a Post-colonial Reading of the African-American Literature

Bressler regards postcolonialism as “[...] an approach to literary analysis that concerns itself particularly with literature written in English in formerly colonized countries” (1999: 265). His definition excludes the literature written by minority groups who had not been previously colonized. It may, subsequently, seem that postcolonialism as a concept does not encompass the literature written by the African-American as a minority group, for the reason that this minority group had not been under direct colony of the other slices of the American society.

Lomba posits that post-colonialism has two implications: temporal and ideological. Avoiding approaching post-colonialism from the time-bound perspective allows one to go beyond the military colonization to other types of oppression such as cultural imperialism, marginalization, violence which do not necessarily entail a military confrontation. The repression of ideologies and the repressing ideologies may be another concern of post-colonialism as Storlorow (1997) states in an interview

Postcolonial concerns are about the encounter of cultures. [...] So we could say it begins with the cultural encounter of colonization. Repression and resistance, hybridity and difference all have their start here. (Sheriet 2015: 19)

In the same way the writers of *The Empire Writes* back agree with Storlorow and Ngugi that the purpose of post-colonial studies is to assist the total and absolute decolonization of societies in psychological as well as political terms, involving massive and powerful recuperations of the pre-colonial cultures (Ngugi 1986 in Ashcroft et al 2002: 194). The African-American self was given different values when brought to The New World. The reshaping of the African-American self in juxtaposition with the other created a plethora of interior and exterior struggles. The recuperative attempts of the African-Americans to regain their selves and redeem their distorted images are similar to the attempts of any newly decolonized group to restate and re-found the pre-colonial culture. “*Black America*” and “*white America*” are clearly not two countries but two opposing groups sharing the same land and belonging to the same society. Nonetheless, the white Americans represent the power while the black Americans represent the oppressed. The oppressed subject is dependent on the

power subject in terms of decision making. As a result, their quest for independence is ceaseless

The independence of a nation is obtained through resistance and is generally linked to the departure of the colonizer from the colonized land. However, the process of liberation is continuing even after the formal end of colonization because “total liberation is that which concerns all sectors of personality” (Fanon 1963:250). The liberation of the mind⁶ is yet another aspect which the African-Americans share with the previously colonized groups. Their minds have been equally colonized by the whites through altering the self values. Therefore, “Facing the consequences of black slavery, which left incurable traces in the consciousness of the colonized subject⁷, consequently disrupting his ability to identify himself as a free individual even after the period of physical independence⁸” (Gjorgjievska 2015:204). Depriving the individual of his sense of freedom leads to an internalized oppression, which requires a psychological resistance more than a confrontational one. This form of resistance is obviously applicable to the case of African-American literature which displays characters who try to find their real selves in the labyrinth of the dichotomy of the self

⁶Nandy classifies the forms of colonization into: *The physical conquest of territories* and the *colonization of the minds*. The former concerns the physical presence – usually violent- of foreign forces in a given territory taking control of politics and economy prevailed with self-interest and greed while the latter is not as evident and explicit as the first form. The second form is a mode in which the minds are controlled – usually with the purpose of civilizing the uncivilized. Nandy explains this form as:

This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helps to generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds(*The Intimate Enemy* 1983:xi)

⁷ The oppressed subject

⁸If postcolonialism refers to the period after colonialization, then the African-Americans have been also through such a period after the end of slavery and if one is to coin a term this period can be called: post slavery.

versus the other. In this sense, one would say that African-American literature can be approached from a postcolonial perspective.

II.3. Postcolonial Concerns in African American literature

Answering the question, *who am I?* is an ongoing process (Yip et al, 2006). The self-image one makes about oneself is rooted in the life events one goes through. Who we are in this world is sometimes imposed by societal standards; who we think we are in this world rests greatly on our perceived circumstances; who we become is predicated by our lived experiences (Gourdine 2009 in Christa 2011: 04).

The conceptualization of the African-American individual's self-image is shaped by his tough life experiences and his relationship with white Americans as two opposed groups, the former being an oppressed and the latter an oppressor .i.e., the oppressed subject is marginalized by the oppressors because they have a falsified image about the blacks. By dint of this fact, the African-American social group is put in the position of the other due to the racial differences and therein lies the difficulty of self-conceptualization.

II.3.1 Self-conceptualization and Identity Reconstruction within the Racist and sexist American Context

The tense unsteady relationship between the blacks and the whites as slaves and masters, inferior and superior eventually as first class citizens and third class citizens is the locus of most of the African-American writings. The imbalanced self-image of the blacks drawn by the whites' derogatory stereotypes resulted in the

commitment of many African-American authors to helping black people feel proud of their real identity. It is due to this reason that their role is targeted towards opposing racism and oppression so as to regain the lost self-esteem.

Prior to illustrating the postcolonial concerns in the African-American literature, it is important to set such terms as *self*, *other* and *identity* clear owing to their significant role in reading African-American texts and their recurrence the analysis of interpretation of the afore-mentioned texts.

II.3.1.1 The Quest for Identity: Re-questioning the Fallacy of the Other

The idea of self-identification is originally related to The French philosopher Descartes' most famous statement: "I think therefore I am". His conception of the *self* is evidently autonomous and dependent on one's own mind disregarding the role of the *other*. By the twentieth century, the scope as far as the definition of the *self* and *other* is concerned was broadened to include other social and ideological considerations. The utility of knowing the *other* to define the self or the conception of the *self* as an independent entity is a constant subject of debates among scholars and philosophers⁹. It has become generally gained that self conception requires the contrast to the *other*. This fact implies that the other is simply seen as the *not-self*.

⁹ The self/other binary concept has been used by a number of scholars and theoreticians like, Lorber (1994), Williams (1997), Butler (2004/2006), but it is generally attributed to the German Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977).

On this basis, the *other* can be defined as someone who has the quality of *otherness*. Otherness is, then, the state of being different to the self. One might be misled by this definition that self and other are a contrast of individuals merely. Notably, the self/other extends to encompass social groups. In this sense, the binary opposition in question is resultant from the existence of a difference between a dominant group (oppressor) and a dominated group (oppressed). The oppressors dictate the norms and standards of being the self and accordingly categorize the oppressed as the other. This means that the oppressors are always the self and the oppressed cannot be but the other.

The self always denotes man, white, western or rich to mention but a few whereas the other denotes woman, colored, oriental or poor, yet the opposite is never true. In the same context, Jean-François Staszak clarifies in his article *Other/Otherness* that:

the creation of otherness (also called *othering*) consists of applying a principle that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups: them and us. The out-group¹⁰ is only coherent as a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity. This lack is based upon stereotypes that are largely stigmatizing and obviously simplistic. (2008:02)

The asymmetric distribution of power is central to otherness since only the oppressor groups are in a position which allows them to value the particularity of their identity and similarly devalue the peculiarity of the oppressed groups. They set the predefined

¹⁰ The out-group is the group of *them*, the group of those with an oppositional difference from the in-group which refers to the *us*. An out-group is called so because people who belong to it are put 'out' of the due to their lack of identity. The lack of identity is defined by the in-group.

measures of the other groups' otherness (Ibid, Beauvoir 1952, Fanon 1963). It can be said that *othering* is a discursive process which is laden with underlying ideologies about one's own identity and the other's identity. In this sense, Edward Said argues that powerful groups incline to the ideology "that certain territories and people require and beseech domination" (1993:08)

As far as the black self-conceptualization is concerned, one can refer to W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (originally published in 1903). He approaches the conflict between the self and the other from a multi-disciplinary perspective (Schalk 2010). He discusses the situation of the African-Americans and the psyche of the black in the twentieth century:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with a second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. (1903:09)

He explains how blurred the Negro's self-consciousness is. He is not privileged with the right to see his identity through his own eyes.

Du Bois' text is mostly associated with the term *Double Consciousness* which he well defines as:

a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.(Ibid)

Du Bois relates how it is difficult and uncomfortable that one does not have a pure self-dependent identity. The blacks as a social group or as individuals are defined and their image is constructed through the eyes of the white men. Nothing is uniquely theirs, the standards the values and the measuring eyes are unfairly the whites'. Du Bois continues: One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” (Ibid)

The sense of two-ness is a proof that the black identity is in split and that the blacks are unable to decide what to reclaim and what to reject as particularities of their identity. This split and indecisiveness are due to the process of *othering* enacted by the whites upon them.

The process of *othering* operates as long as one believes there is a difference—whether real or imagined— but it is always stigmatizing. Likewise, oppression takes place whenever there is a difference between individuals or groups. One may conclude that *othering* is an oppressive process where individuals and social groups are structured hierarchically. It (*othering*) abets social injustice and inequality. Along the same vein, the oppressed groups find it difficult to identify themselves and their belongings. They are set in a journey of identity and self-conceptualization. They dangle between their *real-self/actual-self* and the *idealized/expected-self*.

The relationship between the *real/actual* self and *idealized/expected self* shapes one's identity. The larger the gap between the two selves is, the more incongruent the self-identity is. The real self represents one's view of himself and how

he is *actually* perceived by others. The ideal self represents the others' belief, more or less wish and view of the attributes one *should ideally* have. Sometimes, the attributes of the real self and idealized self are completely incongruent. In this case, establishing a sense of the self and self-identity is a complicated process which can result in self discrepancies. Actually, incongruity is related often to the oppressed subjects, for there is always a mismatching between their real self and ideal self attributes. The figure below illustrates the incongruity between the real self and idealized self for the oppressed groups.

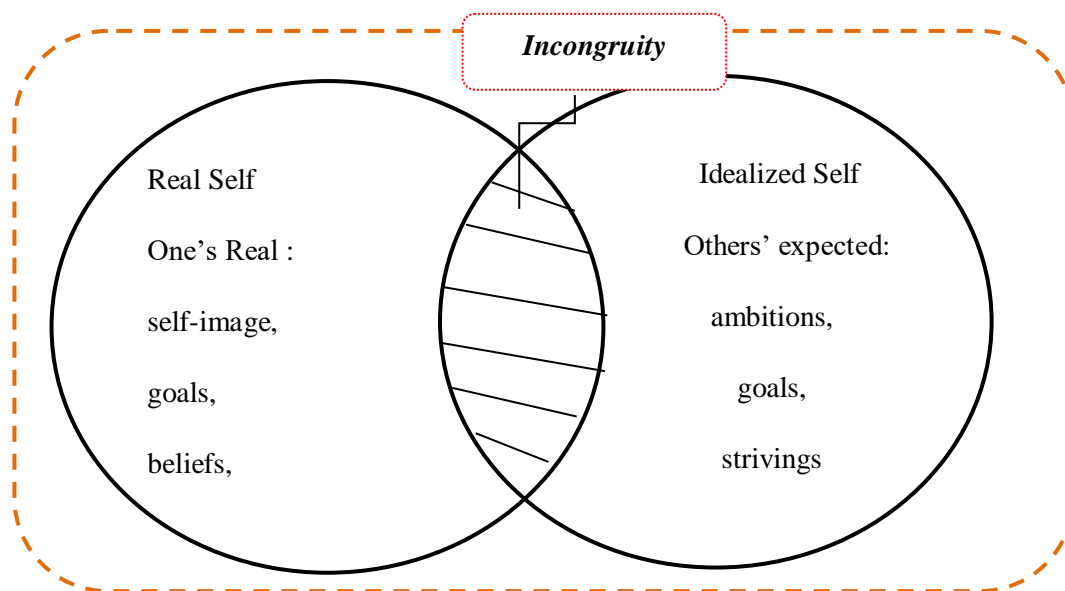


Figure 1: The Incongruity between the Real Self and Idealized Self

The African-Americans are not an exception of the oppressed groups who have been through the quest for their self-identity. They were imported from their land (Africa) to a new land as slaves. They were denied access to education but stigmatized for being uneducated; paid a low salary but oppressed for being poor. They were required to be what they are *actually* not. Below is a demonstration of the conflict between their real self and idealized self:

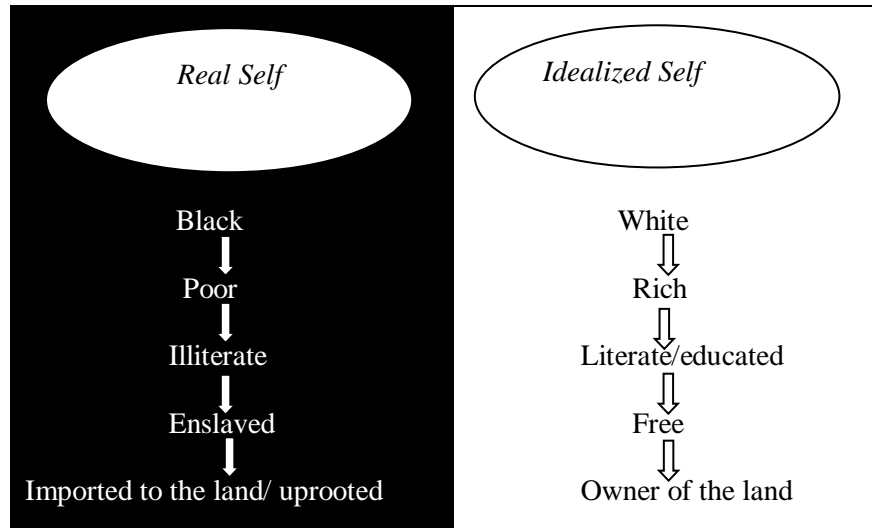


Figure 2: Incongruity between the African-American's Real and Idealized Selves

The figure displays how the features of the African-Americans' *real self* and *idealized self* are completely converse. It is absolutely difficult, not to say impossible, that they can achieve a balance between the two without any discrepancy. A great deal of African-American literature mirrors the difficulties engendered as a result of the incongruity between the real self and the idealized self. Their attempts to integrate in the American society are hindered by the inability to meet the white society's expectations of the black.

Following the tragic experience of slavery and colonialism, the oppressed people face the challenge of rebuilding their identity which is no longer pure. Regaining the oppressed people's lost identity does not necessarily entail the thorough disconnection with that of the oppressor. Change, occurring at different levels of identity and as a result of the tragic experience, makes the challenge even worse. It causes the individual to question its advantages and disadvantages. As a matter of fact, change occurs most on the value of the individual who finds himself relegated to a secondary position and denied the rights in spite of the *physical end* of colonialism.

The identity dangling between the *original* and *new* and the *actual* and *expected* results into a plethora of questions about the self-value of the postcolonial individuals, i.e., the latter subjects are to question the newly coming values and the intruding beliefs which invade the original culture of the oppressed subjects. The latter are, thus, in a state of instability and identity crisis. Ninkovich defines identity crisis as:

a period of disorientation in which values and relationships once taken for granted are thrown into question. Questions of self-adjustment that bedevil individuals caught up in an identity crisis like "who am I?" and "where do I belong?" (Ninkovich 2001:16).

In this sense, postcolonial writers use literary discourse to criticize the new status of their societies emphasizing on both individual and collective identities. The question of identity is, *ipso facto*, at the heart of postcolonial literary discourse because during the process of decolonization, the colonized people try to regain not only their lands but also their blurred identity. In other words:

Once, independence regained the process of post colonialism begins; what is left of the original cultural identity of the native people then starts to be explored and the newly acquired identity starts to be analyzed. This subject of the quest for identity and the attempt to figure out the value of the new identity is deeply explored in postcolonial literature. (Sheriet 2015:09)

Speaking of the quest for identity is often associated with minority groups. Once a minority group is oppressed and dehumanized, it is put at the margin of the human constellation. Once this category of people is marginalized, they look for alternative ways to regain their state of being human and to be put on the same equal footing as their oppressors. As a result, some among them start raising questions which gravitate around their status and identity. Realizing one's differences may mean either

accepting or rejecting the other. One may conform to the other's prescribed identity standards or reject them through preserving one's real self-identity. In either case, the position of the oppressed subject translates his nagging quest for self-recognition as an equal individual.

The quest for self-identity urges the oppressed to look for urgent solutions for their plight and identity crisis, which are crucial issues for the African-Americans who found themselves in a dilemma of the dual identity. The duality can be easily deduced from the label given to their literature and race:

[...] its very naming, *African American* literature is [...] a sense of cultural dualism right from inception. Historically, the socio-cultural undercurrent responsible for the emergence of this literature is the experience of slavery and the attendant contact and dialogue of the African personality with a new culture. (Dasylyva & WJegede 2005: 191)

The dialogue, not to say conflict, between the African personality and the new culture (American personality) boils down to a search for *self-assertion, self integration and self-actualization*, viz. the quest for their real identity *vis-à-vis* the identity which *the other* (white Americans) ascribes. They found literature as an adequate medium through which they can express their grievances and make their voice overtly heard.

Dasylyva & Jegede summarize the themes in African-American literature as: "a passionate concern for race and identity, nationhood and dignity, self-integration and self-assertion and a general quest for roots and freedom stemming from the physical and psychological dislocation which slavery had caused" (Ibid) In point of fact, black people even in their homelands (Africa) were not in a better position owing to the devastating colonial experiences. The theme of the quest for identity and the

conflict between the real self and idealized self is one among the prominent themes in African literature. The issues of identity reconstruction and building a true authentic self-image are a universal concern of the postcolonial literary discourse.

II. 3.1.2. Self-Conceptualization within a Racist Context

The effects of slavery were detected in all life aspects such as accommodations, income, and education. Even after the declared abolition of slavery, African-Americans were banned from going to public schools. Only few of them had the chance to learn writing and reading from their masters. Frederick Douglass relates how it was difficult for him to learn how to write:

By the time my little master Thomas had gone to school and learned how to write these had been brought home and shown to our neighbours and then laid aside. I used to spend time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas' copy book, copying all he had written. I continued this until I could write a hand similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long tedious effort for years, I finally knew how to write (1845:40)¹¹

Not only education was burdensome and hard-fought, but also the recognition of their origins as Africans was similarly challenging. Black slaves were obviously defined as Africans; nonetheless, this label was troublesome for them because according to James Baldwin: “[...] Negroes in the country were taught to be ashamed of Africa. They were taught it bluntly, as I was for example, by being told that Africa never contributed anything to civilization” (1960:80). Hence, it was instilled in the blacks’ psyche that to be black-skinned means to be inferior and *ugly*. On this basis,

¹¹ Available online at: <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abaufda9t.html> [last accessed 20-10-2018]

African-Americans could identify themselves neither as Africans nor as Americans, but they were in a dangling state. The latter is a difficult state for:

Dangling between reality and dreams¹² as well as between hope and mystery is not a choice, but it is imposed [...] this very situation urges any one, no matter what he is, to raise many questions about the nature of the life, of human being, and his status. It is a very long journey [...] to reach an acceptable satisfaction. Yet, it is too difficult, not to say, impossible to reach satisfaction (Halimi 2014:236)

The quest for the self-recognition and self-satisfaction within a racist society is rather unquenchable due to the demands that everyday social practices generates. Halimi comments: “The fact of not getting one’s identity well defined leads one to put many question marks about individual status and his identity in a space of despair.” (Ibid:237) resulting in a conflict which “comes not so much from the outside world but rather much from his own inner mind; he experiences himself as the source of perception and action” (Duval & Wicklund 1972: 03).

In much of the African-American literature, the characters exhibit a dangling identity in which they neither feel at ease as being black nor find their rest as being a white-like. Fishbelly, one of the characters in Richard Wright’s *Long Dream*, seems not to want to be a black, yet; in fact, he finds nothing in the world of the whites as Wright pictures their world as empty and bloodless. The dangling state between not wanting to be “an African” and not finding the consoling state in wanting to be “a white” results in a feeling of shame and a state of despair.

¹² Dangling between the reality of being a racially inferiorized slave and the dream of being free and equally human.

Inasmuch as racism is a discursive practice, one cannot know easily that it is being enacted upon him. In Wright's other novel *Black Boy* (1945), the main character realizes only after a long time how racism was enacted and the extent to which he had not equal opportunities as the whites did:

Why could I not eat when I was hungry? Why did I always have to wait until others were through? I could not understand why some people had enough food and others did not" (26)

Hunger was the effect of racism which the character did not realize at an earlier stage. Due to the low job opportunities, African-Americans lived in poverty; the impecunious state, in its turn, causes hunger. The recycling of causes and effects – low job opportunities, poverty, and hunger is fueled by racism. The unequal chances in the most rudimentary life needs - food- breed low self-esteem engender a foggy view of the value of the individual.

The great extent of poverty and hunger urges Richard and his mother to move to his Aunt Maggie's house to eat. Conversely, the amount of food provided in her house is beyond Richard's expectations. As a reaction of surprise, he cannot believe it is real:

Can I eat all I want? "Eat as much as you like" uncle Hoskins said "I did not believe him then I ate until my stomach hurt, but even then, I did not want to get up from the table. (Ibid: 59)

Owing to the dangling state between reality, hunger, and dream, surplus in food, Richard hides some biscuits in his pockets because of scarcity of hunger the next day: "when I am with my mother, I wake up to hunger standing beside me" (Ibid:62).

