A Study of Stylistic Deviation in Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*

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Abstract:

This research offers a detailed analysis of the various types of linguistic deviation skillfully used by Maya Angelou -an African-American poet-in one of her poems Still I Rise. The study endeavors basically to investigate lexical, discoursal, grammatical, phonological and graphological, morphological, semantic and internal and external deviations in this poem. This poem in particular shows how the poet's excellence at poetry.

Key words: Stylistic Deviation, Maya Angelou, *Still I Rise*

1- Definition of Deviation

Writers who intend to make their language creative or inventive, use a language different from the so called ordinary, unusual or everyday language. Using untraditional or unusual language enables the writer to surprise the readers and make a powerful impression on their mind. This creative use of language which deviates from the norms of literary convention (Leech,1969:50) is technically called *linguistic deviation*.

Leech (ibid:10-12) argues that any *deviation* from the expected patterns of linguistic behavior will give rise to a reaction of disorientation and surprise and that rules in poetry are made to be broken. Thus, *deviation* is the violation and breaking of the rules. However, he believes that a real violation of a rule of the language leads to dimensions of choice; "any selection which is not one of the selections allowed by the rules has a null probability". (ibid: 29- 30). It can occur within the language, but for the poet " the question of whether to obey the rules of the language or not"- is a matter of choices. So, *deviation* occurs as a result of choice, i.e. the poet's selection of features among the range of linguistic items. Thus, the writer can use the normal range of linguistic items or exploit these normal elements uniquely.

Leech (1966:139) says that linguistic *deviation* is "essential to linguistic account of literary language. It is a commonplace that poet and other creative writers use language in unorthodox ways: that they are by convention allowed "poetic license". But we also need to recognize degrees of unorthodoxy, and it is that the scales of descriptive and institutional delicacy become relevant".

Degrees of *deviation* can firstly be identified by identifying the scales of institutional delicacy. The degree of *deviation* is based on authors, genres and periods. It varies from one author to another, from one genre to another; from one period to another. It differs also according to the level in which the rules have been broken.

Leech (ibid: 139) mentions that "literature is distinguished from other varieties of linguistic activity above all by the number and the importance of the deviant features it contains". The most deviant symbol of these characteristics is to be measured not only by the important degree of descriptive delicacy in which they impress but with "an extreme lack of institutional generality". In literary language, the typical *deviation* can be considered unique to the text in which it

appears. Leech (ibid:144) claims that "the patterns of normal language are relevant to literary art only in providing ' background 'for the structured deployment of deviations from the norm".

Leech (1969:56-57) believes that it is a very general principle of artistic communication that "a work of art in some way deviates from norms which we, as members of society, have learnt to expect in the medium used". In a work of art, he believes, the artistic *deviation* "sticks out" from its background, the automatic system, like a figure in the foreground of a visual domain. In the case of poetry, "the foregrounded figure is the linguistic deviation, and the background is the language – the system taken for granted in any talk of deviation". Linguistic *deviation* can be seen as a creative use of language which differs from the norms of the literary convention or everyday language. Such a *deviation* creates elements of interest and surprise. In any poem we distinguish poetic language because it is odd and the foregrounded portion serves to increase the importance of the poem.

Leech identifies two special ways in which poems can be seen as deviant. The language can be '*odd* and *deviant*' i.e., irregularity is 'obtrusive'. For example, using a new word or breaking a rule of grammar for poetic effect is deviant. Alternatively, the language can be abnormally normal, so that its very regularity stands out and becomes obtrusive. For instance, repeating the same speech sound unusually often so that it creates a rhyme is too regular to be normal. Deviance is connected to 'what' the poet has to say, it is also related to the meaning of the language used.

He (Ibid:59-60) asserts that what makes poetry is those linguistic *deviations* that make the poet manipulate in his poetry. Thus, linguistic *deviation* is considered by him a means for poetic creation. For him any linguistic *deviation* is artistically considerable when

    1- It communicates something;

2- It communicates what was intended by its author and,

3- It is judged or felt by the reader to be significant.

