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Voices, Chronotopes, and Genre: Dialogical Self Construction *in I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*

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Abstract

The present study examines the influences of voices and spaces in the self-construction of Maya in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Drawing on Hubert Hermans' concept of the dialogical self, which is conceptualized on Bakhtin's theory of polyphony, the study explores Maya's consciousness as a fluid boundary that receives, accommodates, and adjusts to the influences of others. In this construction, Angelou creates a dialogical self that is populated by the voices of other people and decentralized with highly open boundaries. Angelou weaves elements of African American blues and spirituals with Western literary traditions. By blending these diverse traditions, Angelou shapes Maya's narrative voice as a rich interplay of linguistic, racial, and gendered positions. This narrative complexity reflects Angelou's skilful engagement with cultural traditions and histories. Through her transcendent storytelling, Angelou defies genre boundaries and constructs Maya's selfhood as a powerful tapestry of cultural influences. In doing so, Angelou asserts herself as a polyphonic voice, reinforcing the dynamic interplay of multiple perspectives within her work.

1. INTRODUCTION

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1976), the first book in Maya Angelou's seven-volume autobiographical series, is a coming-of-age story that chronicles the narrator's life from age three to sixteen. Portraying young Maya's journey through racial hatred, the trauma of rape, and the darkness of silence, Angelou asserts that even in the mid-twentieth century, as a black girl navigating a hegemonic society, Maya's sense of self emerges from her longing for equality and activism to achieve freedom from stereotypes, discrimination, and submission. Despite these adversities, Angelou emphasizes that resilience marks the identity of the black girl, unfolding that this strength is nurtured through female connections, community bonds, and a persistent drive for change. Throughout the narrative, Maya explores, constructs, and reconstructs her sense of self through various subject positions, aligning with Herman's concept of the dialogical self. Angelou's portrayal highlights Maya's evolving identity shaped by her interactions with different voices and perspectives. Taking Herman's concept of the dialogical self as the theoretical framework, the present study explores how, by blending her

voice with those of other women and reflecting on her selfhood across temporal and spatial dimensions, Angelou underscores the fluidity of identity. Moreover, it argues how, in Angelou's narration, the genre itself becomes a dynamic medium for this ongoing dialogue, affirming the complex and multifaceted nature of the self in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

1.1.Dialogical Self

The Dialogical Self Theory (DST), developed by Hubert Hermans, presents a psychological framework that views the self as a dynamic and multifaceted system rather than a fixed, unified entity. Drawing inspiration from William James's ideas on the self and Mikhail Bakhtin's polyphonic metaphor, Hermans conceptualizes the self as a collection of 'I-positions' that engage in continuous internal and external dialogues. James described the self as multifaceted, comprising the 'I (the thinker or subject) and the 'Me (the object that is thought about). Bakhtin's concept of polyphony refers to multiple independent voices that coexist, each with its perspective and sense of agency. Hermans adapted this metaphor to describe the internal dialogues within the self. By merging these ideas, Hermans presents the self as a "dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions" ("The Dialogical Self" 2001: 174). Each position represents a different perspective or identity that an individual may adopt in various situations.

In another article, "Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory," Hermans argues that "the brain is a community of agents or voices that, at its higher levels, may entertain mutual dialogical relationships, with one voice being more dominant or active than the other voice" (2001:251). These I-positions represent various aspects of the individual—including thoughts, relationships, possessions, and creative expressions — all of which contribute to shaping one's identity. Moreover, a key feature of the dialogical self is its integration of temporal and spatial elements. The present study reads how the different I-positions of Angelou as black, female, American, and author are constructed through other voices and argues how the construction of self is chronotopic and how the genre blend reasserts a constant dialogue between voices and textures.

