CHAPTER-VI
ALL GOD’S CHILDREN NEED TRAVELLING SHOES

What quickens my pulse now is the stretch ahead rather than the one behind, and it is mainly for some clue to where I am going that I search through where I have been, for some hint as to who I am becoming or failing to become that I delve into what used to be. I listen back to a time when nothing was much farther from my thoughts than God for an echo of the gutturals and sibilants and vowellessness by which I believe that even then God was addressing me out of my life as he addresses us all. And it is because I believe that, that I think of my life and the lives of everyone who has ever lived or will ever live, as not just journeys through time but as sacred journeys.

-- Frederick Buechner,
The Sacred Journey

We had come home, and if house was not what we had expected, never mind, our need for belonging allowed us to ignore the obvious and to create real places or even illusory places, be filling our imagination.

-- Maya Angelou

On January 20, 1993, Maya Angelou became the only second poet to read at a U.S. Presidential inauguration, Robert Frost was the first. She read her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” at President Bill Clinton’s swearing–in ceremony; two of the poem’s stanzas suggest some of the themes and meanings of All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes.

Lift up your eyes upon
The day breathing for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.
Women, children, men
Take it into the palms of yours hands.
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness (1986: 64).
These words suggest the impetus for Angelou’s journey to Africa, for her quest to don travelling shoes that will help her to search out a place to call home. Believing that she must be an active traveller, a person seizing the day for “new chances, for new beginnings,” (1986: 64), she boldly sets out for Ghana. She undertakes the journey fearlessly, not “yoked eternally” (1986: 64) to any kind of brutishness that might deter her.

The fifth volume of Maya Angelou’s autobiography, *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes*, tells (1986) the story of Angelou’s four-year residency in Ghana from 1963 to 1966. When the narrative was published twenty years later, it was greeted with praise and disappointment. Eugenia Collies, on the one hand, proclaimed the book to be “the apex toward which the other autobiographies have pointed” (1986: 24), while Russell Harris, on the other hand, told Angelou the book was too “pedantic,” too academic. Except for the quest idea, these was not much of a story line. She replied: “I think you might need another reading, because there are other stories in the book” (1989: 168).

One major story found in *Travelling Shoes*, one that most critics overlook, is Angelou’s love for her son. The volume begins with a reiteration of Guy’s car accident, the episode that concluded *The Heart of a Woman*. In *Travelling Shoes* Guy recovers from his injuries and continues to mature. A student at the University of Ghana, he seeks independence from his mother as he attempts to define his own separate goals.

Another major story is Angelou’s exploration of her African and African American identities. She explores this conflict as it exists for the American expatriates living in Accra as well as for the groups of people—Banbara, Keta, Ahanta – who still
observe the traditions of their ancestors. At the end of *Travelling Shoes* these issues are resolved when Angelou decides to return to the ways and culture of the United States. Surrounded by friends at the Accra airport, she leaves Guy in Africa to finish his education. At the same time, she forsakes her newly embraced alliance with Mother Africa, claiming she is “not sad” to be leaving Ghana (209).

The narrative point of view in *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* is again sustained through the first-person autobiographer in motion. She moves from journey to journey, propelling the story from one place to another. It is not accidental that the word travelling appears in the title. The autobiography begins with Maya’s and Guy’s travel to Ghana and ends with her anticipated departure to America in the concluding lines of the autobiography. Told from the first-person point of view, the fifth volume, like the others, is subjective. Owing perhaps to the dominance of the travel motif, it is at the same time more tightly controlled.

In *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes*, the African narrative is interrupted by a journey within a journey. Angelou accepts the offer to join a theatrical company in a revival of French Writer Jean Genet’s play *The Blacks*. Three years earlier *The Blacks* shocked its off-Broadway audiences with the force of its racial commentary. In that performance, described in *The Heart of a Woman*, Angelou triumphed in the sinister role of the white queen. Now the play was being revived, and Angelou was asked to repeat the role on a limited tour, with performances in Berlin and Venice. The consequences of the Berlin journey are analysed later in this chapter, in the sections on setting and characters. In terms of point of view, the German sequence offers a glimpse of Angelou
as traveller in an alien land with a history of racial prejudice quite different from what she experienced in America.