Short (1996:11) argues that "deviation, which is a linguistic phenomenon, has an important psychological effect on the readers (and hearers). If a part of a poem is deviant, it becomes especially noticeable, or perceptually prominent."

This shows that *deviation* is a stylistic notion, that is, one of the ways in which foregrounding is produced. The notion of *deviation* is very substantial since it is a way of creating abnormal patterns from the normal patterns of language which shows non-abidance by the established norms, and a departure from the usual communication. It should be noted that *deviation* can occur in written texts as well as in ordinary speeches. It should also be understood that literature, especially poetry, is distinctively identified by departure from the normal use of language. It is, in fact, poetry that the ability to attract the attention of its readers.

A good starting step for the analysis of any poem is to identify the deviant parts and provide a discussion which joins them together. Linguistic *deviation* is an unexpected irregularity in a part of a text which is indicated as critical to the understanding of what is written ,i.e. the whole text.

Leech and Short (2007:44) discuss *deviations* in literary texts at three levels. The first one is primary *deviation* where the text deviates from the norms of the language as a whole; the second one is secondary *deviation* where it deviates from norms of literary structure in particular; the third one is internal *deviation* where the *deviation* is from norms internal to a text. They state that primary *deviation* occurs in two major forms (ibid:39-40):

a. Where the language permits a choice within the rules of its code and the forms of its use, the writer goes outside

    the choices available, (the choices that the writer makes are available).

b. Where the language permits a choice, the writer rejects himself "the freedom to choose", and uses the same article frequently. This conclusion in *deviation* from some expected recurrence and in the term of some linguistic elements "more rarely than usual" and "more often than usual ".

In secondary *deviation*, the text departs not from the norms of linguistic terms in general but from the norms of literary structure involving norms of author or genre.

    In internal *deviation,* the properties of language within the text depart from the norms the text itself has directed us to expect. It is distinguished by its contrast with the previous context. Internal *deviation* clarifies why even ordinary language and "banal" language obtain extraordinary occurrence and impact in literature contexts.

    Short (1996:36) indicates that "we need to make sure that our intuitions are reasonable, and not based on personal whim". Thus, we need to analyze and describe the nature of *deviation*. Different sorts of *deviation* which can achieve foregrounding can be described and classified in any text.

    Crystal (2003: 134) defines *deviation* as "A term used in LINGUISTIC analysis to refer to a SENTENCE (or other UNIT) which does not conform to the RULES of a GRAMMAR (i.e. it is ILL- FORMED".

    Leech and Short (2007:39) define *deviation* as "A purely statistical notion: as the difference between the normal frequency of a feature, and its frequency in the text or corpus".

    The existence of deviation in any literary work, particularly in poetic discourse, is very familiar, which is systematically specified to perform aesthetic effects.

2- Types of deviation

Short (1996: 37) divides *deviations* into seven types, as follows: Discoursal, semantic, Lexical, grammatical, morphological, phonological and graphological, and internal and external deviations.

2- 1 Discoursal deviation

According to Short (1996:37-43), discourse refers to larger units of language, units larger than the sentence, connecting different sentences together to form higher organizational units of language. Through a discoursal level, groups of sentences are organized into paragraphs, groups of paragraphs into sections and groups of sections into bigger chunks of discourse. For example, the present work, which is a written discourse, organizes groups of sentences into paragraphs, groups of paragraphs into sections and groups of sections into chapters. A general assumption in language is that one must begin at the beginning of a sentence. Discourse should also begin at the beginning of discourse as well as at the beginning of sentences. For example, if one begins one's speech *with and, in conclusion, as a result,* etc one would look strange and deviant, just like one who ends with *first of all, let me explain everything for you*, etc. Many poems start at places where a lot look deviant. "The prototypical discourse situation which springs to most people's minds is that of a conversation between two people".(ibid, 39)