II.3.2. Self-conceptualization within a Racist and a Sexist Context

Generally, the African-American women's experience has been studied from a one-dimensional perspective, either race/ethnicity or gender (Moradi & Subich, 2003)¹³ while her state is more complex than being limited to race or gender solely. An African-American woman is oppressed due to both her race and gender, she is, consequently double oppressed and the question of self-conceptualization is not too simple for her. Belonging to the African-American women social group grants her nothing but a multi-layered level of oppression and higher chances of stigmatization. In this perspective, Toni Morrison describes the dolorous experiences of black women during slavery era: "To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal" (2008:163)

The state of the African-American woman is well described in the black feminist Beal's *Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female* (2008). It is a true fact that being black and being a woman is a double jeopardy in the American society because black people as a social group are marginalized by the whites. Since African-American women are part of this social group, they are equally marginalized as black, and in turn, the male members of the same social group marginalize their female counterparts. In other words, black women are not only marginalized within the large American constellation by white people, but also within the smaller black community by men of their own race. So, if black men and women are contrasted, there will

¹³ Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0011000003031004007> [last accessed: 15-12-2017]

always be the same conclusion that whatsoever level and form of oppression a man might receive, a black woman always receives a higher level of oppression.¹⁴

African-American literature has not overlooked the issue of the African-American women since the latter themselves have created their own voice and discourse. Despite the remarkable impact of the white oppression, the relationship with and the value of the woman within the black community are the nexus of most of the literature of female black writers.

Wrights, as a male author, delivers a reflexive image of the male stigmatizing view of African-American women through his female characters in his novels. His male characters show superiority to female ones as the heroines and other female characters' lives are always tied to their men and are meaningless without them. Smashing the black man's values in the American community leads him to become highly defensive against women of his own race, for he believes they threaten his masculinity.

Lil, the heroine of Wright's novel, *Lawd Today*, is an epitome of the double-marginalized African-American women. Jake who is her husband considers her as a fool and an intellectually inferior being. When describing her, he says: "You piss at her back and say it's raining and she would believe it" (15). The blind submission of Lil to her husband makes her believe without any reconsideration of whatever he says. A doubly marginalized woman depends on man even in meaning construction, she is

¹⁴ See Chapter one Section 1.3.1 Social Groups and the Systematization of Oppression

more an *accept-it-all* being as long as the man is the dictator of realities and meaning. In spite of that, whatever comes from Lil is a source of disturbance to Jake.

The novel opens with Lil switching on the radio, an act which disturbs her husband's sleep and dreams. The radio speech brings him back to reality and uproots him from his dreams. In fact, the very first scene describes how Lil's act of switching on the radio disturbs Jake's sleep and dreams and makes him angry. She continues, though unconsciously, to remind him of his frustrations; hereafter, she becomes his outlet to relief all his anger. The voiceless Lil suffers all along the novel from verbal and physical violence but she remains helpless because she does not have another shelter to resort to.

Her pregnancy gets doubted and she is accused of treachery. She is left to suffer with her pregnancy until she gets a tumor because he refuses to pay her treatment fees:

I can just see myself giving that damn quack five hundred dollars for you to get rid of a tumor. What you think I is, the United States' Mint? And you got the nerve to tell me I'm the cause of it! How about all the other niggers you been running around with? (Ibid:15)

All sorts of abuse and humiliation do not make her break or even think to break free from the dependence on Jake. Lil's utmost desire is to have her husband's satisfaction despite the mistreatment she receives. Indeed, she forgets her essence as a human being and she is made to forget her potentiality as a black and as a woman. Lil, like most of African-American women, fails to recognize her identity, thus they fail to

make the other, be it black men or the white society, recognize her as an equal human being. She fails to make her life meaningful.

Lil believes, consciously or unconsciously, Jack gives meaning to her life. The absurdity of her life without him is rooted in her internalized state of powerlessness; her external world does not provide her with any help to get rid of the absurdity thereof, as well. The experience of Lil is analogous to Sisyphus¹⁵ whose *fate*, as it were, was to drag a heavy rock upwards on a high mountain forever. Both Lil and Sisyphus are destined to have a meaningless life forever without any record of them questioning happiness or satisfaction. As Albert Camus (1952-2006) ironically comments on Sisyphus life: "The struggle itself is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (777)

To speak of women's struggles and search of self-conception cannot be monotoned because of the disparate cultural, economic, social, religious and even ideological peculiarities. Black, whether African or African-American, women cannot be described on the same footings as European or western women. The concerns of a black woman are way more basic than a European's in that the black women are deprived the most rudimentary human right, existence. Their life conditions are dreadful for that the struggles of black women are over the everyday life aspects and over the very axiomatic human needs: education, self-worth, self-control of her body.

¹⁵ Sisyphus is a figure in the Greek mythology.

It would be wise that one refers to Toni Morrison who left no stone unturned as far as the African-American woman is concerned. Her works picture vividly the pitiful situation of women of her race. *A Mercy* (2008), her Nobel prize winning novel, is seen as a tessellation of women's spiritual and actual slavery. Florens, a black slave owned by Jacob, recollects the memory of her mother begging a stranger to take her for her family's owner's debt although the stranger, Jacob, wanted the mother and her son. She recounts:

I know it is true because I see it forever and ever. Me watching, my mother listening, her baby boy on her hip. Senhor is not paying the whole amount he owes to Sir. Sir saying he will take instead the woman and the girl, not the baby boy and the debt is gone. A minha mãe begs no. Her baby boy is still at her breast. Take the girl, she says, my daughter, she says. Me. Me. (2008:07)

The experience of being *given* to a stranger for the owner's debts is unquestionably tragic. Although this passage is narrative, Florens uses the present simple tense which stresses that the memory is still vivid in her mind as if it happens now. This is evidence that slavery aftermath and scars are strongly present even after many years¹⁶. It may seem to the reader that the mother's action is unacceptably cruel to her daughter, but the truth unfolds by the end of the novel when the mother justifies her deed. The mother remembers herself imported from Africa as a slave and raped: "I don't know who is your father. It was too dark to see any of them. They came at night and took we three including Bess to a curing shed... There is no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below" (Ibid: 163). The experience of the mother and daughter is hard

¹⁶ The narrator is sixteen years old and she tells a story that happened when she was eight years old.

from whichever perspective one looks at it. It is harsh to be sacrificed at an early age as a slave and it is equally harsh to sacrifice your child for whatever reason. Yet, the mother chooses leaving her daughter away lest she goes through the same destiny: “It was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human” (2008:166-7). The mother believes her daughter’s life would be better if she is displaced elsewhere. She begs Jacob to take her daughter, an action not expected from a normal mother but she thinks Jacob is different from the landlord: “there was no animal in his heart” (Ibid: 163)

Consequently, self-conceptualization within a racist and a sexist context is much more difficult than self-conceptualization within only a sexist context viz., African-American women’s social reality is multi-layered while a European or a western women’s social reality is mono-layered¹⁷ as contrasted in the coming figures:

¹⁷ The term, *womanism*, first appeared in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983) For further elaboration see Ogunyemi, Ch. O. (1985); Kolawole, M. E. M. (1997); *Smith, V. (1997)*. Collins, P. H. (2000).

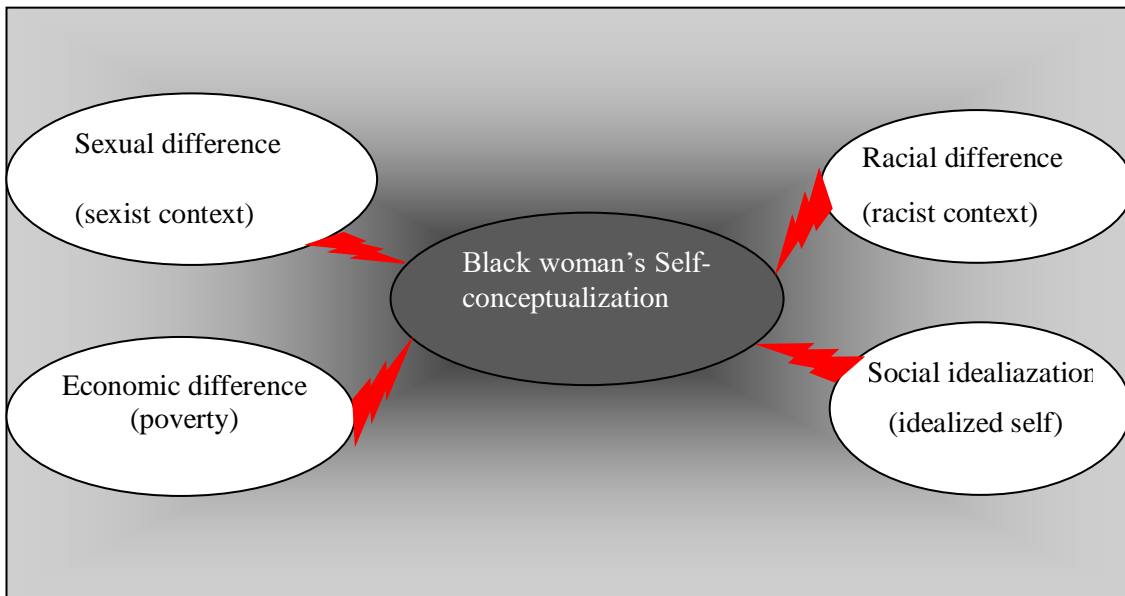


Figure 3: Self-conceptualization within a Multiply Marginalized Social Group

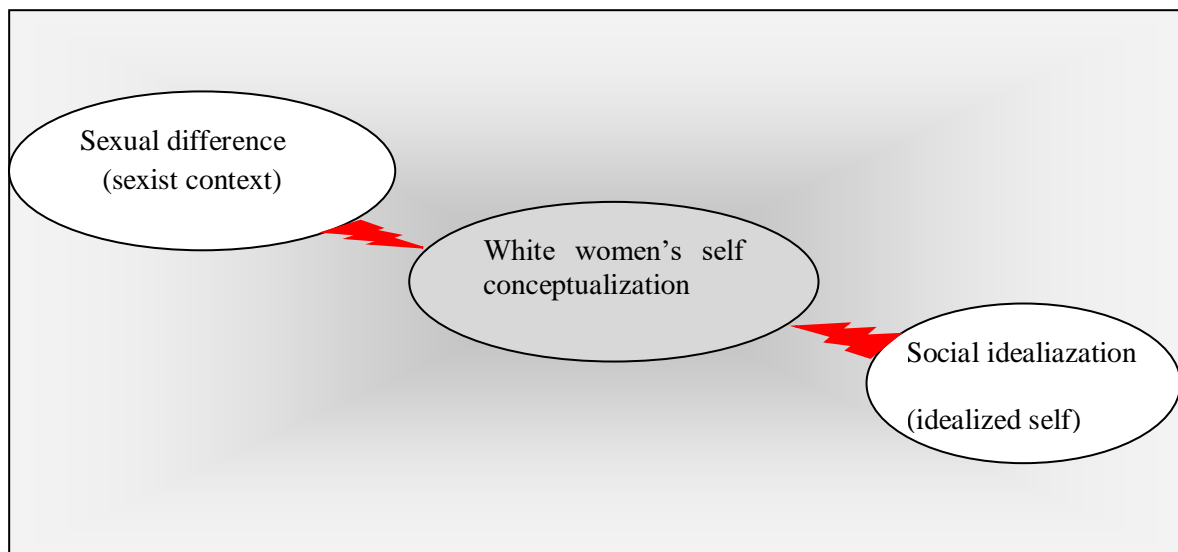


Figure 4: Self-conceptualization within a Sexist Context

These inherent differences between black women and other women in Europe or the west necessitated that break from the mainstream of European Feminism. Black woman preferred that they assemble their work under the umbrella of what Alice Walker named *Womanism*. The latter represents the black conception of feminism.

From a semantic perspective, Womanism and feminism are related to the feature of woman i.e., they both have the same platform but their essence is different. In this context, Buchi Emecheta comments:

I will not be called a feminist here, because it is European. It is as simple as that. I just resent that [...] I don't like being defined by them. It is just that it comes from outside and I don't like people dictating to me. I do believe in [...] womanism, because, you see, you Europeans don't worry about water, you don't worry about schooling, you are so well off. Now, I buy land, and I say, 'OK, I can't build on it, I have no money, so I give it to some woman to start planting. That is my brand of feminism (1988: 175)

White feminists considered that even women who belonged to other social groups were oppressed equally. Yet, actually, there is a number of factors such as race, religion, and class which make the social reality of each group different. Thus, women are oppressed in different ways (Hooks 1984). Audre Lorde agrees with Hooks that :” “The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but does not mean it is identical within those differences” (Lorde: 1979). There is a clear interrelation between racism and sexism but white feminists disregarded the impact of racism on black women. Ergo, the theoretical foundation their feminism offers is not comprehensive of their real concerns Lorde adds: “Beyond sisterhood is still racism” (Ibid: 67). White women are oppressed by white men whereas black women are oppressed by black men, white men, and white women i.e., that black women fight at several levels as it is confirmed in the Combahee River Collective¹⁸: “We struggle together with black men against racism, while we also struggle with black men about

¹⁸ The Combahee River Collective is a group of black lesbian women who fights for the rights of women as blacks, women, and lesbians. See also: <https://combaheerivercollective.weebly.com/history.html>

sexism” (1978). To be able to stand against both sexism and racism, women have to be sufficiently resourceful in their struggles.

Female characters enjoy endurance and resourcefulness when they face up to their oppressive situations. In Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Celie undergoes inner transformation. The novel starts with the recount of Celie’s rape by her father. The brutal opening tells that her life is but anomalous. By the end of the novel, Celie transforms into a strong and self-dependent female. The divergence between the opening and the end of the novel emphasizes that Walker endeavors to empower the black females to search for the truth by themselves. Most of her female characters are aware that they are considered as worthless beings by their counterparts.

Unlike Wright, Walker awakens the sense of strength within her female characters. She urges and motivates them through her womanist works to search for, then, recognize their self-worth. Her description of women’s sufferance is honest despite the brutality of their life conditions, but her female characters are a universal epitome of women’s non-conformist ideology.

One might state that not all the members of the double-marginalized social group are conformists. They resist the oppression which is reproduced through a multidimensional matrix as Patricia Hill Collins describes in her book *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2000) as:

- (1) A structural dimension (i.e., how social institutions are organized to reproduce Black women’s subordination over time) (Ibid: 277)
- (2) A disciplinary dimension, which highlights the role of the state and other institutions that rely on bureaucracy and surveillance to regulate inequalities;

- (3) A hegemonic dimension, which deals with ideology, culture and consciousness; and
- (4) an interpersonal dimension, the “level of everyday social interaction. (Ibid)¹⁹

II.3.3. Alienation and Integration

Due to the dilemma which self-conceptualization within an oppressive context engenders, postcolonial individuals try to integrate within the oppressors’ social group. Their sorties of integration are frustratingly obstructed with alienation. “The concept of alienation is extremely complex. It is multidimensional: it involves philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion, history, even medicine.” pinpoints Eugenia Collier in her article, *Dimensions of Alienation in Two Black American and Caribbean Novel* (1982) Alienation denotes making someone seem an alien. But, “alien to what and whom” is the question? African-American minority group were treated as aliens who are strangers to humanity owing to their color. The theme of alienation and integration is reiterated in a large body of the African-American literature.

An alienated person is not seen in the society; he is considered invisible. Invisibility is the extreme manifestation of alienation. Invisible people see the world but are not seen, in return (Ibid). The nameless protagonist in the *Invisible Man* describes his state of invisibility by the American society:

¹⁹ This is taken from “The Feminist Impulse in Beyala’s Writings: An Existentialist Overviewing” (Halimi 2014: 71)

[...] I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only by surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me. (2014:07)

He explains how the others could not see him but they saw only their prejudices about a black man in him. The problem then resides in their eyes not in his being as he affirms:

[...]That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of the inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality (Ibid)

The protagonist exemplifies his racial group everyday struggle to integrate in the American constellation. The protagonist has to overcome double-alienation because, at first place, he was alienated from his homeland. This reality is symbolized in the novel in the factory episode. A note outside the factory announces: "*Keep America Pure With Liberty Paints*", this statement is an oxymoron which combines liberty with the act of purifying which is associated with *The Ku Klux Klan*²⁰ (Collier Op Cit). The oxymoron is a manifestation of the discrepancies which exist in the protagonist and his people's life.

²⁰ A secret US organization of white protestant Americans, especially in the south of the country, who oppose people of other races or religions

The nameless character works in *Liberty Paint Factory*. The factory produces only white paint which is so pure that it is used for governmental buildings. The paint cannot be purely white unless ten drops of a *BLACK* liquid are added. The black liquid is the secret behind the purity of the paint but it is, certainly, made invisible; it is a vital component but, like the black people, its worth is made imperceptible. The liquid has to be dissolved in the white but the paint produced is not grey rather it is *purely white*. So are the black people supposed to melt down into the white identity yet without any noticeable recognition.

The protagonist is sent to work with *Lucius Brockway* in the basement of the factory, a place which is also invisible, for having unintentionally spoiling the consignment of paint. Lucius Brockway is a black man and he is the lifeblood of the factory but he is put somewhere where he cannot be seen. His role is compulsory for the factory to exist but he is made invisible like the black liquid. In spite of his importance, he must remain separate from the center; he is not only marginalized, i.e., put somewhere near the center but also alienated, i.e., too far from the center.

African American literary discourse demonstrates the effects of alienation on the individuals psyche. They are given paramount roles whose importance is invisible and sometimes purposefully made so. They are inside the life cycle of the white Americans but treated as outsiders of it even worse of the human constellation. Alienation effects allude to the notion of *Double Consciousness* as one lives in twoness of everything. For survival's sake, the black people accept to be decentralized and alienated from the participation in everyday life practices.

The existence of blacks with whites in one space created an aura of uneasiness for the black people. Blacks were neither completely in nor completely out of the constellation; the decision of integration or disintegration was not in their hands. Hence, some intellectuals, amongst whom is Claude McKay, prioritized raising racial consciousness to stir the oppressed blacks “to have confidence in their culture, to search for self-identity and to stand on an equal footings with other peoples of the world” (Chi 1991:103). Alienation is a foregrounded theme in McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928).

The novel, *Home to Harlem*, is reflection of McKay’s life. The author is Jamaican. He was imported to the *New World* as most of the Africans who lived in America at the time of slavery. His nostalgia to his homeland is apparent in the previously-mentioned novel through the images of the tropical atmosphere which characterizes Jamaica as in:

Sometimes there were two or three white women who attracted attention because they were white and strange to Harlem, but they appeared like faded carnations among those burning orchids of tropical race (1928:106)

The analogy made between black women and the tropical orchids confirms that he sees the image of his land in the black women and that he feels homesick. One is generally attracted by the presence of the unusual but, the presence of white women, who are described as *strangers*, does not shade the black women. This description of black and white women mirrors the author’s nostalgia for his *roots*. It, additionally, proves his feeling of *uprootedness*. The latter feeling is generated because of the sense of alienation; why would one be so nostalgic if he finds comfort elsewhere? It is owing

to the feeling of strangeness to the society that one feels as outsider. Below is a figure which demonstrates the alienation of the blacks by the whites:

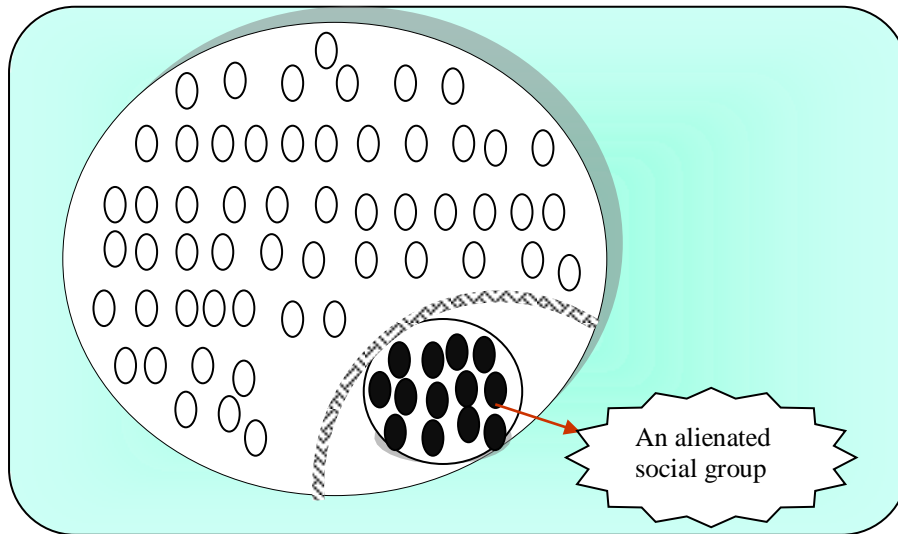


Figure5: Alienation of the Black Social Group

African-Americans did not only feel alienated by the white people. Some of them are alienated from their own racial group as it is the case of Ray, a character in *Home to Harlem*. He is a distinct waiter from his peer colleagues. In a time, his colleague waiters spend their time in entertaining activities such as gambling, frolicking, and so on, he would prefer to sit all alone reading a book. Certainly, Ray does not feel that he fits within his peer group although they belong to the same social group. In essence, reading is not an activity which is associated with black people mainly at the earliest times of slavery. Reading as an activity practiced in his free time, deems Ray as alienated individual from the black constellation. In coming figure, alienation within the same social group is illustrated:

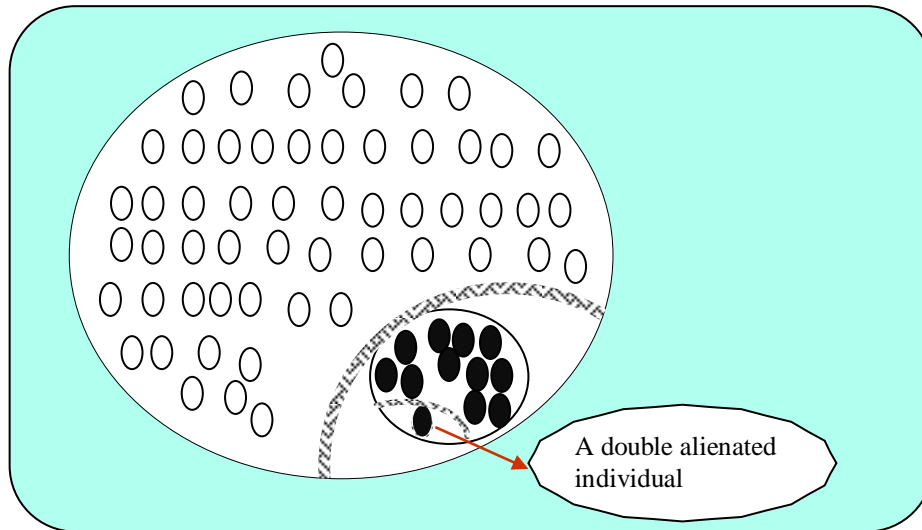


Figure 6 : Double Alienation

Alienation haunts the individuals and social groups in oppressive contexts where the horizontal order of society does not replace the vertical one. Alienation compels the oppressed to not only double-consciousness but also double-vision which is illustrated by Richard Wrights in *The Outsider*:

I mean this," Houston hastened to explain. "Negroes, as they enter our culture, are going to inherit the problems we have, but with a difference. They are outsiders and they are going to know they have these problems. They are going to be self-conscious; they are going to be gifted with a double vision, for, being Negroes, they are going to be both inside and outside, of our culture at the same time (1965:129)

The speaker in this passage is a white man who knows well what is going on inside a black man. Notwithstanding Houston's use of the lexical item *gifted* which connotes a positive aspect, double-vision is as negative as double-consciousness. A clear vision of anything is gained when someone has a steady position, having a double-vision, on the contrary, signifies that one has more than one position. Albeit having a number of positions seems positive because it suggests openness and a variety of experience, it is not the case for African-Americans. Double-vision is positive when the two visions are not simultaneous; African-Americans look at the world with

indecisiveness because they are always in two oppositional positions at the same time. They are insiders but not treated as such and at the same time they are not left freely to be outsiders. They are Americans but always haunted with *Africanity*; they are Africans but always haunted with incomplete *Americanity*: “[...]They will not only be Americans or Negroes objectivity” (Ibid).