1.2.Dialogics of Voices

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of consciousness and dialogism provides the primary model for the dialogical self. Bakhtin suggests that each social group has its distinct way of speaking, known as a "social dialect," which reflects the group's shared values, viewpoints, ideologies, and norms. These dialects contribute to what Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia," where different social

languages interact in complex ways—they may align, oppose, or influence one another through dialogue. Since language, in Bakhtin's view, reflects social identity, an individual's sense of self (or subjectivity) is also formed socially through language. In this context, Hermans explains a dialogical self where the consciousness of self is shaped by the social environment, receiving others' voices much like language. In Angelou's narrative, Maya's emergent subjectivity is deeply influenced by the voices of women who represent different social environments and internal and external subject positions. Her grandmother, Annie Henderson; her mother, Vivian Baxter; and her mentor, Mrs. Bertha Flowers, collectively shape Maya's evolving sense of self, contributing to the plural and dynamic nature of her identity as "a dialogue with the aspects of otherness within the self" (Henderson 1998: 344). Angelou illustrates how Maya's selfhood is not formed in isolation but rather emerges through these formative connections.

Grandmother Henderson plays a significant role in shaping Maya's "I" in personal roles, emotional states, and cultural influences. As a devoutly religious woman, Grandmother Henderson relied on the Bible as a guide for her autonomy and moral compass. George Kent observes that "grandmother's religion gives her the power to order her being... usually the immediate space surrounding her. The spirit of the religion combined with simple, traditional maxims shapes the course of existence and rituals of facing up to something called decency" (Kent 1998: 20). This spiritual grounding empowered Grandmother Henderson to protect her family from the persistent threat of racial violence in Stamps, Arkansas. Her wisdom proved crucial in safeguarding her grandson Bailey and saving Uncle Willie from becoming a victim of racial hatred. When Bailey began to question the injustices of racism, Grandmother Henderson's prudence prompted her to send Maya and Bailey to California, ensuring their safety and exposing them to new environments where they could grow. Throughout the narrative, the grandmother embodies collective wisdom, serving as a source of survival against white oppression and a symbol of black resilience. To Maya, the grandmother's beauty lies in her wisdom and courage. Grandmother's courage made her a role model to Maya as she boasts: "I was so proud of being her granddaughter and sure that some of her magic must have come down to me" (*CB* 210).

While Grandmother Henderson was spiritual, Maya's mother, Vivian Baxter, was worldly and instinctive. According to Manora, Vivian represents sensuality and sexuality in the Black female tradition. She lived by her physical charm, "according to her own rules, redefining traditional views of maternity, eschewing conventionality, and, according to the

times, violating accepted morality" (Manora 2005: 369). Manora identifies Vivian with Black Jezebel—a patriarchal discourse that suggests a hyper-sexualized image of a black woman in contrast to the 'hyperfeminine' Matriarch. However, reading Vivian only as Jezebel limits her influence on Maya. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya is controlled by Vivian's charm. Upon Vivian's suggestion, Maya began taking courses in dance and drama—two lifelong passions that helped shape her creative identity.

In Maya's steps toward independence, Vivian's belief in self-sufficiency became a crucial influence. Maya recalls, "Mother was a firm believer in self-sufficiency. She'd be pleased to think that I had that much gumption, that much of her in my character. (She liked to speak of herself as the original 'do-it-yourself girl')" (*CB* 283). Maya's self-confidence is evident in her confrontation with Dolores—her father's girlfriend—and in her ability to navigate the challenges at the Mexican border, ultimately saving both herself and her father. These moments clearly reflect the influence of Vivian's courage and resilience on Maya.

Among Grandmother Baxter's children, Vivian was the most outgoing and the only one to actively pursue a career. Vivian was also a realist, albeit in a different manner from Grandmother Henderson. She earned a living and ran her family like a true matriarch. In her aphorisms such as, "Life is going to give you just what you put in it. Put your whole heart in everything you do, and pray, then you can wait," and "God helps those who help themselves" (*CB* 288), Vivian also carries the wisdom of generations. While Maya was pursuing a job, her mother became a source of inspiration. Vivian's belief that "there was nothing a person can't do, and there should be nothing a human being didn't care about" (*CB* 288) profoundly influenced Maya. Maya cherished these words, describing them as "the most positive encouragement [she] could have hoped for" (*CB* 288). Vivian Baxter instilled in Maya the values of self-confidence and resilience, ensuring that her daughter would not falter under the pressures of societal differences. Thus, Vivian's influence works as internal dialogues, constructing her as personally confident and culturally dual.