2- 2 Semantic deviation

Leech (1969:49) indicates that semantic deviation "in poetry, TRANSFERENCE OF MEANING, or METAPHOR in its widest sense, is the process whereby literal absurdity leads the mind to comprehension on a figurative plane". In other words, semantic deviation is a controlling feature of poetic language, especially of modern poetry. He introduces semantic deviation as some kind of "nonsense" or "absurdity" where the meaning is

not in evidence at first sight and we have to search for it. He argues (ibid) that "it is reasonable to translate 'semantic deviation' mentally into 'non-sense' or 'absurdity'". Thus semantic deviation is concerned with the notion of meaning. Meanings are formulated with words and sentences in particular contexts. So, this notion is controlled by rules of the language. In short, semantic deviation refers to "meaning relations which are logically inconsistent or paradoxical in some way" (Short,1996:43). Therefore, metaphors show this trait of deviation and they can be considered as 'nonsense'. So, within this sort of deviation poetry can produce foregrounding. Those deviant properties create new meanings that will not be found in dictionaries. Consider Leech's expression "the sky rejoices in the morning's birth" (Leech,1969:153). In normal usage the sky could not rejoice. Rejoicing- the habit of becoming happy- is associated with humanness. However, sky cannot be happy as it is inanimate.

Leech (ibid:48) asserts that there are two types of signals that may help us to know whether a statement is literal or figurative ,i.e. (non-literal). The first signal is a textual one, i.e. the language is identified in some unusual way and does not show literal sense. The second signal is a contextual one; that is the statement has a literal sense but the context in which it is identified is inappropriate. He adds that in semantic deviation it is important to be concerned with what he refers to as tropes; foregrounding or irregularities of content. According to him these can be classified into three headings:

2.2.1 Semantic oddity: refers to semantic bizarreness of expression. There are five kinds of semantic oddity: pleonasm, periphrasis, tautology, oxymoron and paradox.

2.2.2 Transference of meaning: according to his classification, transference of meaning is divided into four kinds

of figurative language: synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor, and simile.

2.2.3 Honest deception: he divides honest deception into three tropes; hyperbole (exaggeration), litotes (understatement) and irony.

2.2.1 Semantic oddity
A. Pleonasm
Pleonasm is " any expression which is semantically redundant in that it merely repeats the meaning contained elsewhere, in what precedes or follows it", (Leech,1969:132) for example my female grandmother, a false lie.

Pleonasm can be considered as a fault of style because a proceeding or a following meaning is repeated. It contains humorous uses. (ibid:137).

B. Periphrasis (circumlocution)
Crystal (2003: 344) defines periphrasis as "a term used in grammatical description to refer to the use of separate WORDS instead of INFLECTION to express the same grammatical relationships". He gives the example of the comparison of adjectives involving both inflections (for example, *happier; happiest*) and periphrastic forms (*more happy; most happy*), although most adjectives use only one or the other of these possibilities.

C. Tautology
Tautology is a statement in which one says the same thing twice using different words when one does not need to, for example, "my grandmother is female; that lie is false; he sat alone by himself". Tautologies do not tell us something about the world, rather they tell something about the language; in other words, they are uninformative.

Like pleonasm, tautology is regarded as a device of limited usefulness in literature.(Leech, 1969:137).

D. Oxymoron

Abram (2009: 239) asserts that oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two words of seeming contradictions are placed together in language unit, for example, *crud, kindness, or to make haste slowly*.

E. Paradox (contradiction)

Short (1996:43) states that paradox is a character of semantic deviation which has "inconsistent semantic relation".

A paradox is a statement which, though it seems on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd, turns out to make good sense. A good example in point is Donne's 'Death, thou shalt die'. This statement is paradoxical "because we cannot reconcile the idea of death with the idea of Death dying in any logical way"(Peck and Coyle, 2002:165-166).

2.2.2 Transference of meaning
A. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole or the whole for a part, the special for the general or the general for the special, as in

Many *hands* make light work.