II.4. Bridging the Gap between Critical discourse Analysis and Postcolonial Theory

In the realm of critical discourse analysis (CDA), any form of language use is considered as a social practice (Vadai 2016). CDA, at its heart, examines re/producing inequalities and power dominance. Advocates of CDA like van Dijk, Fowler, Fairclough, and Foucault emphasize that discourse enfold discursive ideologies and the aim of CDA is to unfold the discursiveness therein.

The key concepts that critical discourse analysts endeavor to elaborate are *power, ideology and manipulation*. Both van Dijk (1996) and Fowler (1985) agree that power entails an asymmetrical relationship between two groups. The asymmetry in this relationship provokes the control of one ‘powerful’ group over another ‘powerless’ group. According to Kress, ideology is defined as a set of beliefs or a system of ideas which the members of a given social group share (1985). An ideology is dominant once the controlling group manipulates the dominated group. Manipulation, for van Dijk, is a “communicative and interactional practice, in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interest” (2006:306). As a result, manipulation is based on discourse; it takes place when the manipulator

uses discourse in a manner which makes the oppressed group incline to and work for the interests of their oppressors.

One notices that in the afore-mentioned definitions there is no allusion to the power of discourse in resisting oppression. As a consequence, critical discourse analysis studies seem to be one-dimensional as far as the discourse/power relation is concerned (Negm 2015). They focus on language as a context for enacting domination and power. In this sense, Fowler (1985) remarks that language is a basis for its users to construct the statuses and roles whereby power is claimed or subservience is required. Similarly, Chaika notes that everyday and journalistic discourse is an “effective ways to maintaining power relations within society” (1994:04). Additionally, these studies centralize the discourse as a context of power but denigrate it as a context of resistance. Even though Fowler (Ibid) mentions subservience, he does not bring the aspect of resisting subservience and oppressive practices to the fore. Van Dijk, an important theoretician in CDA, reports the oppressed as “victims who help perpetuate injustice and reproduce dominance and inequality.” (1993:250). He confesses that CDA focuses more on relations of dominance than relations of resistance.

The African-Americans resorted to literary discourse so as to breathe out their ideologies of rejecting oppression. Maya Angelou asserts: “I really love language. I love it for what it does for us; how it allows us to explain the pain and the glory, the nuances and the delicacies of our existence [...] We need language.”²¹ Angelou’s saying

²¹ <https://dailypost.wordpress.com/2014/05/28/maya-angelou/comment-page-5/> [last accessed 16-04-2018]

puts an accent on the role language plays in resisting oppression. The power of literary discourse in resisting oppression is indisputable. In the same way that oppressors manipulate their discourse to overspread their dominance, the oppressed manipulate their discourse to reject inequalities as far as race and gender issues are concerned, reclaim their lost identity and redeem their distorted image. Correspondingly, discourse is not only in the hands of oppressors but also in the reach of the oppressed.

Africans and African-Americans have had no access to institutional forms of discourse. Those forms of discourse have been in the disposal of white people. Yet, as oppressed subjects they have found it exigent to create their own literature in their own way. Chinua Achebe consistently argued for the right of Africans to tell their own story in their own way, and has attacked the representations of European writers (in Franklin 2008:72). They have needed to create their own representations far from the oppressors' misrepresentations.

Literature is seen by many African-American critics as an essential medium to reach racial equality. Du Bois in his *Criteria of Negro Art* (1926) says: "I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I don't care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda" (in Napier 2000: 22). In other words, producing literary discourse is seen useless and even shameful if it does not contribute to solve race problems. Moreover, seeking artistic beauty should not make the artist go astray from his responsibilities of voicing his peoples' grievances and representing their identity. In his article *The New Negro and The Racial Mountain* (1926), Langston Hughes says that:

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, "I want to be a poet--not a Negro poet," meaning, I believe, "I want to write like a white poet"; meaning subconsciously, "I would like to be a white poet"; meaning behind that, "I would like to be white." And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. (Robert G. O' Meally, 1998: 421)

The author believes that literary discourse is a terrain where one's real identity should appear. Hughes feels sorry for the young because he is certain about the potentials of literary discourse to resist oppression.

Given that discourse is a means to send out the ideologies of oppression and resistance. Discourse is at the disposal of both the oppressors and the oppressed, adopting a postcolonial reading of the African-American poetry is paramount. CDA allows one to look at how people act upon each other through discourse but from an oppressor-based-perspective. Postcolonialism, on the other hand, allows the criticism and analysis of the discourse of both the oppressor and the oppressed. This difference between CDA and postcolonial theory does not in any way belittle the utility of CDA but it only closes the gap and shows the complementary relationship between the two theories.

Conclusion

Primarily, postcolonial theory provides an interpretation to power relations. The interpretations it provides answers to the questions about the position of the colonized/oppressed individuals. Postcolonialism is the result of the interaction between the oppressor and the oppressed; therefore, it is thought to be a discourse of resistance. Postcolonial theory is multidisciplinary in its nature. It triangulates theories²² of other fields so as to aid the reader reach a full perception of discourse. Postcolonialism focuses on the aftermath of colonization and oppression. It also gives a considerable attention to the concept of rejecting injustice and inequalities since literature is regarded as a form of cultural resistance.

Within the American assemblage, whites and blacks have been set in oppositional binaries as slaves and masters, center and margin, and have been otherized. As a result of the drastic experience of slavery and the vertical social order, African-Americans have swept into an identity crisis. In their quest for their lost identity, writers have developed a cornucopia of literary works that deals with both the inner being and social being equally. Themes such as self-conceptualization, marginalization, alienation, racism and sexism are strongly present in African-

American literature. These writers seek to substitute the vertical social order with a horizontal one in order to put both blacks and whites on an equal footing.

The need of a critical approach/framework to analyze the discourse of the oppressed is exigent. One would raise the question why does the approach have to be critical? Power relations in society are intricate relations and their manifestations are discursive within discourses for this reason they demand critical lenses to be clearly seen. Critical discourse analysis seems to be the approach which lends its tools to the readers to indulge into power relations in discourse. Van Dijk confesses that his studies tend to focus more on “top- down relations of dominance than bottom-up relations of resistance, compliance and acceptance.” (1993:250) Hereafter, postcolonial criticism has been awakened in order to look at the African-American literary discourse as a case of the discourse of the oppressed.

Postcolonial theory seems to be born out of CDA. The latter drags the attention towards the discursive power of discourse, but looking at only one face of the coin, the discourse of the oppressor. Postcolonial theory completes the function of CDA through looking at the other face of the coin, the discourse of the oppressed. Both emphasize the relationship between the form and content and the link between discourse and ideological confessions.

Post colonial theory is, in itself, controversial about which discourses it can be applied to. It has been proved in this chapter that a postcolonial reading is relevant to the African-American literary discourse. CDA proponents try to deconstruct the vertical social order through unveiling the discursive practices of the discourse of power.

Likewise, postcolonial critics and writers try to deconstruct the hierarchical social structures through unveiling the power of discourse. It is obvious that CDA and postcolonial theory have a common objective and they both stimulate critical thinking. Besides, the concept of asymmetrical power relations is present in both approaches.

Seemingly, the gap between CDA and literary criticism can be closed with resorting to postcolonial theory. To state that the study subscribes to postcolonial criticism, it does not mean that CDA is abandoned or denigrated as an approach but it emphasizes the eclectic nature of the study. On the light of this theoretical foundation, Hughes and Angelou's poems will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Literary Discourse as a Mode of Action

in Hughes' and Angelou's Poems

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Introduction

To look for immediate solutions for their plight, African-American writers and intelligentsia have created a voice to communicate their search for dismantling the race and/or gender-biased ideologies and practices. African-American literature has played a central role in concertizing their goals. The writers have experimented the different genres prose, drama and poetry to let out their experiences. Writing has, definitely, brought changes to black people's perception of themselves within the American context. African-American literature's fulcrum is redefining the African-American self through the deconstruction of prejudices and stereotypes.

Poetry as a genre has not been an exception. It has been explored by many African-American writers such as Phillis Wheatly (1753-1784), Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906), Claude McKay (1889-1948), Gwendolyn Brooks(1917-2000), Lucille Clifton (1936-201), Audre Lorde (1934-1992), Langston Hughes (1902-1967) and Maya Angelou (1928)¹. Although these poets lived in different periods, most of their poems share common themes revolving around slavery/freedom, inequality/equality, new/original identities, racism and sexism. The emphasis is highly on self-awareness, self-worth, self-assertion, to mention but a few. Langston Hughes asserts that "Poetry can be used to bridge the often imagined gulf between literature and life." (1968: 275) because "One of the functions of poetry is to capture the nuances of everyday life" (Hughes 1943: 08). Poetry, as a form of literary discourse, has been used to defy the racist and sexist social norms. Black people's different nature has led them to write in different manner

¹ Famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets_african_american.html [last accessed 17-11-2017]

than the whites as, again, stated by Hughes:

Those of us who are colored have, of course, difficulties to overcome, obstacles in the way of our dreams, that most Americans do not have. Much of my poetry has dealt with these difficulties, these problems, of the Negro people in America. (1964:02)

Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou represent two different time spans of the African-American literature. The former witnessed the Harlem Renaissance (1920's-1930's) and Angelou is a contemporary poet. Both poets seem to seek to establish a space where the black voice can be heard. Within this space, literature is a medium of resistance in which discourse is modeled so as to fit their intentions. Their linguistic choices cannot be discussed in isolation of the content conveyed through their poems.

Ronald Barthes holds that writing is the link between society and creation (1972) since "Literature, in general, is endlessly significant, and it is likely to reveal universal truth about human nature." (Halimi 2014:93).

III.1. The Discourse of the Oppressed in Hughes' Poems

Hughes, as an oppressed black man, defies the social stereotypes which relegate the black person to a minor position in the American constellation. His literary discourse is addressed to both his people and the oppressors, white Americans. He stands against the ideology of difference in which oppression is rooted. The researcher selected five of his poems to be analyzed in this chapter; they are: *I, Too*, *Mother to Son*, *A Dream Deferred*, *My People and Democracy*.

III.1.1. *I, Too*

The speaker in Hughes' *I, Too*² (2012) is a proud and confident black American who shows no shame or fear of being so. Individuality and the recognition of himself are declared from the very title. The use of the first person singular is not haphazard; it accentuates the speaker's awareness of his distinctness. The "I" in the poem instills in the reader's mind that the speaker can speak for himself and does not need a spokesperson on his behalf. The adverb "too" indicates addition; it is synonymous to the adverb *also*. Its use in the title is to emphasize that the speaker also shares a feature with the addressee or that he also does the same action. The combination of these two lexical items suggests that the speaker knows who he is, what he is and what he shares with the *other*.

² For the full poem, see Appendix 03.

The poem opens with: “I, Too sing America”. One can understand from this line that the shared feature between the speaker and the addressee is *singing America*. The line is an allusion to Walt Whitman’s *I Hear America Singing* (1900)³. In Whitman’s poem, the speaker hears *mechanics, carpenter, mason, boatman, shoemaker, woodcutter*, and all America singing. Each of them sings his own song in his own way. The poem connotes the variety of Americans and the uniqueness of each voice, yet together they make one fabric. The speaker in Hughes’ poem wants also to inform the addressee that he is a segment in this varied fabric and that he, as well, is equally American. The question is ‘why would he want to emphasize that he, *TOO*, sings America?’ His statement implies that he is excluded from the fabric as a distinct segment; he is either not seen or considered as not important. One infers that the speaker is being marginalized and that he aspires to sing America. In other words, being different should not allow the others to exclude him from the macro-world of Americanness and does not make him any less American.

After ensuring his distinctness and Americanness, the speaker describes himself as the “*darker brother*”:

2. I am the darker brother.
3. They send me to eat in the kitchen,
4. When company comes, (2012:57)

The reason of the speaker’s exclusion and marginalization is stated in line 02: being a *darker brother*. The result of being a darker brother is shown in lines 03 and 04. The difference between the speaker and his audience is *color*. Hughes chooses the comparative form of the adjective ‘*dark*’ to show that color can be seen as a nuance only, i.e., a barely noticeable

³ For the full poem, see Appendix 03

difference. It can also mean that all people have color and the difference is in degrees of the color.

Hughes uses *pars pro toto*⁴. The latter is a literary device in which a part is used to express the whole. The poet selects only the skin color to represent the black man. The effect of using the *pars pro toto* reflects the whites' narrow vision of the black. To wit, the whites look only at one component of the human being, color, without widening their vision to the souls of the black. Their vision is as incomplete as the partial description of the speaker of himself. In fact, it is a superficial way of looking at people who share the same land together. The speaker considers himself a brother despite the discrimination. Yet, the brotherhood relationship between the whites and blacks is despotic.

The despotic brotherhood relationship depicted in the above-mentioned stanza echoes prophet Joseph's story with his brothers. The black's experience in America and Joseph's experience with his brothers are semantically linked. The story of the black carries religious semantic connotations in that Joseph was betrayed and ill-treated by his half-brothers and so were the blacks. They were also betrayed and ill-treated by their white *brothers* who could be seen as half-brothers⁵, too. This religious allusion reveals the sense of the speaker's social concession which is similar to Joseph's. In the same token, while the black could consider the American society an enemy, he considers it a family. This family comprises the darker brother who is different but not alien, not inferior and not in any way less human than others.

⁴Pars pro toto is a Latin word for "a part for a whole"

⁵ They are considered as *half-brothers* because they share the same land, America but not the same origin.

Albeit the ill-treatments and the betrayal, the prophet Joseph was merciful because of his sense of concession. Similarly, the black accepts the other despite the latter's attitude and behavior towards him. By dint of the black's reaction to the other's aberrant attitude his consciousness of his state of being a human is revealed, for humanity preaches tolerance and mercy. The sense of tolerance reminds one of the Saul Bellow's Joseph in *The Dangling Man* (1944). As the title suggests, Joseph is a man dangling between two identities: an ideal American one and a Jewish one. Throughout the novel, he attempts integrate with the American society, but his attempts are rejected and faced with a prejudicial image of a Holocaust. Joseph realizes the inevitability of the hierarchical social structure of the American society:

Whether I like it or not, they were my generation, my society, my world. We were figures in the same plot, eternally fixed together. I was aware, also, that their existence, just as it was, made mine possible. And if, as was often said, this part of the century was approaching the nether curve of a cycle, then I, Too, would remain on the bottom, and there, extinct, merely add my body, my life, to the base of a coming time." (Bellow 1944: 25)

Joseph's struggle is not to revenge from an excluding society but to fit in a miscellaneous world where differences are disregarded. In the same way, the conflict the speaker in *I, Too* is not between the self and the other; rather, it is between two opposing views of the world. Both characters see that social concession is important to find a middle ground for these opposing views of the world.

Social concession is not the only similarity between the experiences of Prophet Joseph and the speaker in the poem. Prophet Joseph was transported from his land and sold as a slave; black people were similarly taken to America and traded as slaves. Prophet Joseph was

maltreated by the wife of Potiphar⁶ (prime minister) in Egypt where he was owned. Likewise, African-Americans were maltreated by their owners. Moreover, Prophet Joseph did not surrender to his situation but he grew stronger despite all the obstacles created by the prime minister's wife. The speaker in the poem is sent to eat in the kitchen. The image drawn from this line is that black people are marginalized. The speaker, like Prophet Joseph, grows stronger through eating well laughingly:

5 But I laugh,
6 And eat well,
7 And grow strong (2012 :57)

Consequently, it is presumed that tolerance can be a weapon to fight against oppression. It is even recommended in the different religions; for instance, vengeance -as counterpart to tolerance- is prohibited in The Bible in many verses as in:

Whoever exacts vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord, who keeps strict account of sin. Pardon your neighbor any wrongs done to you, and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven. If anyone nurses anger against another, can one then demand compassion from the Lord? Showing no pity for someone like oneself, can one then plead for one's own sins? - Ecclesiasticus / Sirach 28:1-4

So, one is required not to hold grudge against those who wronged him. When one meets evil with evil, the situation may be more complicated with mutual hatred which can result in worse consequences. Yet, one is asked to meet evil with good. Saint Paul emphasizes the paramount importance of meeting evil with good in the New Testament:

⁶ Potiphar is the Christian equivalent for what is known in Islam as Alaziz.

Never pay back evil with evil, but bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect. As much as possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone. Never try to get revenge: leave that, my dear friends, to the Retribution. As scripture says: Vengeance is mine -- I will pay them back, the Lord promises. And more: If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; if thirsty, something to drink. By this, you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head. Do not be mastered by evil, but master evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)

As far as Islam is concerned, one finds a considerable number of Quran verses in which social concession and tolerance are recommended as a medium to pay the other's ill-treatment. Repelling evil with good results in intimating the relationship between the self and the other. Inasmuch as one is mis-received and ill-treated, his good conduct towards his enemy will make the other reconsider his reception, the enemies might become intimate friends as Allah states in the Holy Quran:

Good and evil are not equal. Repel evil with good, and the person who was your enemy becomes like an intimate friend. (Fussilat (Detailed): 34.a)

Once more the implied concept of social concession is not haphazard. Through his tolerating self, the speaker foregrounds that his different skin pigmentation does not necessitate an overt vulgar discrimination for men have no control over their physical appearance; it is, thence, absolutely unfair to judge someone on the basis of his/her skin color. It breeds the feeling of powerlessness, self versus other conflicts, unquenched curiosity about one's individual and common identity, dangling being, and even pretended indifference. Toni Morrison posits in the forward of her novel, *The Bluest Eyes* that

Perhaps the feeling is merely indifference, mild annoyance, but it may also be hurt. It may even be that some of us know what it is like to be an actually hated — hated for thing we have no control over and cannot change. (1970: ix)

In spite of all the attempts to integrate in the American white society, the speaker is eventually sent to eat in the kitchen for he cannot be with the company as he can only be their servant. The vertical structure of the society does not allow even the so-called brothers to be around one table. Any attempt to integrate in the American society is hindered with the argument that the African brother, if ever he had been considered one, is darker. As the people around the table send the speaker to eat in the kitchen, they want to make him invisible. Even though his role is paramount in the life of white people, they do not want it to be shown. The state of the speaker reminds one of the state of *Lucius Brockway* in Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (2012).

Lucius Brockway is sent to the basement where he cannot be seen by any comers to the factory. In the same way, the speaker is sent to the kitchen where he will be invisible. Though seemingly the color is nothing but an uncontrolled inherited gene, the other, the white society, still considers it an axiom that a darker brother cannot be human and particularly an American human being. Therefore, he must be excluded from the American society despite his lifeblood role and contribution in improving the white people's lives.