As in all her volumes, the title contributes to the plot and to the thematic impact. Angelou states that the title of the fifth volume comes from a spiritual about walking in Heaven: “I’ve got shoes / You got shoes / All of God’s children got shoes” (“Icon” 1997). The Travelling shoes that belong to the narrator and to all children of African descent restate the journey motif. As she told George Plimpton, the book is about “trying to get home,” which for Jews would mean Israel and for black Americans would mean Africa (1994: 20).

On a much lighter note, the travelling shoes might also refer to the pair of feet made famous by writer Langston Hughes in his Best of Simple: “these feet have walked ten thousand miles working for white folks and another ten thousand keeping up with coloured” (1989: 100). In his arousing way, in this story about Simple’s weary feet, Hughes suggests the long stretch of unwanted travel taken by African Americans in the last century of so-called freedom. Angelou speaks passionately of Hughes in Caged Bird as an example of the “wit and humour” that he shares with Dorothy Parker and Edna St. Vincent Millay (and with Angelou herself) (“Icon” 1997).

Setting as place, always an important element in Angelou’s writing, assumes its greatest prominence in the fifth volume. Most of the action is set in Accra, the capital of the West African nation of Ghana. The minute details of contemporary African life, contrasted against ancient customs, lend the volume an exotic backdrop from which to view personal events like Guy’s recovery from the car crash or Maya’s feelings of
dislocation. The African setting plays an important, almost inseparable part in her character development.

Additionally, in presenting the African setting as a major component of the fifth autobiography, Angelou, like other writers before her, describes to an American readership her impressions of what white explorers once called the Dark continent, dark suggesting to them Africa’s quality of mystery as well as the dark complexion of most of her people. In the first sentence of Travelling Shoes, she describes the secret night breezes and how they vanish into the “utter blackness”. Angelou is often intrigued by blackness, and in one of the most passionate moments of a February 1996 interview on Lifetime television, she begins to praise the dark skin of Mrs. Flowers, her mentor in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, simultaneously stroking her own face in a recognition of black pride. As described in Travelling Shoes, the dark skin colour of Ghanaians remind her of peanut butter, caramel, and other treats from childhood. She admires Sheikhali, her suitor from Mali, for the purple hues of his skin; her beautician, Comfort Adday, for being the colour of “ancient bricks” (37); and her roommate Alice windom for her “dark, mahogany colour” (30). The interaction of skin tones with clothing, and landscape contributes significantly to the unfolding of character and setting.

Further settings on the periphery of the African locale are Berlin and Venice, the two cities as the White Queen in the revival of The Blacks. Although Angelou’s inclusion of the Berlin-Venice tour might be viewed as a digression that detracts from the African-based setting, the theatre sequence helps contribute to her character development and, through use of contrast, to the profound exploration of her feelings for a homeland. The Berlin setting offers Angelou an unusual perspective. She is remote enough from
Africa to gain new insights into the behaviour of black Americans and the nature of white racism, both reflected against the German terrain. She gains a new respect for African Americans, missing them now because they seem more spirited than the Africans, she has encountered in Ghana. These interruptions in the Ghanaian setting are effective in giving *Travelling Shoes* a universal quality as the autobiographer reaches beyond her private life into a conflicting world.

In terms of plot development, *Travelling Shoes* is consistent with the earlier volumes. Each is designed to be a continuing journey of the self. The plot of *Travelling Shoes* begins in Ghana and terminates with Angelou’s decision to return to America, thus ending both the series and the journey. She leaves for conscious reasons involving her heritage, her craft, and her private life, especially as it relates to her son.

Angelou’s autobiographies receive their shape from personal and cultural referents rather than from the necessities of plot, as in mystery novels or spy fiction. Whereas a novel is a kind of narrative that must be concluded, an autobiography is an unfinished narrative, told in the first person by the adult who recollects it years later. *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* cannot conclude the series because there are potentially more autobiographies to be written, from images and actions that remain in the repository of memories that connect her to the people around her.

Soon after volume five opens, the narrator, now thirty three years old relates the horrifying event of Guy’s car accident that results in a broken arm, leg and neck. When asked why she repeated the accident scene, which also ends *The Heart of a Woman*, Angelou gave two reasons: first, each book must stand alone; and, second, it was necessary that she explains who she was and what she was doing in Africa (“Icon” 1997).
In order to infuse the African setting with a credible plot, Angelou needed to detail the causes for her lengthy stay. She intensifies the early pages by dramatising her long wait for medical reports from a hospital totally foreign to her. Many parents’ greatest fear is the death of a child; this is the most unspeakable of all catastrophes. Angelou universalises this fear in Travelling Shoes, taking readers close to death but then reversing the expectation. Readers, raised on popular melodrama, expect Guy to die and Angelou to fall apart. But true to her point of view, Angelou elucidates the slow pain of Guy’s recovery. There is no catastrophe. As time passes, he gradually moves out of danger and regains his strength. Simultaneously, Maya demonstrates her increased maturity. Like most people whose children grow up, she starts to appreciate her freedom now that the burdens and responsibilities of motherhood are lessened. Aware that she must respect Guy’s choices, she consciously ceases to make him the centre of her activities. She forms new friendships – with her roommates, African poets, African American writers and artists living in Ghana.