Two *heads* are better than one.

Similarly, we have *seven sail* for *seven ships* or a *Croesus* for a *very rich man.* (see Leech, 1969).

B. Metonymy

Crystal (2003: 291) defines metonymy as "a term used in semantics and stylistics, referring to a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute of an entity is used in place of the entity itself".

Yule (2010: 121) asserts that metonymy can be a type of relationship between words, based on a close relation in everyday experience. That close relation can be used on a container-contents relationship such as 'bottle/ water'; a whole-part relation such as 'car/ wheels' or a representative- symbol relation such as 'king/ crown'. Other examples of metonymy include: *scepter* for *sovereignty*, the *crown* to mean the *monarchy*, the *stage* for the *theatrical profession.*

C. Metaphor

Leech (1969:150-151) states that "metaphor is so central to our notion of poetic creation that it is often treated as a phenomenon in its own right, without reference to other kinds of transferred meaning". A metaphor is a way of describing something by comparing it to something else which has similar qualities, without using *like* or *as*: *she was a caged bird, to use her own metaphor, that had to break free; he was a lion in the fight.*

D. Simile

A simile is a figure of speech in which two distinct things are compared by using the words *like* or *as*: *she is like a rose; he fought like a lion; he was as high as a kite.*

2.2.3 Honest deception

A. Hyperbole

It is a way of describing something by saying it is far much bigger, smaller, worse, etc. than it really is, for example, *to wait an eternity, rivers of blood.* Leech (1969: 167-168) calls hyperbole as an exaggeration in colloquial speech. Hyperbole deals with personal values and feelings, i.e. by using subjective claims where we could not check unless we will be able to go inside the skull of the individual about whom the claims are

made. Leech (ibid) proposed that hyperbole is "a figure which stretches, perhaps almost to breaking point, the communicative resources of the language, it is difficult to see how a failure to say enough about subject can overstep the bounds of reason or acceptability".

B. Litotes

Leech (1969: 168) states that litotes is a figure of understatement i.e., it has not the potential absurdity of others tropes. The influence of litotes depends on what the person know of the situation. Litotes deals with specific sort of understatement in which the speaker can use a negative expression while the positive one is more forceful such as "The food is not bad at all" (when we mean 'good').

C. Irony

Leech (1969, 172) states that irony has two meanings direct and oblique; we say one thing but we mean something else. It is used in most cases for some criticism.

Leech and Short (2007: 222) argue that irony "as a double significance which arises from the contrast in values associated with two different points of view." "Brutus is an honorable man" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*) is an example of irony.

2.3 lexical deviation

Lexical deviation is a very important aspect in poetry. The language of poetry sometimes deviates lexically. The poet may break the rules of word formation and coin strange and new words. Lexical deviation deals with the departure from the norms of the lexis in the language. In dictionaries, lexemes are conventionally listed as separate word. For example, TALK is a lexeme which subsumes *talk, talked* (past and past participle), *talks and talking*. Thus, when we get elements that are made

by breaking this rule they are considered as instances of lexical deviation.

Poets deviate when they mix words of different variety that do not normally exist. They deviate lexically by coining new items or coining the existing ones into new ones which did not exist before. Short (1996:45) calls this technique 'neologism.

The types and instance of lexical deviation in literature in general and in poetry in particular can be classified as shown below:

A. Neologism

A neologism is a new word or expression or an existing word used with a new sense, for example, *sputnik, a stronaut, disco* and *punk rock*. Poets often form new words during their writings "which did not previously exist" (Short, 1996: 45). Leech (1969: 42) asserts that neologism may be used by ordinary people in ordinary conversations as the readiest and most effective way to express their feelings.