The speaker knows that he is hated but he keeps the faith that tomorrow will be better for him. He is certain that his situation must be improved. His certainty is empowered by knowing his self-worth. The tone in this stanza changes from a tone of anger to that of pride. The change of tone is shown through the change of tense from present simple to future simple. The speaker uses the present simple to describe his actual situation and the future simple to say what should happen. Positioning the time indicators *Tomorrow* and *Then* in separate lines emphasizes that the speaker gives importance to the future and that he is waiting for tomorrow, which will bring the change, eagerly and confidently. The speaker could have said: "I'll be at the table when

the company comes/ Nobody'll dare/ Say to me/ Eat in the Kitchen” without using time indicators, but since the speaker is sure of what will happen in the future, he demarks the stanza with two adverbs of time, one at the beginning of the stanza and the other at its end.

The contrast between the present and the future continues in the last stanza in which the speaker's hope of recognizing the beauty of a *darker brother* is expressed. The speaker even hopes that the white people will regret their racism and oppression. The poem closes with a hopeful and challenging tone. In the first and last lines of the poem the speaker emphasizes his Americanness. While in the first line the speaker sings America, in the last one he states that he, too, is America. Hughes uses refrain (starting and ending the poem with almost the same line) to put an accent on his quest of equality between Americans regardless their color. The speaker bespeaks his and his people's quest.

The *I* in the poem is a collective 'I' which includes all the black Americans. The personal pronoun 'I' is repeated eight times in the poem in the title, and in the lines: 01, 02, 05, 09, 16 and 18 and it appears in the objective case (*me*) twice in lines 03 and 12. The reiteration of *I* accentuates the speaker's self-awareness and confidence. He is able to convey his experience, his pride, his hope and expectations by himself. The desired effect is two-way. It is meant for the black audience to encourage them to recognize their self-value and use their past to build a stronger tomorrow instead of lamenting their situation passively. It is meant for the white audience to reconsider their treatment and view of the black people.

III. 1.2. Mother to Son

Langston Hughes uses a variety of voices and speakers in his poems according to his themes. In a number of his poems, the female voice is present specifically the voice of the mother as in *Mother to Son* (Henceforth MTS). Dobie states that MTS gives “earthly, honest commentaries on life difficulties, some of them spiritual, material, that offer no apology or defense but never admit defeat or ask for pity” (2001:200). Dobie’s statement implies that the speaker in MTS is a strong woman. The reader infers also from the title that the speaker is the mother and the addressee is the son.

Mother to Son consists of twenty lines. At the first glance at the poem, one notices that the poem is divided into two unequal parts with the word *Bare* which stands alone in the line. The poem structure has a visual effect on the reader and it raises his expectation that the poem contrasts two different objects or aspects.

The first part of the poem is:

1 Well, son, I’ll tell you
2 Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
3 It’s had tacks in it,
4 And splinters,
5 And boards torn up,
6 And places with no carpet on the floor—
7 Bare. (2012)

The mother has something to tell to her son. The first line introduces the speech to come in rest of the poem as a message from the mother to the son. The difficulties that Dobie (op cit) categorizes as spiritual and material are described in the lines from 02 to 06. The mother has been through a difficult life laden with obstacles. The obstacles caused pain to the mother. The

theme of pain is conveyed through the lexical items: “no crystal stair, tacks⁷, splinters⁸, boards, no carpet”. These lexical items represent small pieces but if one touches them, he may get hurt.

The image drawn out of these lines is that the mother is offered nothing good in her life. The last line in this part is composed of one word ‘Bare’ meaning nothing even on the floor. The author uses the metaphor of the stair to create the sense that the mother is moving upward in her journey. The stair is uncarpeted full of painful tacks, splinters and boards. Although these objects may seem too small, their effect is deep. If one treads them, he will not be able to walk.

In the second part of the poem the mother exhorts her son not to turn back because she has never stopped going on or ‘a-climbin’ on’ in spite of the dark and unlit places she goes through. The mother does not cease her quest to reach the climax because she expects to find her haven there:

8 But all the time
9 I've been a-climbin' on,
10 And reachin' landin's,
11 And turnin' corners,
12 And sometimes goin' in the dark
13 Where there ain't been no light.
14 So boy, don't you turn back.
15 Don't you set down on the steps
16 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
17 Don't you fall now—
18 For I've still goin', honey,

⁷ a small sharp nail with a flat end

⁸ a small sharp broken piece of wood, glass, plastic or similar material

19 I'se still climbin',
20 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair. (2012)

The speaker's life cannot be described as ordinary because in an ordinary life, one meets difficult times and good ones. On the contrary, the mother tells her son that she has met only difficulties. She sounds very strong mainly in the lines 09, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Beyond her journey, the mother has a goal which is not only to survive but to live properly. It is for this reason that she does not retreat before the obstacles she finds in her way. Despite her gloomy future, she continues taking the stair upwards.

The image of the stair is an allusion to Jacob's Ladder. The latter is a ladder which Prophet Jacob saw in a dream when he was running away from his brother Esau who had grudge towards Jacob⁹:

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon the place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood beside him, and said: 'I am the LORD, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. (Genesis 28:10-17)

By the end of the ladder, God himself stood there and promised to take care of Jacob. The mother is climbing on to run away from the oppression of the whites as Prophet Jacob was running away from the ill-deeds of his brother. The disparity between the dream of Jacob and his reality is similar to the disparity between the mother's reality and the American Dream¹⁰ that

⁹ <https://www.bible.com/bible/compare/GEN.28.10-22> [last accessed: 05-11-2019]

¹⁰ The American Dream: "the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful, rich and happy if they work hard" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2007)

everyone will be able to be happy if they work hard. In reality, the mother is working harder than necessary but she is not happy yet. God promised Jacob to take care of him and God was standing at the climax. On the other hand, the mother does not know who is waiting for her by the end of the stair but she keeps the faith that she will be better. The climax of dreams for an African-American is to gain freedom and equality.

As one reads the first seven lines of the poem, he expects that the mother will express her tiredness and her desire to surrender to her inhumane situation. Conversely, the mother continues the struggle in a strong voice and a tone of challenge. In fact, the word *Bare* represents a turning point in the poem because it separates the past of the mother from her present and the son's future. To clarify, the poem goes through three time spans: past, present and future. What the mother tells to her son in the first seven lines is the cause of what she says in the coming lines, .i.e., the mother tells her son about her sufferance not to lament her situation but to tell him what she is doing to fight and he as an African-American should do. One can name the first part of the poem as the action and the rest as an exigent reaction.

The speaker uses both the present simple tense and the present continuous. She uses the simple present to describe her life and its difficulties which are not only physically painful but also spiritually tough. The mother keeps "climbin' on/ And reachin' landin's/ And turnin' corners,/ And sometimes goin' in the dark" because she suffers from homelessness and she has to go through these difficulties because she is marginalized. The use of gerund in these lines stresses the continuity of her sufferance from and struggle against homelessness and marginalization. Hughes could have used the present simple tense in these lines because the mother is describing what she does habitually and not what she is doing at the moment she was

speaking with her son. To stress the human concern, the poet breaches and violates the grammatical rules. Through this grammatical deviation, he creates the image of the nagging quest of the African-American to integrate in the American society.

The gerunds in lines 8 to 13 are not written in their full spelling. Hughes omits the letter 'g' and replaces it with an apostrophe so that all the gerunds end in the sound /n/. The effect which this sound creates is moaning (Hatem 2012). The mother is tired and pained due to her harsh life conditions; if the writer uses the full form of the gerund, .i.e. with the /g/ sound at the end, the speaker would seem more powerful. /g/ is a glottal sound which is pronounced through vibrating the vocal cords unlike the /n/ which is nasal (See Peter Roach *Phonetics and Phonology*). The feature of being nasal allows lingering the pronunciation of /n/ which resembles the sound of a tired and pained person. In addition, /g/ sounds more decisive than /n/ which is not the case with the mother. Although she is determined to keep climbing on, she is not sure about her destination. Therefore, the phonological deviation (omission of /g/) has an acoustic and prosodic effect. It, as well, represents the black identity.

The mother's quest for integrity does not forcibly mean that black Americans abandon their original identity. The theme of black identity is served by the linguistic deviations which occur at different levels in MTS such as:

- Grammatical: *I's been*. The poet uses the short form of 'is' with the pronoun *I* instead of *am*.
- Phonological: *a-climbin' on*. The poet adds the letter *a* before the gerund climbing to resemble the pronunciation of the black Americans.
- Dialectal: *ain't been no crystal stair*. The poet uses the negative form 'ain't' instead of has not or hasn't.

These deviations are purposeful. They all contribute to represent the black identity through using the black way of pronouncing words, composing sentences and using expressions which are black-American-proper. Philip M. Royster comments on the deviated use of language in MTS:

Black dialect verbalizes the folk spirit: double negative _, (11. 2, 13), softened and muted word endings (11. 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 19), creative conjoining of subject pronouns with "to be" at~ auxiliary verbs (11, 9, 18, 19, 3), dropping superfluous prefixes (1. 16), transforming prepositions to suffixes (1. 16), and the use of "ain't instead of "has not," Hughes said that it "is a writer's job to put down, within limits, what people say and do and think in life." (1974:84)

Lastly, the mother insists on her son not to fall down through using refrain, viz. repeating the line: "Life for me ain't been no crystal stair." at the end of the poem. The voice of the mother is "more than a loving parental figure. In fact she is the model, an example of the struggle against oppression....carries the spirit of rebellion"¹¹. The selection of the mother as a speaker is to stress the importance of women in the struggle against oppression. The mother "carries the seed of the free", says Hughes in *The Negro Mother* (2012). The mother represents the old generation who are the pioneer fighters against oppression. Through the mother speaker, Hughes spurs the young people to believe in their cause, equality and integration, and take the resistance of oppression further. Besides, the mother belongs to the working class which Hughes values in poetry:

Langston Hughes was convinced that beneath the artifice of middle-class Negro life there was an authentic and pure voice which the black artist would do well to interpret. It was this special well-spring of culture that should feed the Negro genius. (Nathan1971:203)

¹¹ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/1821/8/08_chapter%202.pdf [last accessed 25-10-2015]

III. 1.3. A Dream Deferred

“*What happens to a dream deferred?*” asks the speaker in Hughes’ poem *A Dream Deferred*¹² (2012) (Henceforward ADD). To answer his question, he asks other five questions. The questions posed are not meant to be answered by the reader; they are rather meant to project images through the similes used in the first stanza:

- 1 What happens to a dream deferred?
- 2 Does it dry up
- 3 like a raisin in the sun?
- 4 Or fester like a sore—
- 5 And then run?
- 6 Does it stink like rotten meat?
- 7 Or crust and sugar over—
- 8 like a syrupy sweet? (2012:33)

As one observes the questions are rhetorical. The speaker tries to list the possibilities of the consequences of a deferred dream. The first possibility is that it dries like a raisin in the sun. A grape has a more nutritious value when it is dry, .i.e., when it becomes a raisin. Since a raisin is already dry, it loses its value when exposed again to the sun. It becomes hard to eat and valueless. So is the case for a dream; it gives value to the human life because it becomes one’s goal to achieve. However, once deferred, its value as a motivation vanishes.

The dreams of an African-American are deferred owing to the nature of the social behaviors which are cruel and segregating. They underlie prejudices against the African-Americans. By 1950’s, the period when the poem was first published and after the abolishment of slavery, African-Americans have gained the right to vote and to own a property; that is to say

¹² The poem is also entitled in some references as “*Harlem*” or “*Harlem: A Dream Deferred*”

that they had more rights than they did during the era of slavery. Nevertheless, in everyday practice, black Americans did suffer from racist acts such as sitting in the back of the bus, having a separate place in restaurants, having specific schools for the blacks and so forth. The dreams of the African-Americans may be as simple as sitting wherever in the bus or having equal chances in education. Indeed, their dreams are obstructed by the white's oppressive and racist practices.

The speaker lists the possible consequences of the deferred dreams gradually. The images he creates through his rhetorical questions and similes have a logical connection. The first question likens the deferred dream to a dried raisin. Then in the second question the unachieved dream is likened to a sore. The verb used in the second simile is *fester*. Festering entails a bad smell because of the pus that the festered area produces and the noun *sore* implies pain. When the dream is not concerted, it is dried up then if not saved and cured it becomes painful and even harmful to one's being. The fact of being put off for a long time make the role of the dream convert into a retardant of happiness instead of a booster of happiness. When an oppressed individual is deprived of an ordinary life that is prejudice-free, his dream becomes a source of psychological tiredness. His self-conceptualization process collides with the callous verdicts of the whites and cuts the way towards self-actualization.

Thirdly, the speaker suggests a more harmful consequence of postponing the dream: "Does it stink like rotten meat?" Since the dream was left to dry up and fester, the obvious result is that it gets infected and rotted as food does when not used in a certain period. If the dream is not realized in its due time, it perishes. The stinky odor which the meat leaves resembles the unpleasant feeling of a dreamer who has not been able to realize his dream. Dreams may be realized at a late stage, yet they can be useless if they are not timely achieved. The simile in this

line (06) reinforces the idea of decaying. Once meat is decayed, it loses its nutritious values and must be thrown away because it becomes dangerous to one's health. A dream put off for a long time may well be abandoned or else it may cause trouble to the dreamer.

The fourth simile compares the deferred dream to the crust syrupy. When a syrupy is left unused for a long time, it forms a thick layer of hard crust. The accumulation of failures in and delaying realizing the dream causes an accumulation of negative feelings: doubt, anger and frustration. Sharma explains in his article *Stylistic Analysis of Langston Hughes's Poem "Harlem"* that:

Crust and sugar over- / like a syrupy sweet?" hints at the fact that if we leave the syrup unused for several days, it becomes too hard and the material is no longer usable. Similarly the dream forced to sit idle hardens into an unusable substance of thought. (2018: 07)

The second stanza consists of two lines which put forward a probability using the modal verb *may*. The speaker in this stanza does not ask questions; instead, he provides a possible answer to the initial question: "What happens to a dream deferred?":

9. Maybe it just sags

10. like a heavy load. (Ibid)

The accumulation of negative thoughts and feelings becomes a burden on the dreamer's shoulder. Carrying a heavy load obliges one to walk slowly and unsteadily; the thoughts that weigh on the mind which has been also obliged to defer a dream makes one in a dangling state between reality and dreams. The African-Americans dangle between who they want to be and what they want to do, and what their oppressors require them to be and what they allow them to do. Sharma clarifies that: "the dream that is not fulfilled may become heavy to bear because it

weighs on his mind with negative musings resulting in depression and lethargy” (Ibid). A black person would raise questions such as: “What could have happened if I were in another society?”, “How would I have lived if I belonged to a different social group?”, or “Would my dream come true if racism did not exist?” All these hypothetical questions drag the dreamer backwards ending up in dangerous or worse results.

In the last stanza, the speaker returns again to posing questions and he asks: “Or does it explode?” unlike the previous questions, the poet uses metaphor instead of using simile. The metaphor compares the deferred dream to a bomb and it is conveyed through the verb *explode*. In all the previous consequences, *dry up, fester, stink, crust and sugar over, and sags*, the negative results are internal. In other words, they are related only to the person who has a dream deferred and their consequences do not harm other people. On the contrary, the final consequence results in destruction to everyone. If a bomb explodes, it harms people, environment, and properties. Similarly, the accumulation of negative thoughts and feelings can end in transforming a good ambitious person to a pessimist. Consequently, he may become aggressive, criminal, or even extremist. Feeling helpless before their situation, the oppressed black Americans may lose hope and thus project their failure into aggressive acts.

The poet sends a double-layered message through ADD. His first audience is his own people. On the one hand, he attempts to revive hope and determination in them to pursuit to quest for gaining complete actual equality and justice. Additionally, he attempts to raise their awareness that surrendering may cause them self-destruction. On the other hand, he warns the white people of the possible consequences of encumbering and thwarting the realization of the

black Americans' dream. To achieve these two purposes, he exploits discourse forms at different levels so as to create an effect on the reader.

At the graphological level, the lines in the first stanza differ in length and word number while all the lines in second and third stanzas are short and comprise four words. The irregularity in this stanza mirrors the chaos in the life of black Americans. The fourth and seventh lines end in an unusual punctuation, dashes: "Or fester like a sore —/ Or crust and sugar over—". The dashes create a sense of hesitation and mediation before completing the speech as if the speaker is contemplating about his situation. In the fourth line, the speaker mentions the sore; the dash may serve to represent the pain because when one suffers from a sore –notably a sore throat- he speaks with difficulty. The last line of the poem is italicized to draw attention to the disastrous consequence of deferred dreams.

Most of the diction in ADD revolves around negative aspects: *dry up, fester, stink, rotten, explode, etc.* As a matter of fact, the selection of diction and figurative language in the poem contributes to constructing effective imagery in the reader's mind. Below is a figure which illustrates the types of images in the poem:

Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crust and sugar over—/like a syrupy sweet?
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explode
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feter like a sore • stink like rotten meat
Gustatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raisin in the sun

Figure 1: Imagery in *A Dream Deferred*

III.1.4. My People

Black people have often been seen as less beautiful due to their skin pigmentation. They were considered as ugly and taught to consider themselves so. Standardizing beauty traits made the African-Americans believe they were not equally beautiful as the whites were. As a consequence, they were led to be internally oppressed¹³. Langston Hughes positive vibes which his poems spread are meant to encourage his people to substitute beauty standards with self-confidence. The poem *My People*¹⁴ (2012) reveals the beauty of the *Negro*.

¹³ For the definition of internalized oppression, see Chapter One: Section 1.3.2 The Other Face of Oppression: Internalized Oppression

¹⁴ For the full poem, see Appendix 01.

The poem has three stanzas. In each of them, the speaker's people are compared to an element in order to confirm their beauty. The beautiful elements are "the night, the stars and the sun", respectively. Black people are compared to the night in the first stanza:

1. The night is beautiful,
2. So the faces of my people. (2012: 84)

The type of imagery in the previous stanza is visual. The African-American's blackness is compared to the darkness of night. The beauty of the speaker's people resides in their *darkness*. In the second stanza, the black people's eyes are likened to the stars. The beauty of the bright stars cannot be noticed and admired unless the sky is dark. The latter image stresses the physical beauty of the African-Americans and demonstrates their role in the white people's life. The stars are of a bright white color but they cannot shine in the absence of darkness which reflects the black people. The white people are, in the speaker's eyes, beautiful yet they cannot function in separation from the black people. The third stanza presents another aspect of beauty which is inner beauty. The speaker compares his people's souls to the sun. The sun provides warmth and light with nothing in return and so do the black people. They provide services and goodness for the whites with no recognition in return.

The first two stanzas show the physical beauty of the Negro while the third one shows the brightness and niceness of their souls. Whichever way, then, they look at themselves, the black people should see their outer and inner beauty. The poem incites black people not to belittle themselves as far as their physical appearance and their souls are concerned. *My People* is of a cyclic nature through starting with the image of dark night with shiny stars and ends with the sun. It pictures the continuity of days and life. Starting from the night then moving to the day

is a reflection of the hope for a better future for the black. After darkness, there is dawn and after the bad-conditioned situation of the African-Americans, there is a better life. It is, additionally, an invitation for the whites to recognize the importance of the dark night .i.e., the black people.

The language and sentences of the poem are very simple. Jemie describes Hughes's choice of simple style as an audacious move in an age when everybody sought to be difficult (1979: ix). He postulates: "In a time when it was fashionable to be difficult....Hughes risked to be simple". The simplicity of Hughes's style can be explained that his first audience is his own black people whose literacy rates were not very high by the time the poem was published. So, the poems are simply intended to anyone who can read. The goal of this poem is to raise the black people's awareness of their beauty. It is a refutation of the societal stereotypes about the black. This poem as the precedent ones celebrates the beauty of the black. However, the style is different in this one: the writer uses simple language to convey a very direct idea in as much simple a language as the concept of beauty should be. This is a recurrent theme in Hughes's poetry as Mehta claims in her essay *Hughes' Poetry: A Pictorial Presentation Of Black Beauty*: "His entire body of work is a call to action, a drive toward increasing momentum, and an impulsion to take up the banner of pride in one's race, one's cultural and ethnic heritage."

Entitling the poem *My People* is indicative of the poet's pride and self-assertion within the black community. The poet spurs his primary audience, the black readers, to love themselves as they are through the pictures the three metaphors create. By the same means, he draws the attention of his second audience, the white readers, to see this beauty and accept it as black and as a black American. To accomplish his communicative intentions, the speaker starts with the

illustrations (night, stars, and sun) then mentions the topics¹⁵ (faces, eyes, and souls). The preferment of the illustration is deployed to convince the reader with the speaker's point of view. Almost all people agree that the night, stars and sun are beautiful elements. So, the speaker starts from a generally gained truth to deliver his message.

III.1.5. Democracy

After the abolishment of slavery, there was an ironically paradoxical gap between the American stated policy and the actual one. Therefore, one finds that among the foremost interests of Hughes' poetry is to discuss democracy as he states: "The major aims of my work have been to interpret and comment upon Negro life, and its relations to the problems of Democracy" (1950:307). Democracy and freedom are interrelated; they are transmitted as immediate needs in Hughes' *Democracy*¹⁶ (2012).