Equally important in Maya's self-construction is the influence of Mrs. Bertha Flowers, who introduced Maya to the power of language and literature. If the grandmother and mother help reconstruct her identity as a **b**lack girl, Mr. Flowers represents Americanness in terms of freedom and elegance. Mrs. Flowers' mentorship provided Maya with "lessons in living" (*CB* 108), fostering her self-confidence and encouraging her to embrace her voice. Mrs. Flowers' refinement, grace, and wisdom left a profound impact on Maya, complementing the spiritual fortitude instilled by her grandmother. Together, these women embody different yet

interconnected sources of strength that contribute to Maya's self-realization. Their combined influence reveals how Maya's self is constructed through dialogue with others, underscoring the vital role of community, tradition, and mentorship.

Like Mother Baxter's realism, Mrs. Flowers' unfamiliarity made her special to Maya. The surreal aura that surrounded Mrs. Flowers elevated her in Maya's imagination, placing her beyond mundane activities like eating and drinking. The "browned photographs leered or threatened from the walls and the white, freshly done curtains pushed against themselves and the wind" (*CB* 107) created a dreamy atmosphere that Maya associated with Mrs. Flowers. Maya compares her with the "...women in English novels who walked the moors ...the women who sat in front of roaring fireplaces, drinking tea incessantly from silver trays full of scones and crumpets. Women who walked over the heath and read morocco-bound books" (*CB* 103). Some critics claim that Angelou's depiction of Mrs. Flowers reflects her fascination with white ideals. However, the present analysis asserts that such comparisons reflect Maya's perception of Mrs. Flowers' freedom and elegance rather than a fixation on whiteness. Maya's declaration, "She [Mrs. Flowers] made me proud to be Negro, just by being herself" (CB 103), confirms that Mrs. Flowers' influence helped Maya transcend feelings of racial inferiority, opening the door to self-actualization and creative expression.

By depicting Mrs. Flowers as ladylike yet powerful, Angelou deconstructs fixed ideas of identity. Mrs. Flowers embodies a fluid model of womanhood that combines elegance with inner strength, transcending the traditional "Cult of True Womanhood … —piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 1976:152). Moreover, the structure of *Caged Bird* mirrors this transformation. The narrative follows two stages: Maya's silence before the fourteenth chapter and her emergence as a voice of strength starting from the sixteenth chapter. Mrs. Flowers emerges as a pivotal figure during this transition, akin to a shamanic guide with mystic wisdom. Rather than a talisman, Mrs. Flowers uses language and literacy as her transformative tools, ultimately restoring Maya's voice.

Angelou wrote *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* during the rise of second-wave feminism—a movement primarily led by white Western women seeking the same social, economic, and political rights as those enjoyed by white men. Angelou distanced herself from the mainstream feminist movement due to its limited inclusivity, seeking instead to assert a distinct identity that reflected the unique experiences of black women, separate from those of white women. She believed that black women had more access to rights than white women. She states:

> Black women have never been as subservient within their community as white women in theirs. White men, who are in effect their fathers, husbands, brothers, their sons, nephews and uncles, say to white women, or imply in any cage: 'I don't really need you to run my institutions. I need you in certain places and in those places you must be kept—in the bedroom, in the kitchen, in the nursery, and on the pedestal.' Black women have never been told this. (qtd. in Gilbert 1999:89).

In contrast to the white feminist struggle and conventional portrayals of black women, Angelou projected a hybrid image that defied traditional boundaries. Grandmother Henderson, Mother Baxter, and her mentor, Mrs. Bertha Flowers, symbolize strength and control. Angelou herself is a composite of them all. In her work, O'Neale credits Angelou with "remold[ing] perceptions" (O'Neale 1994:26) of black women. She states, "No Black women in the world of Angelou's books are losers. She is the third generation of brilliantly resourceful females, who conquered oppression's stereotypical maladies without conforming to its expectations of behavior" (O'Neale 1994:26). Angelou combined the power, spirit, and courage of her female role models to shape Maya's evolving selfhood, reinforcing the dialogic nature of self in the text reflecting on Mae Gwendolyn Henderson's assertion that :

> What is at once characteristic and suggestive about black women's writing is its interlocutory, or dialogic, character, reflecting not only a relationship with the 'other(s),' but an internal dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of black female subjectivity. (1998:118)