B. Functional conversion

According to Short (1996:45), functional conversion is another way of innovation of words which refers to the process of converting an item from one word-class to another without changing its form, i.e. without the addition of an affix. As Short (ibid: 46) mentions Hopkins's example 'the achieve of, the mastery of thing'. In this example the poet did not form exactly a new word but an alternative to a word already existing. Similarly, we have

> *The police released him,*
> *The police ordered his release.*

C. Compounding

Yule (2010: 55) asserts that compounding is simply the joining of two or more separate words to form a single word, as in *'doorknob, bookcase, textbook, a alongside, long-haired,*

breakfast, home-made, high-pitched, dry-clean, forget-me-not, devil-may-care, a fast-food-restaurant, etc.

D. Nonce formation

A nonce word is a word coined and used by a speaker accidentally or consciously for a particular occasion. Crystal (2003: 315) states that a once-formation may be units larger than the word. The reasons behind using these forms are that the speaker cannot remember a particular word, so coins an alternative one, or a speaker is restricted by conditions to produce a new form as in newspapers headlines.

E. Archaism

Short (1996: 46) believes that archaism is "a way in which writers can produce foregrounding through lexical deviation". In other words, an archaism is an old word or expression that is not used anymore; thou art (you are) and in sooth (in truth) are archaism.

2.4 Grammatical deviation

Mentioning the grammar of a language, involves mentioning a largely complex set of engaging units and structures, i.e. the rules of that language.(Simpson,2004: 6).

Short (1996:47) asserts that English has a great many grammatical rules. It follows then that the possibilities of grammatical deviation are also quite large. Grammatical deviation includes violating these grammatical rules (the structure of the language). Any language structure has its own way of arrangement of the words and sentences. In its broad sense, it deals with the ordering of words and sentences. Therefore, when a specific word order or sentence structure does not a bide by the rule of that particular language structure, we can say that there is grammatical deviation. In poetry, it is customary to find various types of grammatical deviation other than the breach of the rules of word order. For

example, breaking the rule of conjunction is one type of linguistic deviations.

Word-order violations are the most recurrent grammatical deviations in the history of English poetry. For example, adjectives can come after the noun, i.e. as a post nominal modifier (big chair- chair big). (Short, 1996:47)

2.5 Morphological deviation

One way of producing deviation at the morphological level is by adding an ending to a word that would not normally be added to (Short, 1996:51). Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words. The lower unit of syntactic organization is the word. Morphemes are the building blocks for words.

Morphemes can be classified into free morphemes and bound morphemes (Yule, 2010: 68-69). Free morphemes can stand alone by themselves as single words, for instance *'mean* and *leave'.* By contrast, bound morphemes are forms which cannot stand alone by themselves and are usually related to other forms, such as ' *re-*, *-ist*, *-ed*, *-s*). These are called affixes. Affixes are classified into prefixes (added to the beginning of the word), e.g. *un-*, *mis-* as in *unclear*, *misunderstanding* and suffixes (added to the end of the word), e.g. *–less*, *-ish* as in *meaningless, reddish*.

2.6 Phonological and graphological deviation

Short (1996: 57-59) asserts that because the sound dimension of language belongs to speech and because most of literature is written, there is relatively little scope for phonological deviation. Graphological deviation is marked off from other forms of writing by graphological means in that it has lines which do not run out to the right hand edge of the page and begins all lines with capital letters.

Phonological deviation deals with the sounds and pronunciation. It particularly means that sometimes readers of a poem are obliged to pronounce some words oddly or stress the

syllable that is not normally stressed in order to keep a rhyme scheme, for example the word 'wind' when pronounced as /waind/ (Short, 1996: 54).

So, phonological deviation includes violating particular sound patterns. When specific sound patterns and pronunciation break the regular pattern, we have phonological deviation.

In poetry, phonological deviation is used for rhyming influence. Phonological deviation can be mostly associated with graphological deviations.

2.6.1 Types of phonological deviation

Phonological deviations are of various types. These include alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, rhythm and meter.

A. Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound, as a consonant or cluster, at the beginning of two or more stressed syllables, as in:

> God **m**akes **m**an; **m**an **m**akes **m**oney; **m**oney **m**akes **m**any **m**en **m**ad from stem to stem.

B. Assonance

According to Short (1996: 111) assonance is "the term traditionally reserved for patterns of repetition between vowel sounds" in two or more words in a line of poetry.

> For example, c**oo**l bl**ue** sh**oe**s.

When Wordsworth writes of 'A host of golden daffodils' there is a repeated 'o' sound: /hɘust/, /gɘuld/ (Peck and Coyle,2002:23).

C. Rhyme

Short (1996:113) indicates that rhyme is "usually reserved to refer to the final syllables of different lines of poetry when the vowel and syllable- final consonants (if any) of the words in

question are identical, e.g. *five* rhymes with live (adjective). In other words rhyme is the repetition of the phonemic sound of a single syllable at the end of a line. Other examples include, c**ool,** sch**ool/** st**ill**, h**ill/** b**ore**, m**ore**.

D. Rhythm

Peck and Coyle (2002 : 67) show that rhythm refers to "the flow or movement of a line whether it goes fast or slow, is calm or troubled".

Arp and Johnson (2006:838- 839) state that rhythm concerns any wavelike repeating of motion or sound. In poetry, the rhythmic influence is based on what a sentence means, and the rhythmic forms succeed each other so regularly that the rhythm can be measured, and the poetry can be divided into metrical feet.

E. Meter

Short (1996: 127) defines meter as "an extra layer of rhythmic structuring". In other words, what is special and not found in other written texts or somewhere else than in poetry is meter. Leech (1969:111) argues that the structure of meter in poetry depends on the regular change of a stressed and an unstressed syllable.

2.7 Internal and external deviation

Many a most linguist divide deviations into two main types: the first one is called 'internal deviation' and the second 'external deviation'. Leech and Short (2007: 44) affirm that properties of language within a text may depart from the norms of the text itself. To be more exact, "they stand against the background of what the text has led us to expect". This is internal deviation, which is most remarkably frequent in poetry. The second type, namely external deviation, is intended to occur against some norms outside the world of the literary work itself.

Short (1996:59) believes that all the above mentioned types of deviation belong to the spheres of external deviations- deviations from some norm which is external to the text. However, it is possible to consider other types of deviations from the norm. In other words, when a poet sets a particular type of norm in his/her writing, and then after some time violates the rule that he himself has set and formulates what is known as internal deviation, i.e. deviation against a norm set up by the text itself.

Leech (1969) remarks that external deviation is a normal feature of literary work. In other words, "a linguistic deviation is a disruption of the normal process of communication; it leaves a gap, as it were, in one's comprehension of the text".(p. 61).

2.8 Still I Rise

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.

5-Does my sassiness upset you?
6- Why are you beset with gloom?
7- 'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
8- Pumping in my living room.

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

13- Did you want to see me broken?
14- Bowed head and lowered eyes?
15- Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
16- Weakened by my soulful cries.

17- Does my haughtiness offend you?

18- Don't you take it awful hard
19- 'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
20- Diggin' in my own back yard.

21- You may shoot me with your words,
22- You may cut me with your eyes,
23- You may kill me with your hatefulness,
24- But still, like air, I'll rise.

25- Does my sexiness upset you?
26- Does it come as a surprise
27- That I dance like I've got diamonds
28- At the meeting of my thighs?

29- Out of the huts of history's shame
30- I rise
31- Up from a past that's rooted in pain
32- I rise
33- I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
34- Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
35- Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
36- I rise
37- Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
38- I rise
39- Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
40- I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
41- I rise
42- I rise
43- I rise.

2.8. 1 Theme

The theme of this poem is self-respect. It shows how the poet can overcome difficult situations with her respect. She does not let difficulties put her down ever. Angelou shows her sense of confidence, African- American pride, feminism, independence and beauty.

Still I Rise is a poem of inspiration, consisting of eight stanzas written in 1978 together with a collection of other poems in a book with the same title.