The speaker in *Democracy* sounds angry and seeks change. He addresses his people warning them not to compromise their dignity for false hope of democracy:

1. Democracy will not come
2. Today, this year
3. Nor ever
4. Through compromise and fear. (2012: 32)

Line 02 and 03 reinforce the impossibility of democracy along the time while line 04 explains the condition that prevents democracy from coming. Compromise and fear, for the speaker, do

¹⁵ A comparison (whether used figuratively or not) has three parts: the topic, the illustration and the point(s) of similarity). The topic is the element that is being talked about; the illustration is the element the topic is being compared to; and the point(s) of similarity is/are the common feature(s) between the topic and illustration.

¹⁶ For the full poem, see Appendix 01.

not allow democracy. The speaker is certain of the absence of democracy in his society and he is certain that he has the right as all men do to live in a horizontal social structure:

5. I have as much right
6. As the other fellow has
7. To stand
8. On my two feet
9. And own the land. (Ibid)

The speaker lays emphasis on his equality to *the other fellow*. The *other fellow* refers to the white person who has more rights than a black does. He is resolute character to achieve democracy at any cost. The promises and mottos of democracy raised in America seem to the speaker as what Freire names *false generosity* or *false charity* in his book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* 1970. The white people attempt to soften the tense relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. Their attempts provide not concrete enhancement for the devastating situation of the black. The speaker feels hopeless and becomes certain that to gain democracy, black people should act and demand their rights:

10. I tire so of hearing people say,
11. *Let things take their course.*
12. Tomorrow is another day.
13. I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
14. I cannot live on tomorrow's bread. (Ibid)

The speaker no longer accepts waiting for *things to take their course*. The tone in line 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 is sharp. The phrase: *tomorrow's bread* signifies the future. The most basic need for a human being is food. When one is hungry, one cannot wait for tomorrow to quench his hunger. The need for democracy is compared to the need of food for being immediate requiring urgent satisfaction. These lines are addressed to both black and white people. Black people are recommended not to wait and live on a fallacious vision of the future while the white people are angrily informed that the speaker and his people are in an exigent need for actual freedom:

15. Freedom
16. Is a strong seed
17. Planted
18. In a great need. (Ibid)

Freedom is compared to the seed. A seed is the fundamental part of any organism to grow. A seed when taken care of grows whether at short or long term. Freedom is seen by the speaker as a seed which needs care by the society so that it grows. Black people need to toil for its growth because the freedom seed is quiescent in the black people's minds. and white people need to avail the appropriate environment. The metaphor of the seed prevails hope that, with determination, freedom shall be earned. As a seed grows, it will bring fruits or every one, both black and white people. When democracy and freedom are achieved, people will live peacefully. Yet, in order to gain its fruits, a seed must be well planted and preserved. Therefore, white

people should turn their mere ‘words’ and mottos’ about democracy into serious actions. The speaker reemphasizes his equality to the *other* fellow in the last three lines of the poem:

20. I live here, too.
21. I want freedom
22. Just as you. (Ibid)

In the first stanza, the white people are not directly addressed, but in the last line of the poem, they are addressed directly using the personal pronoun *you*.

III.2. The Discourse of the Oppressed in Maya Angelou’s Poems

Black women mostly experience double-layered oppression. They are oppressed as black by the whites and oppressed as women by the white and the black men. The discourse in the poems of May Angelou, as a representative of the double oppressed social group, reflects the complex state of black women in America. Her poems depict the sufferance of African-American women to gain a decent life within a sexist and racist society. The poems selected to be analyzed in this chapter are: *Still I Rise*, *Phenomenal Woman*, *Woman Work*, *When I Think of Myself*, and *Equality*.

III.2.1. Still I Rise

Maya Angelou’s *Still I Rise*¹⁷ (1994) (henceforth SIR) is an example of the *tough guy* speaker. The poem is composed of nine stanzas. The speaker in the poem is a black female who addresses directly her oppressors. As one reads the title, one deduces from the adverb *still* that

¹⁷ For the full poem see Appendix 02

the action of rising is deterred and that is the justification of the use of *still*. Were the title reformulated, it would be: “*Despite all the obstacles, I still rise*”. The title of the poem is a clause which is comprised of a verb *Rise* preceded by the adverb *Still*. The subject is *I*, which is so far anonymous. The nature of the verb, action verb, gives a more intense tone of challenge.

In the first stanza, Angelou says:

1. You may write me down in history
2. With your bitter, twisted lies,
3. You may trod me in the very dirt
4. But still, like dust, I'll rise. (1994:163)

The speaker uses the second person “You”. The speaker accuses her addressee of misrepresenting, lying, and maltreating her through the lexical items *write down*, *twisted lies*, *trod*, and *very dirt*. The consequence of these accusations is that the speaker is determined to *rise*. The decision of rising is a reaction to the others’ malevolent actions towards the speaker. Their actions reveal their malicious intentions to make the speaker weaker as it is the case in the poem *I, Too* when the speaker is sent to eat in the kitchen, he is expected to eat less and grow weaker. The speaker of this poem is as revolutionary as the speaker in *I, Too*. Both revolutionize against the others’ attempts of marginalization.

From a semantic perspective, the lexical items of the poem can be divided into three main fields: slavery, challenge, and pride:

Slavery (Oppression)	Challenge	Feminist Pulse
History	Rise	Sassiness
Trod me in / Very dirt	Still	I walk like I've got oil wells
Broken	Hopes	Haughtiness
Bowed head/ lowered eyes	Dance	Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Shoulders falling down	Certainty of tides	Sexiness
Weakened	Dream and hope of the slave	I dance like I've got diamonds
Gold mines		At the meeting of my thighs
Shoot		I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Cut		Welling and swelling I bear in the tide
Kill/ hatefulness		
Past/ pain		
Black		
Nights of terror and fear		
Ancestors		
Slave		

Table 1: The Sementic Fields in Phenomenal Woman

The speaker is proud of who she is as a woman and as a black woman. She does not show fear in any of the lines. She defends her identity and confirms that the whites' attempts to oppress her will be defeated by her powerful reactions. The relationship between the three semantic fields, slavery, challenge, and pride is that the speaker believes in her ability to challenge the other. Her ability of challenge is rooted in her and her ancestors painful past, slavery. Belonging to the slave social group may seem shameful to people who lack self-confidence; conversely, the female speaker is proud of that. One would say that the speaker should sound less strong and more hesitant because she also belongs to the woman social group implying double oppression: as a black and as a woman. Unpredictably, she sounds double strong because she belongs to a double oppressed social group.

Angelou varies the style in SIR. The sentences range from simple to compound and complex. The simple sentences carry the direct thoughts of the speaker mainly in the questions she raises as in: "Does my sassiness upset you? / Why are you beset with gloom?". She asks direct questions to her addressee, the white social group. The questions are yes/no questions which indicate that she needs a direct answer from her oppressors. She is so confident and strong that she gives close-ended questions without leaving the chance to the whites to think of other choices she does not offer. The speaker sounds as if she were in a trial and is accusing the white people of oppression and racism. As a feminist, Angelou asks questions which are directly linked to her body. She breaks the gender codes that a woman should be ashamed of her body. The compound and complex sentences take the speech to a deeper level of thoughts. The first stanza is composed of compound sentences. The first stanza exposes the shameful deeds of the oppressors and the challenge of the speaker. It tells the reader about the action and reaction of

both black and white people. In the seventh stanza, the speaker exposes her beauty, power and pride as a black woman. .

The speaker compares herself to the moon and sun. The moon and sun are out of the reach of people, but the speaker considers them reachable because she is extraordinarily strong:

9. Just like moons and like suns,
10. With the certainty of tides,
11. Just like hopes springing high,
12. Still I'll rise.(Ibid)

She also deploys simile to show that the other's malicious actions will fire back on them in the fourth line. She compares herself to the dust in the line 01, 02, and 03, the speaker tells about the whites' oppressive practices and that they trod her in the very dirt. Unexpectedly, the dirt goes back to them and rises as dust. Moreover, she relates the reasons of her pride (haughtiness and sassiness) to wealth-items. In fact, black people at the time were very poor and they rarely had access to resources such as oil, gold or diamond. Nonetheless, the speaker compares her walk to someone who has oil wells, her laugh to someone who has gold mines and her dance to someone who has diamonds. The resources mentioned are pluralized to amplify the effect of her comparisons.

The speaker displays more pride and power in the eighth stanza:

25. Out of the huts of history's shame
26. I rise
27. Up from a past that's rooted in pain
28. I rise
29. I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
30. Welling and swelling I bear in the tide. (Ibid: 164)

Here the speaker depicts herself as a black ocean. The only apparent common feature between the speaker and the ocean is blackness. The ocean is vast and contains various species which hints to the vastness of the speaker's soul containing various capacities. The ocean also symbolizes danger, for as it wells and swells it may reach its high tides suddenly and causes immediate massive destruction. The speaker is being magnanimous with her enemy but she can suddenly turn things against him mercilessly. In the last stanza, she describes herself as : “the dream and the hope of the slave.” Certainly, the dream and hope are neither people nor human attributes. By stamping herself as dream and hope, the speaker reflects the embodiment of the black people's real-self as opposed to the expected self. The speaker is strong and confident unlike the way her oppressors want her and her people to be:

5. Did you want to see me broken?
6. Bowed head and lowered eyes?
7. Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
8. Weakened by my soulful cries?

The dream and hope also allude to the connection between the older and younger generations. The speaker states that she pursues her ancestors' quest for equality, freedom and justice. She strives for a better tomorrow for her people.

Still I Rise is poetically rich. Angelou uses various figures of speech and tropes which accentuate her themes. One of the recurrent devices in the poem is repetition. The verb *rise* is repeated ten times in the poem: three times in the future simple *I'll rise* and after the adverb *still* and seven times in the present simple tense. The use of future simple stresses the will of the speaker to rise. The use of the present simple tense reinforces the seriousness of the speaker concerning rising.

The lines in which the verb *rise* is conjugated in the present simple tense are shorter than other lines. The shortness has two effects. First, it suggests that the speaker is at the highest degree of determination and that is why she is economic in words, which is to say that she does not have time to add more words, she has time only for action. Second, when repeated successively in the last three lines, the intonation is rising and the tone gets sharper. The effects on her audience are raising enthusiasm in her people's hearts to believe in their power and inculcating in her enemies' minds that the black Americans are able to rise. Therefore, they must be afraid of their rise. The personal pronoun *I* is reiterated nineteen times whereas the pronoun *you* eleven times. The difference in number signifies that *I*, the oppressed, is more important than *you*, the oppressor. Stephen mentions: "the 'I' of Black poetry is not a singular or individualistic referent but a symbol for the ideas of Black collective." (1988: 35). Furthermore, the repetition of *I* underline the self-confidence of the speaker and the ability of speaking for herself as a woman and as a black.

As far as the prosodic level is concerned, the poet uses rhyme. The rhyme scheme is *abcb* in the first seven stanzas. The rhyming sounds are /z/, and /m/. The rhyme scheme in the eighth stanza is *abcbdd* and in the last one is *ababccbbb*. The rhyming sounds are /z/, /d/ and /r/. All the sounds of the rhyme are voiced. Voiced sounds are stronger than devoiced ones due to the vibration made when pronounced. The voiced sounds reinforce the theme of pride and strength. The reader notices that the sounds /z/ occurs more frequently than other sounds. /z/ is a resonating sound. A fact which makes the effect of the speaker's words last longer in the audience minds. It also bears a resemblance to the buzz of some annoying and dangerous insects

such as the mosquitoes, flies, and bees. The speaker intends to disturb her opponents' peace until she achieves her goal. If the opponents try to prevent her, they will be either annoyed or harmed.

III.2.2. Phenomenal Woman

In most of Maya Angelou's poems, she writes to resist oppression at its different levels. Consequently, the speakers whom Maya Angelou selects in her poems are mostly strong and revolutionary. The speaker in *Phenomenal Woman*¹⁸ is a female who exhibits her beauty traits. The speaker sounds self-confident and proud of her real identity. She defies standardized beauty:

The poem is a hymn to woman's beauty. The self-confident speaker reveals her attributes as a phenomenal woman. Unlike the fashion magazines' beauties, she exults in being different. (Trivedi 2016:15)

In a challenge of standardized beauty and the patriarchal structure, the speaker declares that pretty women wonder at the secret of her beauty although she does not fit into the known standards of beauty:

1 Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
2 I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
3 But when I start to tell them,
4 They think I'm telling lies. (Angelou: 1994)

The speaker recognizes her beauty secret but since it is different than the generally gained one, women think that she is not telling them the true secret. She states the elements which make her beautiful as following:

¹⁸ For the full poem see Appendix 02

6 It's in the reach of my arms,
7 The span of my hips,
8 The stride of my step,
9 The curl of my lips. (Angelou: 1994)

Similar to the speaker in SIR, the speaker in *Phenomenal Woman* refers directly to her body without constraints. She mentions her *arms, hips, lips* to create a visual image of her body. She expresses pride of her distinct physical appearance in a feminist pulse. In point of fact, the poem can be described as feminist because through choosing a female speaker, the poet 'decenters' the male view of the world and authority over discourse. Besides, the poem is written to achieve a balance between the idealized-self (*cute or built to suit a fashion model's size*) and the real-self (lines 06, 07, 08 and 09). A woman is expected to be of a small size, a white skin pigmentation, and a well-shaped body to be considered beautiful. Nevertheless, the speaker is of a large size, a black skin pigmentation, and a different body shape and women cannot see that her beauty comes from her difference. In view of the fact that the speaker's beauty secret does not conform to the white women's stereotypical beauty standards, they accuse her of lying. The stanza ends in the speaker intensifying her difference as a phenomenon through describing herself in the following lines

10 I'm a woman
11 Phenomenally.
12 Phenomenal woman,
13 That's me. (Ibid)

Men also wonder at the secret of the speaker's beauty and they regard her seductive: "*Men themselves have wondered/ What they see in me./ They swarm around me/ A hive of honey bees*"; the speaker answers their question in the lines

22 It's the fire in my eyes,
23 And the flash of my teeth,
24 The swing in my waist,
25 And the joy in my feet. (Ibid)

And:

38 It's in the arch of my back,
39 The sun of my smile,
40 The ride of my breasts,
41 The grace of my style. (Ibid)

She adds:

53 It's in the click of my heels,
54 The bend of my hair,
55 the palm of my hand,
56 The need for my care. (Ibid)

Each time the speaker explains what makes her beautiful, she repeats the last four lines of the first stanza: “*I am a woman/ Phenomenally./ I am a phenomenal woman*”. This repetition is called epiphora. The latter is a figure of speech that is highly emphatic, so the speaker intends to emphasize the phenomenon of the phenomenal woman.

In line 56 (The need for my care.), the speaker shows that being a woman is not only being fit to a model's size. The role of a woman is beyond the shallow image of the woman as a body. It is undeniable that men were created with a biological need of women in their lives but they were created with a need of their care, too. Angelou stresses the complementary role of men and women through the move from describing the speaker's body to speaker's ability of taking care of a man.

Phenomenal Woman constitutes of sixty lines which have different lengths. The uneven length of the lines creates an image of a real woman's body curves. The poem is written in free verse with no rhyme scheme. Resorting to free verse is to put an accent on the free nature of the black woman. Put differently, the poet breaks the regularities of poetry as a means of breaking

the dictated social norms. The poet, however, uses prosodic devices like alliteration as in (women/ wonder, *They/ think, Then/ they*), assonance as in (*fire/eyes, it's in the click*). Such devices give rhythm to the poem.

Rhetorical devices and figures of speech are wisely deployed in the poem. Metaphor is used, for example, to show how men are strongly allured by her beauty and they are imaged as a *hive of honey bees*. Men are compared to bees in order to suggest that she is their queen bee which they have to follow and obey. Metaphor is employed to describe the speaker's white teeth in "*the flash of my teeth*". Black people are known to have very white teeth. The whiteness of the speaker's teeth when juxtaposed to the blackness of her skin generates a flash-like effect. To amplify her effect on men, she uses hyperbole saying that men fall down on their knees when they see her (line 18). This device is used also to allude to her irresistibility in (*the fire of my eyes*). Visually, fire cannot be avoided especially in darkness; it shines from far away distance. The speaker is equally unavoidable. The most foregrounded type of imagery is visual through the descriptions of the speaker's beauty traits. Judging someone as beautiful or ugly is through the visual sense, thus, the poet focuses on this type to convey the theme of beauty. It also monitors that people's perception of beauty is trivial and is based solely on what they see on the surface instead of the: *inner mystery*:

They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them,
They say they still can't see. (Ibid)

The concept of beauty which is presented in *Phenomenal Woman* is not traditional to the white people. It can be called an alien conceptualization of beauty. Alienation, which is a

form of oppression, can occur at a cognitive level¹⁹. The poem reveals another type of alienation which is conceptual. Conceptual alienation means considering some concepts as illogical and unrealistic as it is the case of the speaker's beauty secret.

III.2.3. Woman Work

The poem *Woman Work*²⁰(1984) (henceforth WW) is about the restless busy life of a woman. Women are supposed to do numerous duties at home according to the general consensus: cleaning, cooking, looking after children, etc. within this vast range of duties, a woman may not have time for herself or even to rest. In fact, there is no legal or religious code which dictates that the household duties are woman-proper, yet it is gained through convention that they are a woman's responsibility in some societies.

The speaker in WW is not as strong as the speakers in SIR and phenomenal woman. She speaks about what she has to do during the day in the first stanza. She lists fourteen duties to do amongst which are: children tend, clothes to mend, company to feed, garden to weed, cotton to pick to mention but a few. The speaker is a working woman. She has to do her job outside and inside the home. She does not seem so happy with work outside and inside. The speaker sounds rather dragged to do the chores and her job. There is nothing special in her life because she does the same things routinely.

¹⁹ See Chapter one: Introduction

²⁰ For the full poem, see Appendix 02.

The dull nature of her life can be detected from the rhyme scheme in the first stanza: *aa* (tend/ mend), *bb* (mop/shop), *cc* (fry/dry), *dd* (feed/weed), *ee* (press/ dress), *ff* (cut/ hut), *gg* (sick/pick). Although there is a change in the sounds but repetition is present. Likewise, although the duties the speaker has to do are various but she does them repeatedly. Parallelism is used in all lines except the thirteenth line in the first stanza through the repetition of the structure: “The + noun+ to+ stem”. This device accentuates the sense of monotony and routine. All the stem verbs used are monosyllabic. Hereby, they give a flat rhythm to the poem to highlight the passage of time without doing something special like the rhythm created by the watch hands: tick-tock. None of the verbs is related to the speaker herself, they are all in the service of others.

The next three stanzas are dissimilar to the first one in terms of prosody and length. In actual fact, the first stanza is the only rhymed stanza in the poem and it is the longest one. The speaker looks for rest in nature. She pleases nature to provide her with rest. The nature elements used are sun, rain, storm, snowflakes, sky, mountains, ocean, leaf, stone and star. As it is noticed these elements are diverse. Some of them belong to the day: sun, some to the night: star, some to winter: rain and snowflakes, and so on. The diversity of the elements is significant. It reveals that the speaker has a strong urgent desire for rest through whatever means available. It is mainly shown in the last stanza:

Sun, rain, curving sky
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
Star shine, moon glow
You're all that I can call my own. (Angelou: 1984)

As earlier mentioned, the rhyme scheme is disturbed in the last three stanzas. A disturbed rhyme scheme transmits the speaker's desire in change. Breaking the rhyme scheme carries the desire to break the monotonous routine.

Some of the nature elements mentioned in the poem are personified. For instance:

Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again. (Ibid)

The act of cooling one's brow involves another human being. The dewdrops are given this human attribute. Also, in lines 23-25, the woman asks the snowflakes to cover her with kisses.

Kissing is an act that requires another human:

Fall gently, snowflakes
Cover me with white
Cold icy kisses and (Ibid)

The speaker looks for comfort in nature elements because neither her micro-world, the black social group, nor her macro-world, the white social group, provides her with rest. Termed differently, human beings could not satisfy her need of comfort. It is due to the lack of comfort in the human world that she considers nature her shelter. The personification of nature elements points out her needs which she wishes are satisfied by human beings.

III.2.4. When I Think about Myself

The title of the poem *When I Think about Myself*²¹ (1984) (henceforward WITM) hints that the poem is of a personal nature. The pronouns *I* and *Myself* suggest that the speaker is

²¹ For the full poem, see Appendix 02.

contemplating about a personal matter. The previous poems reveal the sense of racial identification and consciousness. The first stanza reveals the speaker's thoughts about herself:

1. When I think about myself,
2. I almost laugh myself to death,
3. My life has been one great big joke,
4. A dance that's walked,
5. A song that's spoke,
6. I laugh so hard I almost choke,
7. When I think about myself. (1984:29)

The speaker reflects on her life which she describes as *big joke*, *a dance that's walked* and *a song that's spoke*. Although the lexical items *joke*, *dance* and *song* which are used to describe the speaker's life are of a positive nature and they connote joy, the tone in the first stanza is sad. Laughing is associated with death in line 02. The words *laugh* and *death* belong to two oppositional connotations: joy and sadness. The speaker laughs to death because her she finds out that her life is a big joke. Joke is supposed to be funny, as well. Yet, the metaphor in which life is compared to the big joke is ironic. As the speaker thinks about her life, she does not feel satisfied and she ascertains that she has lost enormously. The metaphors in lines 04 and 05 unearth the monotony of the speaker's life. While a dance is supposed to be energetic, a walk is more routine. While a song is supposed to be rhythmic, speaking is an ordinary act. The association of dancing with walking and singing with walking means that her life is not as it should be and it is why she laughs until she chokes.