2. SPATIO-TEMPORAL DIMENSION OF THE DIALOGICAL SELF

According to Hermans, the spatialization of dialogical relationships enables a particular idea to be explored through both internal and external dialogues, generating dynamic and ever-evolving perspectives. Maya's subjectivity takes on a chronotopic turn in its exposure to spatio-temporal influences throughout the narrative. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope explains a blend of temporal and spatial elements. Bakhtin describes the literary chronotope as such:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (1981:84)

In *Caged Bird*, the Store, located in Stamps, Arkansas, acts as a pivotal space in Maya's development. It becomes a "place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (Bakhtin 1981: 250). For Maya, the Store reflects her inner world. Alone in the mornings, the Store "looked like an unopened present from a stranger" (*CB* 18). At night, it promised "magic mornings," giving Maya a sense of comfort (*CB* 18). The Store embodies Stamps' segregated life, connecting Maya's emerging self with her environment. Maya declares, "[u]ntil I was thirteen and left Arkansas for good, the Store was my favorite place to be" (*CB* 18). After Maya's traumatic experience in St. Louis, her shared loneliness with the Store reflects her emotional state. The Store becomes both a marker of Maya's identity and "the crucible of [Maya's] first transformations" (Zuss 1995:30).

Apart from the Store, the junkyard serves as a transformative space in Maya's journey toward self-discovery and empowerment. After her father's abandonment, Maya's decision to leave her father's home and take refuge in a broken-down car at the junkyard signifies her "flight" (Myles 2009: 37) — both a literal and symbolic escape from oppression and instability. The junkyard functions as a safe space, distinct from environments marked by racial and gender-based oppression. By joining a community of youthful runaways — a diverse group composed of Mexican, black, and white individuals — Maya finds acceptance and experiences a newfound sense of belonging. This multicultural environment provides her with emotional security, which helps her overcome feelings of insecurity and marginalization. Spending time in the junkyard not only fosters Maya's self-assertion but also broadens her understanding of identity. The solidarity she experiences in this space dismantles previous notions of exclusion and empowers her with confidence. The junkyard, therefore, represents a crucial point in Maya's journey — a place where she sheds societal labels and embraces her individuality within a supportive collective. In essence, the junkyard becomes a pivotal chronotope — a space that transcends oppression and differences, providing Maya the freedom to redefine her identity and emerge with greater self-awareness and strength.

Chronotope also provides Maya with a form of resistance to racial oppression. During Henry Reed's performance of the Black National Anthem at the end of the school graduation incident, Maya recalls a rich legacy of black survival through music. Reflecting on black poets and blues singers, Maya asks:

> Oh, Black known and unknown poets, how often have your auctioned pains sustained us? Who will compute the lonely nights made less lonely by your songs... less tragic by your tales? If we were a people much given to revealing secrets, we might raise

> monuments and sacrifice to the memories of our poets, but slavery cured us of that weakness. It may be enough, however, to have it said that we survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets (include preachers, musicians and blues singers). (*CB* 198)

At this moment, the gap of time and space is blurred, evoking the past voices in Maya's present reality. This "chronotopic collapse" (Barnwell 2009:141) enables Maya to identify with Henry Reed, the audience, and historic black literary heroes. Angelou's reference to the songs of other voices reinforces Maya's position in the black autobiographical tradition, where collective voices shape her evolving identity and ultimately, *Caged Bird* affirms Angelou's dialogic hybridity, combining cultural traditions, self-reflection, and narrative innovation.

2.1. Dialogics of Traditions

The dialogue extends to the book's genre. Through the genre blend, different positions of Blackness, Americanness, and writership create polyphony as dialogical voices in the self of Angelou. Just as Maya's identity blends different influences, *Caged Bird* makes a textual montage of different traditions, making dialogue with each other. Here, the voices of Grandmother Henderson, Mother Baxter, and Mrs. Flowers not only shape Maya's sense of personal, social, emotional, and cultural I-positions but also weave the authorial 'I' of Angelou. George E. Kent, in "Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Black Autobiographical Tradition," identifies "two areas of black life" influencing Angelou's narrative: "the religious and the blues traditions" (Kent 1998:75). Lionnet adds a third influence—the literary tradition. If Grandmother represents religious influence and Mother Baxter embodies the fast-paced "blues-street" (1989: 134) tradition, Mrs. Flowers upholds the white Western literary tradition. In one scene, Angelou writes:

> [Bertha Flowers] opened the first page, and I heard poetry for the first time in my life... Her voice slid in and curved down through and over the words. She was nearly singing. I wanted to look at the pages. Were they the same that I had read? Or were there notes, music, lined on the pages, as in a hymn book? Her sounds began cascading gently. I knew from listening to a thousand preachers that she was nearing the end of her reading, and I hadn't really heard, heard to understand, a single word. (*CB* 108)

Mrs. Flowers' sound resembled the blues Maya's mother sang, infused with the spirit of her grandmother's hymn humming, "Glory, glory, hallelujah, when I lay my burden down" (*CB* 35) while Mrs. Flowers was reading lines from the famous English novelist Charles Dickens:

"It was the best of times and the worst of times..." (*CB* 108). In this moment, the three influential women are symbolically united, and different oral and written traditions converge. These women contribute not only to Maya's hybridity but also act as narrative joints connecting her social and professional subject positions.

George Kent emphasizes that *Caged Bird* "creates a unique place within black autobiographical tradition... by its special stance toward the self, the community, and the universe, and by a form exploiting the full measure of imagination necessary both to beauty and absurdity" (1998:19). However, apart from the black autobiographical tradition, Angelou's narrative resembles many white Western literary traditions. For example, in the Mexican border scene, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* reads like an adventure thriller, while the Junkyard chapter provides a utopian tone. In her confrontation with the white dentist, Angelou presents a powerful act of resistance that unfolds like a fantasy. In Maya's imagination, her grandmother storms into the dentist's room with "eyes blazing like coals" (*CB* 204) and arms doubled in length. Grabbing the collar of his white jacket, Grandmother Henderson threatens to drive him out of town "by sundown" (*CB* 204). Her words, "well enunciated and sharp like little claps of thunder" (*CB* 204), echo with power. In this imagined scene, the dentist apologizes and thanks Momma for sparing his life. Through this fantasy, Maya recreates her grandmother as "ten feet tall with eight-foot arms" (*CB* 204), channeling the strength and defiance of historical figures like Prosser, Turner, and Tubman, who resisted white oppression with courage and sacrifice. Pierre Walker argues that since the dentist scene is a work of imagination, it takes on a poetic quality, and "poetry, in all its forms, can be an act of resistance" (1999: 91). This interpretation emphasizes that the black experience extends beyond victimhood; it also encompasses active resistance. Maya's portrayal of her grandmother as an empowered woman reflects the broader theme of challenging racial and sexual stereotypes to redefine her identity. This episode is an instance of Angelou's capacity to handle fantasy with the mastery of an American author to resist racism.

Angelou's narrative also reveals her extensive reading of diverse texts by both black and white writers. According to Lionnet, Angelou drew inspiration from classical English authors like Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe. The influence of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is particularly evident in Angelou's portrayal of Vivian Baxter. Like Moll, Vivian embodies economic individualism and resourcefulness. While Vivian reflects Moll's independence, Maya similarly mirrors Moll's quest for selfhood, though Maya's journey is distinct in its focus on building her identity through connections with other black women rather than pursuing

'True Womanhood.' Angelou's ability to blend African folkloric traditions with English literary influences is exemplified in chapter twenty-two. On long winter nights, "lurid tales of ghosts and hants, banshees and juju, voodoo and other anti-life stories" (*CB* 171) captivated the community gathered at the Store. On one such stormy night, Mr. Taylor joined the Henderson family for dinner and recounted a chilling story about his late wife's spirit manifesting as a blue-eyed "baby angel" (*CB* 176). Maya, who had planned to immerse herself in *Jane Eyre*, and Bailey, absorbed in *The Adventures Huckleberry Finn*, abandoned their books to hear Mr. Taylor's ghost story. This blending of the Western literary classics with African American oral storytelling reflects what Lionnet describes as "nonhierarchical modes of relation among cultures that we can address the crucial issues of indeterminacy and solidarity" (Lionnet 1989:5). Angelou's narrative thus becomes a powerful fusion of cultural traditions, reinforcing the richness and complexity of her autobiographical voice as a dialogical one.