At the same time, Angelou strengthens her ties with mother Africa. In travelling through eastern Ghana, she forms allegiances with people she meets and also becomes spiritually attached to her venerated ancestors. These intimate racial, political and scarred connections with Africans allow Angelou to recognise but not resolve the dual nature of her heritage. By the end of Travelling Shoes she has explored her roots, has come to terms with much of her past, and has decided to return to America to begin a new phase of her life, one that assimilates the African and American elements of her character: “I think in All God’s Children, I have written about some of the complexity of
returning, at one and being unable to return (to Africa) and yet being so grateful that I had made the attempt” (“Icon” 1997).

The mother/son plot, like the African/African-American plot, is dual in nature. To develop the plot is to create a series of active/counteractive rhythms. The confrontations between love and desertion, between knowledge and misunderstanding, are two examples of the shifting story that shape the series.

For Angelou, though, the termination of plot seems less successful here than in her other volumes, possibly because she forces her narrator/self to present too sharp a separation between herself and Africa. Four years earlier, African American novelist Alice Walker attempted in *The Colour Purple* (1982) to unify similar geographical (Africa/America) and familial (sister Celie/Sister Nattie) themes. At the end of the novel, Nettic arrives from Africa with her husband, Samuel, their two children, Olivia and Adam, and a young African woman, Tashi, who is Adam’s wife. Everyone has come, united at last in one colossal family reunion. But Walker’s finale is too perfect, too out of place in a novel that so consistently raised the questions of race and gender in America. Director Steven Spielberg, in his 1985 film version of *The Color Purple*, ignored many of the book’s socio-economic issues but retained Walker’s joyous resolution, visually amplified through the use of dazzling African costumes and children’s clapping games.

Like Walker, Maya Angelou attempts to tie together the divergent strands that inform the fifth autobiography. Thus, the final scene at the Accra airport is crowded with a farewell contingent of sages, poets, expatriates, dancers, dignitaries, college students, professors and children. But as John C. Gruesser points out, the end of Angelou’s journey is not convincing. The conflicts inherent in the book remain unresolved and the
ending is “too easily manufactured at the last minute to resolve the problem of the book” (1990: 18). Similarly, Deborah E. McDowell (1986) finds the resolution of the plot to be stereotyped and unauthentic.

As Angelou admits, her view of Africa is not completely authentic. At times she romanticises her experiences: “But whether I like it or not, I am also captured by the romance of history” (“Icon” 1997). In *Even the Stars Look Lonesome*, she describes the illusion called Africa: “Despite a spate of nature commentaries, and despite endless shelves or travel books, Africa remains for most of us a hazy and remote illusion” (65).*

In Ghana, Angelou was to some degree, and quite reasonably so, caught up in a vision of Africa similar to what a generation of black Americans experienced at home in the 1960s: identification with the Pan African Movement and with West African hair styles, clothing, language, music and other manifestations of African culture. In *Travelling Shoes*, she embraced these styles, hair and dress in particular. In one revealing episode, Angelou is at first horrified when her beautician, comfort Adday, styles her hair into ugly strands like the “pickaninnies” in old photos (37). Comfort Adday apparently amused, goes on to reshape, tighten, and cut Angelou’s hair so that by the end of the session her customer looks just like a Ghanaian. Angelou self-consciously recalls this moment knowing that to “look like” a Ghanaian meant only a cosmetic transformation and not a genuine assimilation into West African attitudes and traditions. It seems that here and in other episodes of *Travelling Shoes*, the contradictions of race, culture and nationality are too strong to disappear and too fragile to preserve.