Angelou is a person who has suffered much. In fact, no writer has ever expressed the black experience with such passion as Maya Angelou. She represents her experiences within her works and *" Still I Rise "* is one piece which includes several of her experiences. Angelou produces an inspiring message to those who are suffering what she has suffered, namely ' racism '.

The poem has a positive and strong tone so that it should be read with confidence, particularly in the parts " I ' ll rise and I rise", in order to show her strong desire to do things even if they are difficult.

The main theme in the poem is racial discrimination. This poem describes a strong person living with a positive attitude. It tells the readers that all humans have strength inside them that helps them to overcome any difficulties. It also shows the importance of being proud and hopeful at all times.

This poem focuses on the whites' message, namely whites are superior to blacks. The poem shows the confidence in being black and the instability of being white. Angelou is black but she challenges history using her pride to fight the white race.

The poem is historically established, referring several times to slavery, "past of pain" and "gifts of ancestors". She is talking in the present, having overcome all of the sufferings of her past and starting the rest of her journey, to show great determination to be a strong African American woman.

The clause "I rise"/ "Still I rise"[1] has been used repetitively throughout the poem to show that the poet is

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[1] The word 'still' is conjunct defined as a type of adverbial which is used to show the connection between a sentence and an earlier sentence. Common conjunctions in English include, among others, *in conclusion, therefore, consequently, so, thus, still then, yet, etc.*

determined to overcome each and every minute of oppression and her oppressors.

Imagery is dominant in this poem, particularly when Angelou asks her oppressors some questions. These images are obviously shown in the lines "I walk like I've got oil wells/ pumping in my living room" and "Shoulders falling down like teardrops" and "I dance like I've got diamonds / At the meeting of my thighs". There are also repeated images of air and dust rising. The imagery is transmitted through the use of similes and metaphors. The use of figurative language shows us a very clear picture of what the poet means; it usually carries a strong emotion. The poem is more a narrative than anything else since Angelou interacts with her audience as she speaks about the highs and lows of her life and history. Angelou shows her pride as an African- American woman and refuses playful images into the poem while questioning her oppressors 'you, the white race'. Stanzas which raise questions show the strong relationship between the poet and the audience.

2.8. 2 Poem Analysis

The title of this poem shows that no matter what happens to the poet, she has decided to overcome it. She shows her passionate and powerful style with natural and exciting words. She explains her style by using literary devices such as simile, hyperbole, personification, etc. She points in different parts of the poem to her African- American origin and shows great pride in being Black.

In the first stanza, the poet is addressing the white man ('you') who has the money, and who, therefore, is the one who decides what 'history' is and what history is not. The poet translates her home style in this poem by using a very simple and natural vocabulary that can easily be understood. Angelou cleverly puts the words together in order to make the readers understand the idea that she wants to convey. For example, in

this stanza the word 'lies' is a very simple word but the significance of it is very great. It shows that the poet is fighting against these 'twisted lies' and 'bitter' times. Examples of alliteration are there in lines 1 and 3: '**m**ay write **m**e' and '**m**ay trod **m**e'. In line 4 we have consonance 'still, I'll'. 'l**i**ke', 'r**i**se' , 'B**u**t', 'd**u**st' exemplify assonance. 'like dust' is an example of simile. These devices aim at catching the reader's attention. To be more exact, they reinforce the meaning of the words and give them emphasis by linking them together.

In the second stanza, *sassiness* means the state or quality of being shameless or arrogantly self-confident. Angelou uses irony when she asks the white man if her sassy ways upset him. She does not care what other people think. She uses irony in order to deflate scorn or send up her subject. She is pleased to see the influence of her words on the white man's face. The poet walks with great self-confidence as if she were rich enough to own oil wells at home. Here Angelou shows an image, namely "I walk like I've got oil wells / pumping in my living room" to give the reader a clear picture of what she means and to convey her strong feelings. The word " 'Cause" in line 7 is an example of graphological deviation. 'Cause' (spoken) is an informal way of saying 'because'.