Thus, in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou masterfully constructs the self through her linguistic choices and narrative strategies. Her use of Western literary genres highlights her ability to speak English in both the Southern black and white American vernaculars. Angelou underscores the differences in education between the black and the white students, explaining:

> In the classroom we all learned past participles, but in the streets and in our homes the Blacks learned to drop 's' from plurals and suffixes from past-tense verbs. We were alert to the gap separating the written word from the colloquial. We learned to slide out of one language and into another without being conscious of the effort. At school, in a given situation, we might respond with 'That's not unusual.' But in the street, meeting the same situation, we easily said, 'It be's like that sometimes.' (*CB* 240-41)

This adaptability reveals the linguistic dexterity of black children, who master "what all the whites do and more" (Walker 1999:92). Such narrative hybridity results in a multivocality that allows the oppressed to speak in several tongues or dialogics.

And finally, the paper argues that Angelou makes a dialogic hybridity through a dialogue between traditions in her choice of the name "Maya." Maya, her autobiographical persona, is recreated in defiance of white American discourse about black women. When Maya's brother discovered that she was his sister, he refused to call her by her given name, Marguerite. Instead, he affectionately addressed her as "Mya Sister," which later evolved into "My" and finally "Maya" (*CB* 73). The name "Maya" carries powerful associations across cultures. Lionnet

notes that in *The Gospel of S'ri Ramakrishna*, "God Himself is MahaMaya, who deludes the world with His illusion and conjures up the magic of creation, preservation, and destruction" (Lionnet 1989:138). In this sense, "Maya" signifies both veil in Hindustani and the power to create illusion in Vedantic philosophy. These meanings connect Maya to the conjure woman archetype, a spiritual healer and fortuneteller in the black tradition. The conjure woman, wielding talismans as tools of resistance, combats the harsh realities of slavery and fate (Stanley 1992:151). The symbolic richness of Maya's name extends further. The Maya civilization, renowned for its intricate logosyllabic script, represents a sophisticated writing system in pre-Columbian Americas. For Angelou, writing serves as a powerful tool to preserve her experiences and achieve self-integration. As Lionnet observes, this act of writing mirrors "the goddess Maya's ability to create and recreate" (Lionnet 1989:154). Like the conjure woman's talisman, *Caged Bird* functions as a literary weapon, resisting racial and gender oppression.

Such conflation of genre and literary traditions in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, reclaims Angelou's subject position as an inherently dialogical one. By drawing on African blues, ghost stories, and slave narratives, Angelou reasserts her identity as a black woman, while also acknowledging her debt to Western literary traditions through elements of the bildungsroman, science fiction, and utopian literature. This interplay reflects a form of double consciousness—her simultaneous understanding of herself as both African and American. Yet, Angelou neither credits Africanness as her sole marker of identity nor expresses a preference for Americanness. Instead, her authorial identity emerges from a fusion of diverse national and social subjectivities. The genres embedded in *Caged Bird* engage in a dynamic interplay, creating a meaningful dialogue among various literary traditions that reflect the multifaceted nature of Angelou's narrative voice—the multiple "I" she inhabits. Thus, the blending of genres not only highlights the dialogic nature of these traditions but also reveals the multiplicity of voices within the self, culminating in a deeply dialogical narrative.

3. CONCLUSION

This discussion argues that Angelou's narrative aligns with Elsheikh's conception of the dialogical self, wherein "self-positions, both external and internal, are engaged in ongoing dialogues, reflecting the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the self" (Elsheikh 2023:88).Throughout the *Caged Bird* Angelou has created dialogues with individuals, time and spaces and traditions. Constructing Maya's consciousness as a fluid boundary of receiving, accommodating, and adjusting the influences of others Angelou has created a dialogical self which is "populated by the voices of other people, decentralized with highly open boundaries

(Hermans 2003:90). Weaving elements of Afro-American blues, spirituals with white Western genres the authorial Angelou has reflected on the narratorial dialogics of Maya, reinforcing the rich interplay of linguistic, racial, and gendered positions that shape Angelou's storytelling. In this way, Angelou's writing, by transcending genre boundaries and embodying the self as a powerful tapestry of cultural traditions and histories, asserts the authorial Angelou as a dialogical voice.

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