*Maya Angelou. *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* (New York: Random House, 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.*
The ambivalent conclusion of *Travelling Shoes* involves her departure not only from Ghana but from Guy as well. Her journey in Africa over, she waits at the Accra airport for the plane to return her to America. Using the phrase “second leave-taking” (209), she suggests that her awaited voyage from Africa to America is an ironic echo of the voyage long ago, when West African slaves were chained and wrenched from their homeland and families. She parallels her departure from Africa with her departure from Guy, the emotional centre of her autobiographies, the son who in *Singin’ and Swingin’ and Getting’ Merry Like Christmas* she left in America with his grandmother so that she could tour Europe with *Porgy and Bess*. In *Travelling Shoes*, though, she leaves Guy in Africa as she prepares to return to America.

The reversals at the end of *Travelling Shoes* suggest the apparent end of Angelou’s mother/son plot. Guy stands apart from her, surrounded by his African friends. In this, her last depiction of Guy in the narratives, Angelou roots him in the culture of Ghana, thus returning him to the place of his ancestors. He is magically transformed from uncooperative son to newly born American African, free to continue his education at the University of Ghana while she is free to explore her potential as performer, poet, spokesperson and autobiographer.

In a metaphor that effectively captures the mother/son confrontation in this last volume Angelou compares her maternal role to an apron string, untied and in shreds. The same metaphor might apply to the plot design that ends the autobiography: she waits until the final pages to tie the unstrung narrative threads together, offering her reader a vision of Guy as a lord, perhaps a chief. Angelou seems to create, in this departure scene, a sunny, almost regal atmosphere, as if to protect herself from acknowledging the reality of
so absolute a separation. In giving her son back to Africa, to his ancestors, she appears to be constructing a perfect ending. Instead, it seems to fall short of the forthright self-assessment that readers have come to expect in her autobiographies. As in her dissolving romance with Africa, her farewell address to Guy shows the rough ends of the narrative are still unravelled.

As Maya Angelou brings the mother/son confrontation to its paradoxical conclusion, readers observe that it is the mother who finally does forsake the son, in order to rediscover the special rhythms of her African American heritage. While some critics praise Angelou for her show of independence, others question the wilful cutting of the maternal ties that she established throughout the series. When asked about this paradox, Angelou emphatically stated that “If you are really a mother you can let go. It’s like love of any sort” (“Icon” 1997).

At the threshold of the New World, Maya Angelou readies herself for departure, letting readers go now that the conflicting elements of point of view and narrative structure have been settled. Ironically, though, the book ends not in departure but in stasis. Without her son and without full acknowledgement of her Ghanaian heritage, she stands at the Edge of Africa, at the Accra airport, with the journey Westward anticipated but not accomplished, with the narrative actually unfinished.

What Angelou the autobiographer does not recount is yet another story. It involves the plane that in actuality arrived, at the Accra airport. The Pan Am plane had come via Johannesburg, South Africa. There were Boers (White Dutch South Africans) on the plane:

They tried their best to keep the blacks sitting together and not intruding on the flight . . . I had been away from that idea of prejudice and
segregation for years. I had been in Egypt and in Ghana and getting on that plane, leaving my son and all, and finding myself in the atmosphere of Arkansas. (“Icon” 1997).

The joys of departure surrender to the horrors of reentry of much more to come. Despite the feel of an ending, the structure of *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* is open to a continuation of the plot into a conceivable sixth volume.

Angelou’s intense suffering over Guy’s injury sets both the tone for this pensive fifth volume and greatly reinforces the strength of her character. She first describes herself negatively, in terms of darkness and shadows. She is a “dark spectre” who walks “the sweltering white streets” (4). A shadow, a ghost, Angelou is reduced to silence. Readers need to interpret the silence not only as a present response but also as a duplication of the past. For her silence is reminiscent of her muteness following the rape by Mr. Freeman described in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and of her unspoken terror in *The Heart of a Woman* when friend and novelist John Killens telephones Maya in Chicago to warn her of a crisis between Guy and a Brooklyn gang.

Angelou develops her self-portrait through a combination of present incidents and past recollections, in which events and responses are often meant to recall earlier moments. Thus, in *Travelling Shoes* she thinks warmly of her mother, Vivian Baxter, remembering how she had instructed her Maya and Bailey in the art of survival, much as Maya has instructed Guy, and how Vivian was her “doting mother” (151). On her journey through rural East Ghana she remembers the compassion her grandmother, Annie Henderson, had shown to African Americans travelling during segregation, when they were denied bed, board, food and decent toilets. When Maya and her roommates
reluctantly hire a village boy named Kojo to do house work, she associates his intense colour and delicate hands with her brother Bailey.