In the third stanza, the poet uses the plural forms 'moons' and 'suns' instead of the singular forms 'moon and sun', as we have only one Moon (or moon) and one Sun (or sun). This is an example of grammatical deviation. The line is also a kind of hyperbole (exaggeration) showing how she constantly elevates herself up emotionally to keep strong and high just like the moon and the sun that rise everyday regardless of what happens. She uses hyperbole to express her strong feelings and to create a strong impression. 'L**i**ke' and 'h**i**gh' are examples of assonance.

In the fourth stanza, the poet is certainly asking her addresses (racists, misogynists haters in general) whether they rejoice in her defeat and loss of self- confidence. 'Bowed head'

and 'lowered eyes' can also symbolize one's soul and all human beings'. She shows that her 'enemy' would love to see her collapse. This is a simile comparing how one's shoulders drop as one loses confidence in one's self when falling down, exactly like tears that drop down a person's face when harmed or beset. We have an image of dropping shoulders like tears flowing from one's eyes; the tear itself is associated with sadness. This picture makes the image stronger, and the tone she uses shows her great determination to face difficulties.

In the fifth stanza, the poet is laughing at racists who have nothing but contempt for black people. The phrase "gold mines" (noun + noun) refers to the key of her success and her fixed sense of pride. These are expensive things which the poet relates to the value of herself. This is a metaphor. The use of 'awful' (adjective) in line 18 instead of 'awfully' (an adverb) is an example of grammatical deviation. The word "Diggin' " in line 20 is an example of graphological deviation. 'L**i**ke' and 'm**i**nes' are examples of assonance. '**L**augh', '**l**ike' and '**g**ot', '**g**old' are examples of alliteration.

In the sixth stanza, the poet is stating that the addressee can talk about her what he wants to: he can look at her with disgust, he can even hate her, but she does not care. She is sure she will rise. In this stanza, the poet plays with words, saying 'shoot me with your words', but we know that words cannot shoot, 'cut me with your eyes', though eyes cannot cut, 'kill me with your hatefulness', despite the fact that hate cannot kill. These are examples of semantic deviation. '**M**ay' and '**m**e' (lines 21, 22 and 23), and '**you**', '**you**r' are examples of alliteration. 'k**i**ll', 'w**i**th' and 'l**i**ke', 'r**i**se' are examples of assonance. 'Like air' is a simile.

In the seventh stanza, the poet uses irony when she asks if her sexiness is a problem in the eyes of the white man. In line 27 she uses metaphor when she describes her way of dancing as if she got a diamond. Diamond is an expensive and valuable stone so she is worth as much as everyone else so that

she should receive just as much respect and love like others. She uses metaphor to make an association between the literal and the figurative picture. 'Do**s**e', 'a**s**', 'surpri**s**e' are examples of consonance. '**I**', '**I**'ve' and '**m**eeting', '**m**y' are examples of alliteration.

In the eighth stanza, the poet mentions huts in which American slaves are housed. Here, the poet uses semantic deviation 'huts of history's shame'; history does not have huts. She uses the feature [+animate] instead of [-inanimate] when talking of 'huts'. In line 33 she uses metaphor, comparing herself with a 'black ocean'; the color *black* is used to create a sense of fear and evil. A 'black ocean' characterizes an ocean that is full of hardness, where things appear or happen unexpectedly. This description shows how her own life is full of horror. The metaphor she shows a relation between various areas of experience. 'Huts'/ 'history' and 'past'/ 'pain' are examples of alliteration. Consonance (in the sense of harmony of words) is found in 'welling' and 'swelling'. Line 35 contains assonance in 'beh**i**nd' and 'n**i**ghts'. ' **G**ifts', '**G**ave' and '**th**e', '**th**at' are examples of alliteration. The last three lines 'I rise' are examples of repetition which show her dogged determination.

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