The second stanza uncovers more details about the speaker's unsatisfactory life:

8. Sixty years in these folks' world,
9. The child I works for calls me girl,
10. I say "Yes ma'am" for working's sake.

The speaker has worked for sixty years old for some *'folks'* but she does not enjoy enough dignity and respect. The child calls her *girl* and she calls the child *ma'am*. Social codes are inverted in the speaker's life. For a second time, the speaker shows that her life is not as it should be. An aged person is not supposed to work at all and is supposed to gain respect by younger people. Yet, the speaker is: "11. Too proud to bend, /12. Too poor to break,". She is in a dilemma whether to bend for the demeaning life or break from it. She finds herself *too poor* to look for a life with more dignity.

The speaker seems not to identify herself with the people she works for. She calls them *these folks* though she has been in their world for sixty years. The word *folks* is not friendly and is indicative of a frosty relationship. The speaker feels alienated from her oppressors' world. Indeed, living in their world is what makes her life as odd as it is. In the third stanza, the speaker refers to the folks with whom she identifies: the African-American people:

15. My folks can make me split my side,
16. I laughed so hard I nearly died,
17. The tales they tell sound just like lying, (Ibid)

Similar to her life, her folks make the speaker laugh so hard because they tell her unbelievable tales. As a black, she belongs to a slave race who: "[...] grow the fruit, but eat the rind." Slaves grow fruits with their own hard effort and labor but they are not allowed to taste them. They eat the rind instead. The state is as ironic as the speaker's. Their life is not as it should be. The speaker closes the poem with the following lines: "I laugh until I start to crying, When I think about my folks." (Ibid).

The poem WITM consists of three stanzas. The first stanza tells the reader about the speaker in her own micro-world, she thinks about herself and her own life. The second one, the speaker puts herself in a wider scope: herself in the world of the other, the white people. The last stanza, she thinks about her own people. In whichever way, her life is not happy. The irony in her life is demonstrated through linking the verb to laugh with negative words which connote sadness and pain: “I almost laugh myself to death, I laugh so hard I almost choke, I laugh until my stomach ache, I laugh until I start to crying” (1984:29 My emphasis). The speaker laughs hysterically because of the unordinary life she has. Her laughter is a defense mechanism as she looks back at her life and she finds that she has lived a meaningless life. She laughs to go over sorrow. She also laughs because she feels helpless.

The poet employs discourse to carry an experience of a helpless slave. The repetition of line *When I think about myself* is to accentuate that the speaker thinks repeatedly about her life in vain with no changes for the better. The repetition of the verb *laugh* carries a tone of despair because each time the speaker laughs, she ends up in a painful experience: “death, choke, stomach ache, crying”. At the phonological level, the majority of the sounds in the poem are voiceless. Voiceless sounds are not as strong as the voiced ones. The repetition of these sounds (/f/, /k/, /s/, etc) puts emphasis on the desperate and weak state of the speaker. One notices that the speaker deviates from grammar rules in some lines, such as: “that’s spoke, my stomach ache, start to crying”. The grammatical deviation helps the reader to recognize the speaker’s identity as a black slave.

Although the speaker focuses on her own life in the first two stanzas, she gives importance to her racial belonging in the last one. The speaker does not isolate herself from her

people. She cares for their state. Each time she thinks about her life she laughs – though not joyously- but when she thinks of her folks she cannot resist any longer and she cries. This fact is a sign of the great extent of concern towards her people.

III.2.5. Equality

The African-American's utmost quest is for equality to the white people. Equality is synonymous to freedom for them. Hence, the theme of equality is recurrent in almost all of Angelou's poems. *Equality*²² (1984) reinforces the gap between the black and the white Americans. The gap leads to lack of understanding of the black Americans' quest and search for equality. The poem constitutes of nine stanzas in which she monitors the other's calumny and intentional deeds to hinder bridging the gap between the oppressed and the oppressors. As a result, the African-Americans, as an oppressed subject, keep being treated on an unequal footing. The poet seems to pay special consideration to the language at different levels in the poem *Equality* to convey the message.

The poem is a straightforward call for the white Americans to reconsider their oppressive acts. The pronouns *I* and *you* are used repeatedly in the poem in the subjective, objective and possessive cases. The table below illustrates the number of their recurrence:

²² For the full poem, see Appendix 02

Pronoun	Number
<i>I</i>	10
<i>You</i>	10
<i>My</i>	5
<i>Your</i>	2
<i>Me</i>	3

Table 2: The Recurrence of the Pronouns *I* and *You* in *Equality*

The most interesting result displayed in the above table is the equal repetition of the *I* and *you*. *I* represents the black Americans and *you* the white Americans. The poet calls attention to the equality of the two social groups. Moreover, the number of the pronouns which refer the black Americans is greater than the number of pronouns referring to the white Americans. This statistical evidence evinces the speaker's self-assurance and strength.

The verbs whose subject is *I* are verbs which imply strength as it is the case in the first stanza line 03: *I stand before you boldly*, the fourth stanza line 02: *I fly*, and the fifth stanza line 03: *I keep on marching forward*. (1984: 232 My emphasis). Standing boldly, flying and keeping on marching are actions which require strength and endurance. The association of these verbs with the black American as an agent is an evidence for the strength of this social group and persistence to accomplish their dreams of equality. On the other hand, the verbs whose subject is *you* denote the white's deliberate ignorance of the blacks' efforts of integration as it displayed in Table 03 below where *you* is a subject of the main clause of compound sentences. The latter express concession using conjunctions like *though*, *but* and *where*. The concessive sentences contrast the blacks' diligent actions to the white's suppressive reactions .i.e., their converse attitudes towards integration.

Main clause	Subordinate clause
1. <i>You declare you see me dimly through a glass which will not shine</i>	<i>though I stand before you boldly</i>
2. <i>You do own to hear me faintly as a whisper out of range,</i>	<i>while my drums beat out the message and the rhythms never change</i>
3. <i>You announce my ways are wanton that I fly from man to man,</i>	<i>but if I'm just a shadow to you could you ever understand?</i>
4. <i>you keep on coming last</i>	<i>But I keep on marching forward</i>

Table 3: Contrasting the African-Americans' and the White Americans' Attitudes towards Integration

In the first contrast, the white Americans declare that they cannot see the speaker because the glass through which they see will not shine. A glass is supposed to be a see-through object which does not block vision. The oppressors claim the unclear vision and use the glass as a pretext although the speaker states that she stands in readiness and boldness. In the second contrast, the white Americans announce that they hear the speaker only as a whisper although the speaker's drums beat so loud. Life, which is metaphorically expressed as rhythm, does not change because the whites do not want to hear the speaker who represents her race. The speaker is aware of the other's perception of her as a black woman. She is seen as indecent but the oppressor ignores that fact that she is only a *shadow* for him. A shadow is secondary when compared to one's being.

The speaker sheds light on the mental perception of the whites. Oppression can be, as earlier mentioned, cognitive. Oppression reveals itself not as a behavioral act but as a discursive ideology. The verbs related to senses (*see/ seen, hear/ heard*) are linked to the whites. The black people as race are represented in line 15. *we know the shameful past*. The verb to know reflects a mental process. The difference between the nature of verbs to see and too hear and to know explains the difference between the two social groups. The white Americans view is superficial

and stops at the level of senses without going further to deeper mental processes such as understanding. The speaker blames her addressee for not being able to understand so far through a rhetorical question: *13. Could you ever understand?* The black people seek more important things than what the whites think. They seek, beyond seeing and hearing, a mutual understanding between two races who share the same world. Besides mutual understanding, the speaker seeks equality. She repeats the chorus *Equality, and I will be free/Equality, and I will be free.* (1984:123) thrice. The repetition emphasizes the urgent need for equality through which she will be set free.

Conclusion

Oppression of the African-Americans has turned them from subjects into objects. They are objects in a sense that they do not control their lives; they are not in a position to speak for themselves. Speaking for themselves would require a direct contact with the whites, but this was not acceptable during the slavery era. To stand against oppression, Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou use literary discourse to bespeak their quest for identity, their resistance of racism and sexism their pride and celebration of blackness. The chapter is rather an attempt to unveil how the two poets manipulate discourse to express their resistance of oppression.

The analyses of the discourse of the oppressed in Langston Hughes' and Maya Angelou's poems have revealed some similarities and differences between the forms of expression that the poets use to express the theme of oppression and/or resisting oppression. The interest of both Maya Angelou's and Langston Hughes's poems is resisting oppression in its different forms and at its different levels. The identity of the black people is celebrated in their poems.

Discourse in the selected poems is reflexive of the poets' underlying ideologies and worldviews. It has been revealed that the choices of discourse forms of expression are at the service of the poets' themes and desired effects. The discourse elements work at different levels, graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax, rhetoric and/ or semantics in parallel to achieve the desired effect on the discourse recipients.

It has been foregrounded that the speakers in the selected poems play a central role in conveying the poets' messages. The characteristics of each speaker are indicative of what the

poet desires to tell the readers. In the poems *I, to, Mother to son, Still I rise* and *phenomenal woman*, the speaker uses the first person pronoun *I*. The selection of the first person point of view signifies self-confidence, strength, and pride. Through the use of *I*, Angelou and Hughes bring about the sense of self-reliance. The African-Americans are able to talk for themselves and they do not need a spokesperson on their behalf. The speaker in *MTS* represents the contribution of the mothers and women in general to the cause of the African-Americans. The speakers in these poems are equally proud of their roots and real-identity. The speaker in *Woman Work* is not as strong and revolutionary as the speakers in the rest of the poems. The speaker sounds tired and unable to revolutionize against her situation.

At the phonological level, most of the poems are in free verse. Free verse is a pattern of writing poetry has less strict rules and regularities. Since their poetry is a poetry of freedom and resistance, Hughes and Angelou prefer to use a writing pattern which allows them to express their ideas freely. It is noticeable that Hughes rhymes his poems less than Angelou. The graphological structure in some poems like *MTS* and *Phenomenal Woman* vehicles their themes. Graphology has a visual effect on the reader.

Rhetorical devices, figures of speech and imagery have been demonstrated as intensely used in all the poems. The two poets successfully create visual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory effects through metaphors, similes, hyperbole and other devices. The rhetorical use of language is mainly to transmit the emotions, feelings and attitudes of the oppressed subject. Since emotions, feelings and attitudes are abstract concept, the poets endeavor to concretize them to the readers.

The analysis of lexis in the poems unearths the themes of the poems through classifying words into lexical fields. It also decodes the tone of each poem. The tone is very important in the analysis of poetry because it reveals the poets' attitudes towards their subject matters.

To sum up, Hughes and Angelou maneuver their discourse effectively to express resistance and rejection of oppression. They deliver a reverse image of the blacks' distorted stereotypical image by the whites. They celebrate their beauty as blacks. They do not lament their situations and demonstrate powerlessness or internalized oppression. On the contrary, they bring to light the inner power and beauty of the black people within the American constellation. They manage to breathe life into the frustrated souls of the African-Americans through encouraging them to hold tight to their real-self-identity and their belongings. Indeed, the two poets succeed in evoking the sympathy and empathy of readers as receivers of the discourse of the oppressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

*THE POSTCOLONIAL ALGERIAN READER'S
RECEPTION OF THE DISCOURSE OF THE OPPRESSED
IN HUGHES' AND ANGELOU'S POEMS*

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Introduction

As a reader of literary discourse, one endeavours to explore and understand the similarities with and differences from the other in that literary discourse is laden with the authors' and characters'/speakers' experiences. Readers allow themselves either a centripetal or a centrifugal reading with reference to their implication in the text and to their different backgrounds. As a result, this view created binary oppositions such as *the self* versus *the other*, *male* versus *female* and *oppressor* versus *oppressed*. Therefore, the study of literary discourse should attempt to generate a horizontal account for human relationships beyond any vertical social, cultural, racial, sexual and even ideological considerations.

In the increasingly globalized age, the teaching/learning of literature seems challenging because of the intense rhythm of the political, economic and social changes that marked the shift into the 21st century. These social metamorphoses and psychological disturbances created miscellaneous opinions and attitudes *vis-à-vis* Man's perception of himself within a distorted human being's/race's constellation. This view created binary oppositions which could be better represented through dialectical views between the *self* and the *other*. In reality, this opposition has become the matrix of the world order, which makes people having different cultural backgrounds, ideologies, skin pigmentations, gender, confessional ideologies, social standards, etc, react almost vertically but not necessarily similarly. Their perception would be certainly different and thus their construction of meaning would bear essentially different linguistic and/or cultural connotations. Therefore, the study literature would, undoubtedly, generate a

horizontal account for human relationships beyond any vertical social, cultural, racial, sexual and even ideological considerations. Thus, reading literary discourse requires particular critical approaches which would, eventually, enhance both the English native speaker's and the non-native speaker's knowledge and understanding of each other's mind.

The Algerian EFL student is considered a post-colonial individual who may share with African-American an experience of oppression and the state of postcoloniality. Yet, he still has his unique identity which distinguishes him from the African-Americans'. The objective of this chapter is to check the extent to which the Algerian EFL student's background as an Algerian reader effects his reception of the discourse of the oppressed. It is assumed that one's background can effect his reception of literary discourse. For the purpose of the study, a questionnaire has been administered to Master students in Ouargla and Batna Universities.

IV.1. The Reception of the Literary Discourse

Reading literary discourse is a dialectic process between its producer/writer and its receiver/reader. The writer and the reader do not necessarily share the same background. Therefore, it is noteworthy that as readers come '*equipped*' with their stock of experience¹ (Selden 1997:56) when interpreting any text. As a result, the process of interpreting the literary discourse can be described as *interactive* between one's stock of experience and the linguistic input in the text (Ibid). The readers should know about themselves, about their very nature as human beings; they should know that the modern writers deal with the inner being more than with the social being, and since their (the writers') literary production is not always an imitation of something real which is as well an imitation of a universal concept or idea that Plato called "the really real", but a *liberating force* as it is agreed upon by most Marxist and New Historicist literary theorists, they look for adequate and convincing answers inside themselves.

People's experience, in a world where individual's definition of himself is most often blurred, shows that the fact of being a lonely "outsider" as far as the others' cultures are concerned is no longer exclusive to a particular segment of a given social constellation, but a Global issue. In this perspective, one would say that any process of

¹ Prior experience with other texts.

interpretation does not depend only on intrinsic² elements of the text but also on extrinsic³ ones.

Reading a literary text, hereafter, is not static since readers are expected to depart from the text itself, and then relate the experiences carried in the discourse to their real experiences. The construction of its meaning(s) differs from one reader to another. They may, consequently, be in either a centripetal, a centrifugal position or in both positions, simultaneously referring to their background. They may raise individual and/or collective horizons of expectations, as well. Holub defines the horizon of expectations as: “an intersubjective system or structure of expectations, a system of references or a mind-set that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text” (1984:59). This will depend on their personal (one’s unique identity) and collective identity (gender, geographical distribution, religion, race, ideological confessions).

In fact, the intrinsic and extrinsic elements, reader's position towards the text, individual and collective horizons of expectations and the individual and/or collective identities are the factors which shape the attitude of the reader towards the experience carried in the text. For example, male readers may display *sympathy* with feminist characters while female readers are expected to display more *empathy* with the same characters. Despite that, one cannot neglect the fact that female readers may only sympathize with feminist characters.

² Intrinsic refers to the textual elements which are found in the text itself.

³ Extrinsic elements refer to the elements which are found outside the text . In this paper, the reader's background and schemata are the elements addressed mainly.

IV.2. The Intersection between The African-American Writer and The Algerian Reader

The Algerian reader's schemata record a colonial experience, even if not directly effected by the experience, he has witnessed its aftermath. *Ergo*, the Algerian reader's and the black American's profiles intersect at being both *undergoers* of oppression. Besides the experience of oppression, the two have, in common, the fighting spirit. Algerians got their independence after a 132-year- colonial experience. All along this considerable period, Algerians had not submitted to the French colonizer- at least the majority had not; neither had they lost hope and stopped fighting for their liberty.

Any reader of literary discourse can be in either a centripetal or a centrifugal position towards the situation and experience transmitted. One has to know why a difference between a reader's centrifugal view and his centripetal one is important to understand the world. Paul Ricoeur explains this very difference with reference to the relationship between the real reader and the narrator. when having a centrifugal view, the reader implies himself. Ricoeur says:

La théorie de la lecture nous en averti: la stratégie de persuasion fomentée par le narrateur vise à imposer au lecteur une vision du monde qui n'est jamais éthiquement neutre, mais qui plutôt induit implicitement ou explicitement une nouvelle évaluation du monde et du lecteur lui-même (Michaël Foëssel 2007 : 235)

Since the reader is an Algerian and the narrator provides a vision of an oppressed individual in an oppressed world, the former would process the discourse of the oppressed not only as a neutral real reader but as an implied reader; he refers to his

background as a subject who experienced oppression before. This reader can put himself, therefore, in the place of the other oppressed individuals and identifying himself to them. This narrative identity becomes a common identity. Thus, the positions (*centripetal* and/or a *centrifugal positions*) the Algerian reader can be in are equally accounted for in this context.

It is, however, fundamental to know what if there is a difference between the positions. Having a *centrifugal* position provides the Algerian reader with a subjective psychological stance rekindling and provoking by that his *sympathy* which might be dormant with the speaker because he is already aware of the effects of oppression, which he had been immediately experienced or had been prone to its repercussions. However, if in a centrifugal position, he is likely to develop *empathy*. Empathy is different from sympathy in a sense that one can visualize himself in the position of the other and is able to feel what the other goes through. Put differently, the reader's schemata allow him to 'put himself in the other's shoes', as it were. In both cases, " Le sujet apparaît alors constitué à la fois comme lecteur et comme scripteur de sa propre " (Marcel Proust, 1954 : 1033)

IV.3. The Sample

To examine the Algerian readers' reception of the discourse of the oppressed in literary texts, a questionnaire was administered to a mixed⁴ group of twenty (20) Anglo-Saxon literature Master I students at Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla (henceforth

⁴ By a mixed group, it is meant a group which encompasses both male and female students.

KMUO) and another mixed group of twenty (20) Literature Master students at Mustapha Benboulaïd University- Batna 2 (henceforth MBU).

The sample taken from KMUO encompasses sixteen (16) female students and four (04) male students while the sample MBU encompasses twelve (12) female students and (08) male students. The selected students were required to read *I, Too* (2012) and *When I think of Myself* (1994), two African-American poems written, respectively, by Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. The selected texts reveal the oppression the African-Americans had undergone during the civil war and after it. The African-Americans used to be considered as slaves and inferior to their white masters. The poems are expected to stimulate the reader's interaction with both content and form. Upon reading, the students are required to answer questions on the basis of their reaction towards the experiences of the speakers in the two poems.

The selected sample is a non-random. The group is ready-made; this type of sampling is selected to avoid any extraneous variable which may effect the results of the study. Also, the number of master students is limited; consequently, the researcher had to take the sample as it is without any further selection or regrouping. Furthermore, the selection of these two universities was in the purpose of varying the sample as far as the geographical distribution is concerned. The geographical space to which one belongs contributes to shaping one's background and thus his reception of discourse. It is believed that one's culture is related to the space where he lives and identifies with. There are common psychological and social traits among people as groups. Sometimes, even the common physical traits shared by people who belong to the same place effect one's sense

of being and background. People of the same color usually share the same culture. The reception of these people by *the other* contributes to building their attitudes and adds other dimensions to their experience, for instance, the feeling of acceptance or rejection by the other.

The sample comprises first year master students because it is assumed that these students have already encountered some African-American literary texts in the previous years. Hereafter, their responses are highly beneficial to confirm or deny the stated hypothesis that students would react to the discourse of the oppressed with reference to their background as postcolonial Muslim Algerian individuals.

IV.4. Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of fourteen (14) questions. Some questions are close-ended requiring from students to answer either with *yes* or *no* or to select the appropriate answer among a number of options. Other questions are open-ended requiring them to provide their own answers and sometimes to justify them. The questionnaire is divided into three sections⁵ as follows:

- 1- *Before you read*
- 2- *As you read*
- 3- *After you read*

⁵ The questionnaire follows the PDP (pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading) framework.

Section One is to check the extent to which the students are familiar with African-American literary texts during their study course. It is composed of three questions. Question (1) verifies the number of Africa-American corpora the students have read. Question (2) investigates the level of difficulty the students have met when reading these texts. Question (3) examines the similarity between the experiences in the African-American literature and the students' real life experiences.

Section Two is designed to examine the students' comprehension of and reaction to the text. It is composed of seven questions. Question (1) examines the students' comprehension of the speakers' experiences in the poems. Question (2) treats the reception of the blacks by the white people in the poems. Question (3) asks the students whether they find white Americans racist. Questions (4) and (5) tackle the students' implication in the poems. The sixth question investigates the extent of sympathy the students develop towards the speakers in the poems. The last question is about whether the speakers are equally oppressed.