Kojo is also an obvious substitute for Guy, previously her in-house son, now grown and at university, out of his mother’s reach. Maya comments on her feelings for Kojo; “[T]he old became new and I was pinched back into those familiar contractions” (57). In this passage she uses birth images – “pinched” and “contractions” – to describe the painful effect of Kojo’s presence and of Guy’s past on her own rebirth.

Sometimes the reference to a family member is barely perceptible, as in her recollection that African Americans who appear child-like might actually be acting bravely, like “humming a jazz tune while walking into a gathering of the Ku Klux Klan” (76). The tactic of humming as a way to dissipate fear is an unmistakable analogy to the scene in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* where Mama outlasts the three “powhitetrash” children by humming a hymn (23-27). Or, Angelou laughs at the idea of her father, Bailey Johnson Sr., leaving the comfort of San Diego to make the acquaintance of her suitor, Sheikhal, as required by Malian custom. She remembers that Bailey Sr. believed Africa was inhabited by “savages” (94).

As in the four previous autobiographies, Maya’s character in *Travelling Shoes* is tested and determined through her actual and remembered confrontations with her son Guy. She seems to vacillate between wanting to supervise him and wanting to let him go. When she learns, for instance, that Guy is having an affair with a woman a year older than herself, she is so angry that she threatens to strike him. Guy simply patronises her, calling her his “little mother”, politely insisting on his autonomy (*Travelling Shoes*, 149).
In another painful moment from the same book, Guy cooks Maya a fried chicken dinner on her return from Germany and then announces that he has made plans for the evening. Again she is “speechless”, unable to respond to Guy’s words (186). Alone and unhappy, as she was at the conclusion of The Heart of a Woman, Angelou analyses her feelings toward her son and questions the strength of their love for each other. So adept at expressing her sorrow over Guy’s accident, she again verbalizes her pain, although in this case not in dread of her son’s impending death but of his growing up, stretching beyond her ability to love or control him. This fluctuation is apparent earlier, in Singin’ and Swingin’ and Gettin’ Merry Like Christmas, where Angelou eloquently captures the feelings of guilt that a working mother experiences in slighting her child. Antithetically, in this fifth volume, she conveys her fear that it is the mother who will be slighted.

It is largely this ability to connect emotionally, as mother and woman, that makes Maya Angelou so popular an autobiographer. She has the ability to communicate her misfortunes and make them accessible to sensitive readers, whatever their race or gender. She has the verbal power, through her own self-portrait of a black woman, to eradicate many of the surrounding stereotypes by “demonstrating the trials, rejections, and endurances which so many black women share” (O’ Neale 1984, 26).

Through much of the fifth volume, Angelou’s time-consuming concern for her son is paralleled by her efforts to form new relationships with black women. In Ghana, she shares a bungalow with two roommates, Vicki Garvin and Alice Windom. Both Alice and Vicki were educated in America; Alice having a Master’s degree from the University of Chicago and Vicki a Master’s in Economics along with a national reputation in labour organising. Yet neither woman is able to get the kind of work in
Ghana that reflects their capabilities. Angelou considers herself lucky to have been hired by the University of Ghana as an administrative assistant and lecturer. Although the job does not include tuition or other privileges, she confesses that she loves getting paid, just to look at the currency, with its portrait of a black President.

Fortunately, Angelou is able to find an American enclave in Ghana where she can express her shifting impressions of the country and of her place in it. Humorously dubbed the Revolutionist Returnees, the small group of African American Expatriates recognises her struggles – the conflicting feelings of being “home” yet simultaneously being “home-less”, cut off from America without tangible roots in their adopted black nation. Of her various friendships with the African Americans, she is closest to author and journalist Julian Mayfield. Like Angelou, Mayfield and his wife, Ana Livia, are identified with a movement that would enable future African Americans to live again on African soil. Sadly, Mayfield did not “come home” to Africa. He died in the United States in 1984, where he had accepted a position at Howard University, an historically black institution located in Washington, D.C., an ocean away from the promised land.