The last section is intended to examine the factors which effect the students' different reactions towards the text. It consists of five questions. The first question is about whether the students think that one's background shapes their reception of literary discourse. The second question revolves around the impact of the readers' background on the reception of discourse. The third question deals with the position of the readers towards the poems. Question (4) is tightly related to question (3) because it deals with the impact of students' position on their attitude from the text. The last question tests whether

the sexual nature (gender) of the speaker effects the students' extent of sympathy with the speakers.

IV.5. Analysis of the Results

The results of the questionnaires of each sample will be analyzed separately then compared, contrasted and discussed. Analyzing the results separately would enable the reader to track the results of each university easily. The comparisons which are made later would be understood without difficulty .i.e., immediate comparisons may not help to better pinpoint the similarities and differences in answering the questionnaire.

5.1. The Results of Kasdi Merbah, Ouargla

Section One: Before You Read

1- Since your admission at university, how many African-American texts have you read?

- a) None b) 1-3 c) 4-6 d) More than ten

(If you have answered with a (None) skip to section Two)

	A	b	C	d
<i>Male</i>	00	04	00	00
<i>Female</i>	06	10	00	00
<i>Total</i>	06	14	00	00

Table 01: Students Familiarity with African-American Texts

It can be noticed that the majority of students are familiar with African-American texts. Yet, they have read less than four corpora. The results in Table 01 suggest that the students may be familiar even with the themes and topics discussed in African-American literature.

2. How did you find these texts?⁶

- a) Easy to understand b) Medium c) Difficult to understand

	a	b	c
<i>Male</i>	01	00	03
<i>Female</i>	05	00	05
<i>Total</i>	06	00	08

Table 1: Difficulty of the African-American literature

⁶The previous question is about the number of African-American literary corpora the student has read so far. Since some of the students answered that they have not read any African-American literary text, they skipped directly to Sections Two and Three as required from them. It is for this reason that the total number of the answers is less than the number of the sample

Most of the students find African-American Texts difficult to understand even though the majority is familiar with the African-American texts as shown in the previous questions.

3. To what extent is the following statement true: “The experiences reflected in African-American literature are close to my own life experience”?

a) True

b) Untrue

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	02	02
<i>Female</i>	04	06
<i>Total</i>	06	08

Table 2: The Students' Shared Experience with African-American Individual

Most of the students opted for “*b untrue*” while five students have opted for “*a true*”. The students’ inverse answers are almost equal. The students’ answers reveal that their experiences’ are not similar.

Section Two: As You Read

1. What is/are the theme(s) that the speakers in poems A⁷ and B⁸ try to convey?

95 % were able to detect the themes of the two poems. The students provided answers like: “*racism, oppression, segregation, discrimination, being stigmatized by white people, experience of slavery, how Americans deal with black people*”. The remaining 5 % did not provide clear answer, the respondent answered as such: “*to learn from life experience.*” Even though the majority stated that they find the African-American literary texts difficult to understand, they were able to answer adequately.

2. How are the blacks received by the American society in the poems? Use examples from the texts?

All the students answered that black people were not well treated by the whites using different expressions: *underestimated, they have been received like slaves, they are being oppressed and neglected*. 18 students (90 %) quoted the line: “They send me to eat in the kitchen” as a textual support to their answers.

3. Do you find this reception racist?

a) Yes

b) No

⁷ Poem A stands for Langston Hughes’ *I, Too*.

⁸ Poem B stands for Maya Angelou’s *When I Think about Myself*.

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	04	00
<i>Female</i>	15	00
<i>Total</i>	19	00

Table 3: Students' Opinion about The reception of the Black People in America

All the students find the reception as racist. There is one female who did not provide any answer. The students believe that the black Americans were prejudiced for their color.

4. As you read poem A, do you find the “I” used in the poem includes you?

a) Yes

b) No

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	01	03
<i>Female</i>	08	08
<i>Total</i>	09	11

Table 4: Students' Implication in *I, Too*

It is observed that there is only one male student who provided a positive answer while half of females provided a positive answer. Despite the similarity in gender the male students do not feel concerned with the *I* in the poem *I, Too*.

5. As you read poem B, do you find the “I” used in the poem includes you?

- a) Yes b) No

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	00	04
<i>Female</i>	06	10
<i>Total</i>	06	14

Table 5: Students' Implication in *When I Think about Myself*

Most of female students provided a negative answer to the question. All male students provided a negative answer. The majority did not, as well, feel concerned with the *I* in *When I Think about Myself*.

6. As an Algerian reader, to what extent do you sympathize with the speakers in the poems?

The students expressed their sympathy with the speaker from secular and religious perspectives. They explained that all human beings should be equal mentioning that the difference in color does not allow the white people to oppress the black ones. They added that God created people with different and colors and that as Muslims they are ordered to accept each other and show respect to each other.

7. Do you find that the speaker in poem A and the speaker in poem B undergo the same level of oppression? Justify

- a) Equally oppressed b) A more than B c) B more than A

	a	b	c
<i>Male</i>	01	00	03
<i>Female</i>	04	08	04
<i>Total</i>	05	08	07

Table 6: The extent of sympathy with the speakers

Only 25 % of the sample found that the speakers are equally oppressed; 40% of them found that the speaker in *I, Too* is oppressed more; and 35 % of them found the opposite. The results denote that the majority of students found that the male speaker in *I, Too* is more oppressed than the speaker in *When I Think about Myself*. Students who opted for (a) justified their answer that both men and women cannot endure oppression and racism.

Section Three: After You Read

I. Do you think that the reader’s background and experience contribute in shaping his reception of literary discourse?

a) Yes

b) sometimes

c) No

	a	b	c
Male	04	00	00
Female	15	00	01
Total	19	00	00

Table 7: The Contribution of the Readers' Background to The Reception of Literary Discourse

The table demonstrates that 95 % of the students confirmed that their background effected their reception.

2. How did yours effect your reception of the discourse of poems A and B?

The answers of students to this question differed. It is crucial to mention that six (06) students skipped this question; one male and three females. The remaining fourteen answers revolved three main aspects: religion, race, and literary background. Some of the explanations they offered are: *“I am a black Algerian and racism is universal, some previous reading help me understand better, I relate between my experience and their experience and put myself in their shoes, As a Muslim, I don’t accept the white behavior, As I am black, it really affects me”*

3. As you read the poems, did you see things from the speakers’ perspective?

- a) Yes, in both poems b) in poem A only c) in poem B only d)

No, not at all

	a	b	c	d
<i>Male</i>	03	01	00	00
<i>Female</i>	11	04	01	00
<i>Total</i>	14	05	01	00

Table 8: Readers' Position towards the poems

It is shown in this table that the majority of the students hold a centripetal position .i.e. they put themselves in the speakers' shoes. There are more students who adopted the speaker's perspective in poem A than poem B in spite of the fact that the majority are female students and the speaker in poem B is a female, too.

4. If you see things from the speakers' perspective, explain how did this effect your feelings and attitude?

Basing on the students' responses, the centripetal position allowed them to feel and understand what the speakers go through in the poems despite the differences between them. They students explained that when they imagined themselves as being the speaker himself/herself, they were able to feel more the gravity of their situation.

5. Does the gender of the speaker effect the extent to which you sympathize with the speaker?

- a) Yes b) Yes, to a great c) No d) not to a great extent

	a	b	c	d
<i>Male</i>	01	03	00	00
<i>Female</i>	05	10	00	01
<i>Total</i>	16	13	00	01

Table 9: The Effect of the Speaker's Gender on The Students' Attitude

It is displayed in the table above that 19 students provided a positive answer to confirm that the gender of the speaker effected their attitude towards the text.

IV.5.2. The Results of Mustapha Benboulaïd University- Batna 2

Section One: Before You Read

- 1. Since your admission at university, how many African-American texts have you read?**

	a	b	c	d
<i>Male</i>	01	07	00	00
<i>Female</i>	04	05	03	00
<i>Total</i>	05	12	03	00

Table 10: Students' Familiarity with African-American Literature

It can be noticed that the majority of students are familiar with African-American texts whereas five (05) students have never read African-American texts. The majority of students have not read more than three works.

2. How did you find these texts?

	a	b	c
<i>Male</i>	06	01	01
<i>Female</i>	05	00	03
<i>Total</i>	11	01	04

Table 11: Difficulty of the African-American Literature

It can be noted that the majority of students find the African American texts easy to understand. It is possible that the students find these texts easy to understand because they are already familiar with them.

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	04	04
<i>Female</i>	02	06
<i>Total</i>	06	10

Table 12: The Students' Familiarity with African-American Literature

The majority of the students (10) did not find that the statement is true. The male students' answers are equally divided between option (a) and option (b).

Section Two: As You Read

1. What is/are the theme(s) that the speakers in poems A and B try to convey?

100 % were able to detect the themes of the two poems. The students provided answers like: *racism, oppression, segregation, discrimination, being stigmatized by white people, the sufferance of black Americans in the face of the white, the perception of white people of black people, inferiority of the blacks.*

2. How are the blacks received by the American society in the poems? Use examples from the texts

All the students answered that black people were not well treated by the whites using different expressions: *as inferior, as less important, they are received as servants, they belittle them.* Half of the students quoted the line: *"They send me to eat in the kitchen"* as a textual support to their answers. The other half quoted different lines from the two poems. It is noteworthy that the majority of KMUO students quoted the same line as a textual support.

3. Do you find this reception racist?

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	08	00
<i>Female</i>	12	00
<i>Total</i>	20	00

Table 13: Students' Opinion about The reception of the Black People in America

All the students find the reception racist. The same results were found in Table 04.

4. As you read poem B, do you find the “I” used in the poem includes you?

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	05	03
<i>Female</i>	03	09
<i>Total</i>	08	12

Table 14: Students' Implication in *I, Too*

The table shows that more than half of the male students felt implicated in the text. The majority of female students (09) provided a negative answer. Most of male students regarded themselves as concerned with the *I* in the poem *I, Too* unlike the KMUO male students.

5. As you read poem B, do you find the “I” used in the poem includes you?

	a	b
<i>Male</i>	00	08
<i>Female</i>	06	06
<i>Total</i>	06	14

Table 15: Students' Implication in When I Think about Myself

It is shown that half of the female students (50 %) provided a positive answer to the question while the other half provided a negative answer. All male students provided a negative answer. Male students react to the texts basing on their gender.

6. As an Algerian reader, to what extent do you sympathize with the speakers in the poems?

Sixteen students confirmed that they sympathized with the speakers to a great extent because they are equal human beings and should be treated better. Four students stated that they did not sympathize with any speaker. These students have provided negative answers to the two previous questions.

7. Do you find that the speaker in poem A and the speaker in poem B undergo the same level of oppression? Justify

	a	b	c
<i>Male</i>	07	01	00
<i>Female</i>	03	06	03
<i>Total</i>	10	07	03

Table 16: The Extent of Sympathy with the Speakers

The results exhibit that the majority of males found the speakers equally oppressed justifying their answer that all human beings should not be oppressed regardless their gender. On the other hand, most of the female students found the speaker in *I, Too* more oppressed. They explained that the speaker in *I, Too* is treated worse than the speaker in *When I Think about Myself* and that he has a more difficult challenge.

Section Three: After you read

1. Do you think that the reader's background and experience contribute in shaping his reception of literary discourse?

	A	b	c
<i>Male</i>	04	03	01
<i>Female</i>	09	03	00
<i>Total</i>	13	06	01

Table 17: The Contribution of the Readers' Background to The Reception of Literary Discourse

According to the results in Table 18, it can be said that the readers' background contributes to shape their reception of literary discourse.

2. How did yours effect your reception of the discourse of poems A and B?

The students clarified that as Algerians their reception was effected by their background. Some referred to being black themselves and thus they met some discriminatory situations: *As I am black and female, I find them very touchy. I am black and I meet the same sometimes.* Others explained that Algeria has gone through two periods in which oppression spread: *colonization and the black decade: There's a different kind of oppression in my country. It was colony. Some Algerians faced the same treatment during colonization and the nineties.*

3. As you read the poems, did you see things from the speakers' perspective?

	a	b	c	d
Male	07	00	00	01
Female	10	00	01	01
Total	17	00	01	02

Table 18: Readers' Position towards the poems

It is shown in this table that the majority of the students hold a centripetal position .i.e. they put themselves in the speakers' shoes in the two poems. Although several male

students confirmed previously that they felt implicated by the *I* in Hughes' *I, Too*, no single male student adopted the speaker's perspective when reading the latter poem.

4. If you see things from the speakers' perspective, explain how did this effect your feelings and attitude?

Basing on the students' responses, the centripetal position allowed them to feel and understand what the speakers go through in the poems despite the difference between them.

5. Does the gender of the speaker effect the extent to which you sympathize with the speaker?

	a	b	c	d
<i>Male</i>	02	00	00	06
<i>Female</i>	04	00	00	08
<i>Total</i>	06	00	00	14

Table 19: the effect of the speaker's gender on the students' attitude

Fourteen students claimed that the speaker's gender does not effect the extent to which they sympathize with the speaker.

6. The Interpretation of the results

On the basis of the results already presented, MBU and KMUO students' answers are similar in some questions and different in others. The differences are due to some factors. The latter are the geographical distribution of students and the nature of the areas they belong to. Ouargla is a city in the south of Algeria while Batna can be considered as a northern one.

Both table (01) and (10) reveal that the students of both universities are familiar with African-American literary text. It could be claimed that the poems selected to be read are not the first African-American corpora the students would read. The objective of this question was to confirm that the students selected have a background about the African-American literature. MBU students found the African-American literary texts easy while KMUO students found them difficult to understand.

As far as question (03) in the first section is concerned, most the students of both universities stated that they do not have a shared experience with the African-American individual conveyed through this literature. The students' answers signify that the students' life experiences and their views to the other are different. In fact, Table (03) shows that KMUO students have almost equal reverse answers. This can be accounted for that there are colored people in the region they belong to. It may be due to this fact that there are more students who claim that there is a shared experience with the African-Americans than MBU.

All the students were able to recognize the themes of the two poems. It may be explained that the majority is familiar with the African-American literature. All the students agreed that the African-Americans are not well-received by the American society. As a textual support, most of the students quoted the line: “ *They send me to eat in the kitchen*” from Hughes’ *I, Too*. One can give the reason that students see that the act of not allowing the speaker to eat with the company more stigmatizing than what the speaker in Poem B meets. It also explains why there are more students who sympathize with the speaker in Poem A. The speaker in poem A is a man. According to the Algerian social ‘code’, a man is not supposed to be in the kitchen let alone to eat in the kitchen. I see it worthy to quote one of the students justification for sympathizing with this speaker: *The men of my family don’t even enter or come near the kitchen. So how come they eat there. For Algerian culture, it is forbidden to go there and when people see a man in the kitchen they don’t accept it.*

Table (05) shows that there is a larger number of female students who felt implicated in *I, Too* than male ones as far as KMUO sample is concerned. The objective of this question was to investigate whether the students react to the experience carried in the poem basing on their gender differences. The speaker in *I, Too* (2012) is a male, but, surprisingly, 3 out of 4 male students selected a negative answer though it would have made more sense and been closer to expectations⁹ if the male students would have provided a positive answer “*Yes*”. Female students, on their part, provided divergent

⁹ My expectations were that the male readers would feel concerned with the situation of the male speaker in the poem.

answers with an equal number selecting each option. The expectations that the number of male students answering with “yes” would be greater than the females’ were defied. The students’ answers to this question are more *individual-identity-based answers*: they make appeal to their personal stock of experience instead of their collective one. The male students allow themselves a centrifugal reading, i.e., they read the text as outsiders.

Table (15) displays different results. More than 50 % of the male students felt implicated in the text. Yet 75% of female students did not. This result is reasonable since the speaker in *I, Too* is a male speaker. Unlike the KMOU male students, MBU male students allowed themselves a centripetal reading .i.e., they read the text as insiders. They depend more on their *collective identity* as males than on their individual stock of experience and so do the female students of the MBU sample. The results in this table are closer to the expectations.

The answers to the question “*As you read poem B, do you find the “I” used in the poem includes you?*” are expected to confirm the results obtained in the previous one. 0 % of the male students of both universities answered with “Yes”. The KMOU male students could not again put themselves in speaker’s shoes. They are still in the centrifugal position. MBU students shifted from a centripetal to a centrifugal reading. The results in table (15) confirm that MBU students hold a centripetal position. All the male students did not feel implicated by the *I* in *When I Think about Myself*. 50 % of female students felt concerned with the *I* in the poem. Interestingly, more than half of the KMOU female students did not feel included by the “*I*” in the second poem even though the speaker is a female despite the fact that a greater number of them put themselves in a centrifugal

position when reading poem A. One may say that the real readers, with reference to this question, do not feel concerned with the question of racism. It can be argued that the majority of this sample holds a centripetal position towards the text. As a matter of fact, the interpretation of the results of the questions 04 and 05 shall be confirmed or denied through the interpretations of the results of Section Three.

One may also state that the experience of the speaker in *I, Too* is harder and the tone is overtly raising challenge as in:

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen"

Conversely, the tone in *When I think of Myself* is less challenging. The speaker sounds more helpless before her plight accepting the stigmatizing treatment of her young master for the sake of making a living as in:

Sixty years in these folks' world,
The child I works for calls me girl,
I say "Yes ma'am" for working's sake.

Obviously, one feels solidarity with a challenging person who sees the future hopefully as the speaker in *I, Too* does. The fact that there are people who sympathized with the male speaker than the female one can be also attributed to man's position in the Algerian society.

Almost all the students confirmed that they sympathize with the speakers in both poems with a subtle difference, and when they were asked to justify, they provided different reasons. With reference to their religious background as Muslim, some students stated that one should not discriminate people on the basis of their skin pigmentation. From the Muslim confessional ideological convictional point of view, people are considered equal regardless their race, gender, age, or position. For God, there is no one who is better than the other except by piety and righteousness. Abu Nadrah reported:

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said during the middle of the day at the end of the pilgrimage, "O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favor of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness." (Source Musnad Ahmed 22978)¹⁰

Islam also invites people not to give more importance for the physical appearance, to which one's color belongs, than peoples' souls as Prophet Mohamed PBUH said in his Hadith:

Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather He looks at your hearts and actions'." (Muslim :2564)

¹⁰ <https://abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2011/12/30/farewell-sermon-your-lord-is-one-your-father-is-one-your-lives-are-sacred/> [Last accessed 04-01-2019]

Some students looked at the speakers' experiences from a human viewpoint with no single reference to their ideological confession. They said that all people should be treated equally regardless their gender. They frequently repeated expressions like: "*man and woman are human beings, white and black are not different, no one can endure oppression, we are human beings*" It could be seen as a secular reading of the poems.

Despite the fact that the answers in the previous questions demonstrate how the factor of the speaker's gender is disregarded by the KMUO students, only 25 % of the sample found that the speakers are equally oppressed; 40% of them found that the speaker in *I, Too* is oppressed more; and 35 % of them found the opposite. It insinuates that the factor of gender is discretely present in the students' analysis of and reaction to the texts because there is no difference between the speakers in the two poems except for their gender. Both speakers are black, poor, slaves and live in America, and both are prone to oppression for their skin pigmentation.

Most of MBU female students opined that the speaker in *I, Too* is more oppressed. In other words, they joined the KMUO students' vision. Men are given more importance in the Algerian societies; as a result, it is unacceptable to see him oppressed as such. The female students' attitude may be due to their high respect to men and his role in society. The majority of their male counterparts opined that the speakers' are equally oppressed. As afore-mentioned, they allow themselves a centrifugal reading; therefore, they disregard the factor of gender.

One may also notice that the number of the female students is greater than the number of male ones; nonetheless, the larger portion sympathized with the male speaker in *I, Too*. One can refer to the readers' background; they belong to more traditional regions, Ouargla and Batna when compared to other cities open to the sea as Annaba, Bejaia, or Algiers. Among the particularities of these regions is that derogatory treatments to a man are not accepted by the society whether males or females. In addition, the difference in status between men and women is a social consensus. Men are expected to have a life full of dignity .i.e., the nature of their lives is totally opposite to that of the speaker in *I, Too*. The latter's ' *manhood*' is affronted, yet, he raises the challenge confidently instead of surrendering to the denigrating situation. Subsequently, the readers join the speaker in his challenge since they would rather prompt him to reclaim his affronted '*manhood*'.

Very few students did not think their background effected their reception of the literary discourse. Conversely, the large majority though their background did effect their reception. Rosenblatt contends that: "The STUDENT WILL BRING to his reading the moral and religious code and social philosophy assimilated from his family and community background"(1995:111). A reader is tied to who he is. When he approaches the text, he " brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations) (Ibid: 35). Thus, the students reacted to the texts on the basis of their background as they illustrated how their background effected their reception, some of

them said: *My father was a victim of oppression in the black ten years¹¹, France caused oppression in Algeria and people suffered from stigmatization, I live in Batna the wilaya where the revolution started so I fight against oppression because we Algerians do not accept tyranny, we as muslims sympathize with people from all over the world*” These illustrations are interesting because they prove that the readers in the sample depend more on their broader social group identity as Algerians and Muslims rather than males and females to react to the literary discourse. They also confirm that the majority of students take a centrifugal position and look at the texts from the lenses of their real identity and not from the lenses of the speakers who are not Algerians and greatly expected not to be Muslims.

¹¹ Referring to the Black Decade in Algeria during the 1990’s.

Conclusion

Answering the question, *who am I?* is an ongoing process (Yip et al, 2006). The self-image one makes about oneself is rooted in the life events one goes through. Who we are in this world is sometimes imposed by societal standards; who we think we are in this world rests greatly on our perceived circumstances; who we become is predicated by our lived experiences. In this sense, readers' attitudes towards the two poems, *I, too* and *When I think of Myself* are rooted in their background as confirmed by the majority of the students in the last section of the questionnaire. In this context Billig contends that:

Whether the topic is political, moral, religious, commercial, or whatever, an attitude refers to a stance on a matter of public debate and disagreement. In other words, an attitude represents an evaluation of a controversial issue (1996:207)

Accordingly, the students reacted to the text basing more on *who they are* disregarding their and the speakers' gender. One is to conclude that the gender of the speakers does not effect the students' reception of the literary discourse in the poems greatly. The students opted for a horizontal reading of the poems with reference mainly to the speakers' experience as human beings regardless their sex, race, and religion. Although the majority of students confirmed that the gender effected their interpretation and interaction with the text, the impact of this factor (gender) is not remarkable enough. In their justification of their answers in the seventh question in Section Two, expressions like "*I am female I sympathize with female*" "*yeah, because we are the same in gender*" and "*because the speaker is a man, he feels more oppressed*" to mention but a few,

appeared less frequently than answers like “*it doesn't matter the gender, they are both humans*”, and “*because being neglect not only for women but also for men*”

As above-mentioned even though female students constitute that larger portion of the sample, there are more readers who sympathized with the male speaker. This can be due to the fact that the experience of oppression in *When I think of Myself* may seem to be told to the reader from an economic perspective. The speaker depicts how the poor state of the speaker urges her to accept humiliation to make a living. Therefore, if one takes into consideration that the group under study is a group of students who have not graduated yet, one may understand why the majority sympathized with the male speaker more than the female one. To explain more, the students are not yet aware enough of the concept of making a living and of being responsible for feeding oneself and his/her family. The results of this question are not expected, but knowing that in the Algerian context, the students are not expected to look for an income unless they graduate,¹² in the meantime their parents are responsible for their study fees enables one to justify the students unexpected reaction.

To conclude, a reader cannot rid himself of his profile when dealing with literary discourse. Therefore, one should know that the processes of reading and reacting to the literary discourse are dependent on the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the text equally. The amalgamation of these elements enables the reader to develop a horizontal

¹² The majority of students are expected first to have their diploma than look for a job. The concept of part-time job is not too common among university students. This is not, surely, to suggest that all university students do not have an income apart from their parents’.

attitude which denigrates differences to the experience of *the other vis-à-vis* his own experience i.e., one is enabled to better explore and understand the *other*.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The unequal distribution of power in the American society created a vertical world where people are categorized to majorities and minorities. With reference to the ideology of difference which the majority inclines to, people of color are considered as inferior. Set in a position where he is not able to answer the question “*Who am I?*”, the African-American individual questions his status. Unable to fathom his relegation to a secondary position, he tries to create a balance between the real and the idealized through integration with the whites. Unfortunately, the attempts of integration are shattered to pieces before stubborn prejudicial stereotypes. Therefore, African-American writers found it but indispensable to create a discourse which bespeaks their concerns.

The African-American literary discourse is a discourse of resistance to oppression. It can be referred to as the counter-discourse of the white-centered discourse. Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou, among many other black writers, raised the challenge of reconstructing the African-American voice through their poems. Their poems are a verbalization of the rebellious struggle against the unjust austere life conditions. They join the cry of the postcolonial individual to achieve a horizontal order of the world where differences are put aside.

The poems of Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou, as representatives of the discourse of the oppressed, have provided insights into the potentialities of literary discourse as a means to resist oppression. Their analysis has proved that oppression and discourse are social practices which are associated to each other. Oppression is a social behavior which is enacted through the *discourse of power*. The *discourse of the oppressed*, as a counter discourse of power, is a social behavior which mediates the

resistance of oppression. Therefore, oppression and its resistance are the message and discourse is the medium whereby the message is conveyed.

Critical discourse analysis approach has permitted the analysis of power relations and their relationship with discourse. Furthermore, postcolonial theory has availed another perspective to power relations. That is, postcolonial theory has allowed the exploration of the power of discourse. Feminism and womanism have given useful insights at the world of women and black women. CDA, postcolonial theory and feminism/womanism are critical lenses. They allow the deconstruction of power hierarchies from different perspectives. CDA analyzes the control of the power over discourse, postcolonial theory analyzes the power of the discourse of the oppressed, feminism/womanism analyzes the control of men over discourse and the power of the discourse of women. The mono-dimensional construction of meaning is reconsidered thanks to these approaches.

Accordingly, possible efforts were made to bridge the gaps between the aforementioned approaches and theories in order to enhance the arguments of the researcher's reading and the arguments of opting for these specific lenses to look at the discourse of the oppressed. The conclusions reached in the thesis allow the research to rethink about the possibilities of critical approaches and theories to provide a more comprehensive account for the intricate relations between discourse production/reception and ideologies. The limitation of coexisting with the *other* can be constructed or deconstructed through discourse. Within a miscellaneous assemblage, the minute details of the black identity are

swept away because of idealizations. By taking a very different path, Hughes and Angelou rewrite the black identity.

The theoretical framework of the study has allowed answering the raised questions. As far as the first question is concerned, the impact of the experience of oppression on one's identity has been proven to be strong. Oppression enacted about the subjugated individuals and social groups creates a state of limbo. The oppressed subjects feel frustrated when they cannot 'exercise' their being freely; they cannot decide who and what they *really* are. Their freedom of being and of knowing their real identities is restricted by the oppressive and prejudicial idealizations.

The impact of oppression on one's identity is mediated through discourse. The creation of the discourse of the oppressed is resultant from the oppressed people's need for communicating their counter-oppression-ideologies. They structure their discourse, whether consciously or unconsciously, to function as a medium of resistance.

African-Americans, as oppressed subjects, make use of discourse to bespeak their concerns, search for self-identity, and rejection of oppression. Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou take advantage of the devices of literary discourse to rewrite the black identity authentically, approach the inner being of the African-American as an oppressed, and to resist the oppression enacted by the white American.

Throughout my thesis, I have attempted to highlight the underlying motifs of the discourse of the oppressed in African-American literature with some emphasis on Hughes' and Angelou's poems. My objective has not, however, been to list the recurrent

themes or to adopt a thematic study. I have sought to link what is said through the poems to how it is said and why it is said in this specific manner because I rest on the assumption that discourse is a vehicle of ideologies. It is also important to mention that I have not tried to categorize the discourse of the oppressed or to enable one 'to know it once he sees it'. The essay has instead been to enable readers to explore the disposability of discourse to function as a useful tool to act upon each other.

The formal discourse choices of the two poets have been shown to be deployed to resist oppression and celebrate the black identity overtly. In fact, Hughes and Angelou do not exclude themselves from the American fabric. Nonetheless, they fight to preserve their identity pure without an intruder identity and culture. They seek a linear worldview but with demarcations of individual and collective identities.

Both Hughes and Angelou use rhetorical devices, figurative language and imagery to concretize abstract feelings and emotional experiences. I have found that metaphors and similes are used to describe emotional experiences of the speakers and voice out their internal concerns. They are sometimes used to describe the beauty of the black or his/her strength. It has been noticed that Angelou makes more use of metaphor than does Hughes. I have referred the recurrent use of metaphors by Angelou to her social reality. She undergoes double oppression as a black and as a woman. So, her situation is more complex than Hughes'. Metaphor is a more complex figure of speech than the simile. It can be said that the complexity of metaphor is to portray the complexity of her situation.

The personas which Hughes and Angelou use in their poems as speakers embody the *tough guy* characters. The latter are characters who, instead of bewailing their sad realities, confront the hardship in search of changing the sad reality. They meet pain with joy. They strive to spread self-assurance, pride and hope within the frustrated black community. Speakers in poetry are forms of representation. The selected speakers in Hughes' *I, Too, Mother to Son, My People* (2012) and Angelou's *Still I Rise* and *Phenomenal Woman* (1984) are Hemingwayesque forms of representations. The latter embody the new hero who faces oppression with resistance and search for truth and self-identity. They do not reject their oppressors; instead, they make efforts to create the balance between the real and the expected. The speakers enjoy self-confidence and self-awareness. Their strength is communicated through the use of the first person.

The poets use less strong and challenging personas in some poems like *A Dream Deferred*, *When I think about Myself* and *Woman Work*. The speakers in these poems are aware of their similarity to and distinctness from the *other*. They recognize their individuality as human beings and as black human beings. At the same time, they do not deny their belonging to the human constellation as a whole. Ergo, they are surrounded by questions, doubt, and curiosity due to the imbalance between the self and the other. They refuse the *otherized* state of being and raise questions about the rejection they meet in the American society. Their questions are left unanswered; they weigh on their minds. Hence, their being *sags like a heavy load* (Hughes 2012: 33). Despite their recognition of their difference from the other, they remain incarcerated in their desire to be accepted by the other and recognized. Once their desire is not achieved, they fall into weakness

moments. Their weakness turns into anger and dissatisfaction. The tone of anger is recurring in Hughes' and Angelou's poems. The variety in the voices and speakers in the poems portrays the dissimilar states of being of the African-Americans.

Punctuation and the poem structure play a vital role in weaving the elements of discourse to produce a strong effect on the reader. The graphological level of the poems has a visual effect which helps the reader to better comprehend and appreciate the poem in question. The number of stanzas, the length of lines and stanza and the location of words within poems contribute to the creation of the visual effect and to the interpretation of the discourse. Sound devices, on the other part, create auditory effects. The poems are written in free verse which conveys the poets' quest for freedom. Free verse contributes to evoke the rebellious desire to deconstruct the white pattern of writing and thus the prescribing modes of writing and living. Rhyme scheme is indicative of themes and motifs, too. The rhyme schemes suffuse the themes through the distribution of sound patterns and through the choice of the sound itself.

It has been brought to light that poets manipulate discourse at its different levels to weave a literary discourse which mediates their underlying beliefs, values and ideologies. The levels of discourse work concomitantly and in harmony to achieve unity of the message. Hughes and Angelou shift in the tones of the poems. The tones in the same poem fluctuate between hope, anger, certainty, pride, and despair. The shift of tone from one stanza to another mirrors the African-American concerns and feelings as an oppressed subject. The shifts in tones show that the poets approach the African-American concerns from different perspectives.

The findings of this thesis display that the presence of the *other* can cause an uncomfortable sense of being. To establish a sense of the *self* with regard to the other is a complex task. It involves self-definition and self-conceptualization, but it also entails the recognition of the self in comparison to the other. The refusal of inherent differences between individuals and social groups engender anxiety and tension between the *self* and the *other* as two opposing entities. Indeed, black Americans were not accepted by the whites as equal beings.

Regardless the different contexts in which the poems were written, the two poets deal with oppression as a human concern. They point an unremitting pursuit of equality and freedom in spite of the difference in gender between the two poets. The gender of the poets has not greatly effected the use of discourse as a mode of action. Almost the same devices are used by both poets. The similitude is due to their mutual concern as members of an oppressed social group and the common motif of resisting oppression.

A produced discourse is meant to be communicated. At the other end of the process of communication there is a receiver. A written discourse is communicated to a reader, who is the receiver of discourse. Perhaps, Hughes and Angelou never thought of their readability rates nor did they expect an Algerian to be their reader. The discourse they produced was, evidently, not meant to be communicated to other readers rather than Americans. These statements remain conjectures and suppositions. Yet, what is agreed upon is that: “the reading of a particular work at a particular moment by ' a particular

reader will be a highly complex process.” (Rosenblatt 1995:92) The process of reading is complex because:

Anything in the reader’s past experience, any of his present preoccupations, his needs and frustrations—even his present physical state—may enter actively into the nature of his primary spontaneous response. (Ibid)

A reader’s profile is bracketed to his readings; he cannot do away with it. His background and stock of experience intervene in the process of discourse reception. Then, reading a literary text is not bias-free.

The readings I have provided remain to a great degree personal. To validate my arguments, I have referred to other Algerian readers since I, too, cannot exclude myself from the Algerian constellation. The insights these readers have provided reveal the shared concept of horizontality. The readers I questioned did sympathize with the speakers despite the difference in geographical distribution and sometimes gender and/or race. They, as I, did not need to be black Americans to understand what the *other* goes through; it suffices that they transcend the gender and/ or race-biased societal codes.

The questioned readers reacted to the text as postcolonial Algerian readers. They formulated their answers with reference to their broad identities as Muslim and as Algerians. The attitudes which they developed towards the speakers’ experiences in the two poems are rooted in the positions they allow themselves. They allowed themselves a centrifugal position and reacted to the texts on the basis of their real-self identities without reference to the speakers’ identities that are neither Algerians and might well be not Muslims. At this level, it can be concluded that the readers made little reference to

their narrow social group identity as male and females to receive the discourse of the oppressed. Their and the speakers' gender-based identity did not effect their reception to a considerable extent.

Through the comparisons conducted in this study – whether between the texts or the readers' reaction to the texts- it can be substantiated that the approaches to human concerns are ubiquitously and timelessly identical. Man and woman, Arab and non-Arab, and Muslim and non-Muslim exhibit their rejection of oppression in an almost alike manner. The sense of commonness as far as injustices and inequalities is concerned is well rendered in the Quranic verse:

O people! We created you from a male and a female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. The best among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Allah is All-Knowing, Well-Experienced. (al- Hujurat 13)

The research does not consider the thesis as an all-inclusive study of the discourse of the oppressed in literary texts. Yet, it can be considered as a starting point for further research points and topics. Therefore, future researchers are invited to focus on the interpretation and reception of the discourse of the oppressed from a cognitive perspective. It is meant by cognitive perspective tracking down the processing of discourse cognitively. In fact, such a study can be projected on EFL students especially in Literature classes to enhance the teaching of literature in EFL pedagogical situations. Additionally, it is suggested that future researches take into consideration the importance of critical thinking in EFL learning/teaching. So, the study of the importance of applying

critical discourse analysis to develop and /or enhance critical thinking skill for EFL learners is needed.

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Appendix 1: Langston Hughes' Poems

1. I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"

Then.

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

2. Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:

Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I'se been a-climbin' on,

And reachin' landin's,

And turnin' corners,

And sometimes goin' in the dark

Where there ain't been no light.

So boy, don't you turn back.

Don't you set down on the steps

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.

Don't you fall now—

For I'se still goin', honey,

I'se still climbin',

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

3. A Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-- like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

4. My People

The night is beautiful,

So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful,

So the eyes of my people

Beautiful, also, is the sun.

Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people

Appendix 2: Maya Angelou's Poems

1. Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?

Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

2. Phenomenal Woman

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.

I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size

But when I start to tell them,

They think I'm telling lies.

I say,

It's in the reach of my arms,

The span of my hips,

The stride of my step,

The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

I walk into a room

Just as cool as you please,

And to a man,

The fellows stand or

Fall down on their knees.

Then they swarm around me,

A hive of honey bees.

I say,

It's the fire in my eyes,

And the flash of my teeth,

The swing in my waist,

And the joy in my feet.

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

Men themselves have wondered

What they see in me.

They try so much

But they can't touch

My inner mystery.

When I try to show them,

They say they still can't see.

I say,

It's in the arch of my back,

The sun of my smile,

The ride of my breasts,

The grace of my style.

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

Now you understand

Just why my head's not bowed.

I don't shout or jump about

Or have to talk real loud.

When you see me passing,

It ought to make you proud.

I say,

It's in the click of my heels,

The bend of my hair,

the palm of my hand,

The need for my care.

'Cause I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

3. *Woman Work*

I've got the children to tend

The clothes to mend

The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I've got shirts to press
The tots to dress
The can to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine
Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here
With your fiercest wind
Let me float across the sky
'Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes

Cover me with white

Cold icy kisses and

Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky

Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone

Star shine, moon glow

You're all that I can call my own.

Appendix 3: I Hear America Singing (Walt Whitman)

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,

Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,

The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,

The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,

The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,

The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,

The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,

The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,

Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,

The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,

Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

Appendix 4: The Students' Questionnaire

Section One: Before You Read

1- Since your admission at university, how many African-American texts have you read?

- a) None b) 1-3 c) 4-6 d) More than ten

(If you have answered with a (None) skip to section Two)

2. How did you find these texts?

- a) Easy to understand b) Medium c) Difficult to understand

3. To what extent is the following statement true: "The experiences reflected in African-American literature are close to my own life experience"?

- a) True b) Untrue

Section Two: as you read

(Below are two poems which you are kindly invited to read before answering the following questions)

Poem A : <i>I, Too</i>	Poem B : <i>When I Think about Myself</i>
<p>I, too, sing America. I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen, When company comes, But I laugh, And eat well, And grow strong</p> <p>Tomorrow, I'll be at the table When company comes. Nobody'll dare Say to me, "Eat in the kitchen" Then.</p> <p>Besides, They'll see how beautiful I am And be ashamed— I, too, am America</p>	<p>When I think about myself, I almost laugh myself to death, My life has been one great big joke, A dance that's walked, A song that's spoke, I laugh so hard I almost choke,</p> <p>Sixty years in these folks' world, The child I works for calls me girl, I s ay "Yes ma'am" for working's sake. Too proud to bend, Too poor to break, I laugh until my stomach ache, When I think about myself.</p>

4. If you see things from the speakers' perspective, explain how did this effect your feelings and attitude?

5. Does the gender of the speaker effect the extent to which you sympathize with the speaker?

الملخص

تعد معرفة الذات في ظل نظام تعسفي عملية معقدة إذ يتأرجح الإنسان بين ثنائية الأنا و الغير .كما يولد انتهاك المجتمع لحقوق المضطهدين المدنية و الاجتماعية و حتى الإنسانية أسئلة ملحة في أنفسهم لا يمكن الإجابة عنها إلا إذا تأسست مكانة الأنا بالنسبة للغير . و عليه فإن مقاومة الاضطهاد تصبح حاجة شديدة مطلوبة بذلك الوسائل المناسبة لها .

لجأ الأفارقة الأمريكيون كمضطهدين إلى الخطاب الأدبي كوسيلة لمقاومة الممارسات و الإيديولوجيات التعسفية التي يمارسها ضدهم المجتمع الأمريكي الأبيض و ذلك لكون الخطاب يمكن أن يحمل بالإيديولوجيات. و تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى مناقشة الطرق التي يستعملها كل من لانغستون هيوز و مايا انجلو للدفاع عن الهوية الافروأمريكية و مقاومة الاضطهاد من خلال قصائدهم. تنقسم هذه الدراسة على أربعة فصول. يعرض الفصل الأول أهم نظريات التي تربط الخطاب بالإيديولوجيات. أما الفصل الثاني فهو يوضح كيف أن الخطاب الافروأمريكي خطاب ما بعد استعماري في حين أن الفصل الثالث يحوي على تحليل للنصوص المختارة من أجل ابراز كيف استطاع هيوز و انجلو التعبير عن رفضهم للاستعمار من خلال قصائدهم. خصص الفصل الأخير لاستطلاع قراءة القارئ الجزائري لخطاب الكاتبين من خلال تحليل و مناقشة نتائج استجواب كان قد وزع على طلبة الماستر بجامعة قاصدي مرباح، ورقلة و مصطفى بن بولعيد، باتنة 02 كعينة للدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب، المضطهد، الشعر الأفروأمريكي، الاستقبال

Résumé

Établir un sens de *soi* sous un régime oppressif semble trop complexe car on se trouve dans une position dialectale entre le *soi* et *l'autre*. La négation sociale aux droits civiques, sociaux et même fondamentaux du sujet opprimé, nécessite des questions urgentes que le sujet opprimé ne peut répondre à moins que le sens et la position de *soi* vis-à-vis du sens et de la position de *l'autre* soit établis. Résister à l'oppression, par exemple, devient un besoin pressant, qui nécessite un support adéquat. N'ayant pas accès aux formes institutionnelles de discours, les écrivains afro-américains font recours au discours littéraire à fin d'exprimer leur résistance aux idéologies et pratiques oppressives que les blancs leur ont infligées. Les oppresseurs adoptent, re/produisent et renforcent l'oppression par le discours. De même, les groupes opprimés résistent et rejettent l'oppression par le même moyen qui est le discours. Partant de l'hypothèse selon laquelle le discours est un mode d'action pour la société et l'autre, et reste un médiateur des idéologies sous-jacentes, cette étude, en adoptant une approche interdisciplinaire, vise à expliquer comment le discours médiatise les idéologies des opprimés dans certains poèmes de Langston Hughes et Maya Angelou. La thèse contient quatre chapitres, qui donnent une vision globale sur la théorie de l'opprimé et l'analyse du discours critique, une lecture postcoloniale de la littérature afro-américaine, l'analyse du discours des opprimés comme étant un mode d'action dans les poèmes de Hughes et d'Angelou et enfin la lecture du discours des opprimés par les lecteurs algériens.

Mots clés : Discours, l'opprimé, la poésie afro-américaine, la réception