Angelou was also a friend of the revered American writer, W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois was one of the twentieth century’s most influential theorists of black thought and philosophy. Author, critic, Editor, Du Bois was best known for his book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), in which he describes an American Negro culture rich in mythology, music, and spiritual traditions. He also was instrumental in promoting African American writers and artists during the Harlem Renaissance (1919 to 1929), in his role as Editor of the journal, *The Crisis*. Unlike the Mayfields and many other expatriates, Du Bois and his wife, Shisley Graham, found sanctuary in Africa when, shortly after Ghana claimed
independence in 1957, President Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1970) offered them permanent residency. “To many of us,” exclaims Angelou, “he was the first American Negro intellectual” (124). An advocate of world peace, Du Bois joined the Communist Party in the early 1960s. With Du Bois as an accessible model, Angelou rekindles her own leadership qualities, which were at their height when she had been Northern coordinator of Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, but which had understandably diminished following her commitment to Vus Make and her anguish over Guy’s accident.

Angelou seems resentful of Du Bois’s wife, comparing her to Africa’s tallest mountain, Kilimanjaro, a comparison she also used in describing Vuusmzi Make’s patronising attitude toward her; Vus was “the old man of Kilimanjaro” and “Maya a tiny shepherd” (McPherson: 1990, 98). The highest mountain in Africa—majestic, remote, located in Tanzania – Kilimanjaro appears to be an appropriate symbol for Maya’s distaste of Shirley Graham’s isolationist profile. Maya’s hostility will create problems for Angelou later in *Travelling Shoes*.

Although geographically far from America and disillusioned by Dr. King’s non-violent strategies, Angelou nonetheless makes a commitment to his 1963 march on Washington. In a show of support for his internationally publicised civil rights demonstration, she and a small group of African American friends – Julian Mayfield, Alice Windom, Ana Livia, and others - organise a parallel demonstration in Ghana. Noticeably shifting her perspective from “I” to “we”, Angelou outlines their plans, which include writing a letter of protest against racism and conveying it to the American ambassador. Sadly, their enthusiasm for King’s historic project is dampened by their
denunciation of his pacifist tactics; they hosted their experiences in America of being harassed by Whites, then being told to be passive about it. As Angelou told Marney Rich, King’s idea of “redemptive suffering” seemed irresponsible; she had never seen a person redeemed through anguish (1989, 127). Despite her own restrained participation in the protest, Angelou renews her tenuous bonds with King, a commitment that helps prepare her psychologically for her later allegiance to Malcolm X, so vividly described a few pages later in the text.

For the African Americans in Ghana, Dr. King’s march has grievous emotional repercussions. On the night before the Ghanaian solidarity demonstration, as King is about to achieve his greatest public triumph, W.E.B. Du Bois, weak, ailing and five years shy of one hundred years of age, dies. When they learn of his death, the Revolutionist Returnees transform a politically restrained rally into a wake to commemorate the spirit of a man who made immeasurable contributions to African American life and letters. One participant starts to sing “oh, oh, Freedom” and is joined by the diverse crowd, which includes farmers, vacationers, teachers, students, even Guy, who has had training in protest marches. Angelou writes about this ceremony using the collective form: “We were singing Dr. Du Bois’ spirit, for the invaluable contributions he made, for his shining intellect and his courage” (124). This great American editor and statesman had become a symbol to African Americans living in Ghana, for he had been welcomed to the promised land, in life and in death.

The tone of the march suddenly shifts, however, from a tribute to Du Bois to an unfounded sunrise tirade against two soldiers, one of them black, who are raising the flat at the American Embassy. The sequence concludes with Angelou’s invective against the
government of the Untied States for its centuries of exploitation of black people. At the same time, though she chastises the United States, she still longs for full citizenship, which she cannot expect to acquire in Africa. Angelou’s alliance with the African American community often focuses on their indignation over the Ghanaians’ refusal to fully welcome them.

Angelou and her small group of African American colleagues are the people most involved in the planning for Malcolm X’s visit to Ghana in 1964. They help arrange his itinerary and they introduce him to African leaders. When Angelou first met Malcolm X, he had espoused the teachings of Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad, the prophet who claimed that white people were devils. In *The Heart of a Woman*, she vividly depicts Malcolm’s initial impact on her: “I had never been so affected by a human presence” (167). In 1964, en route from a pilgrimage to the holy Islamic cities of Mecca and Jiddah, the Black Muslim leader experienced a political transformation. Although he still believed that America is a racist country, he no longer held the conviction that whites were inherently evil.

For Malcolm X, the return visit from Mecca to Cairo to Ghana is intended to garner support from black world leaders for his organisation of African unity, a nationalist group not directly governed by the Nation of Islam. He also wishes to contest racist tactics within the diaspora, those areas occupied by displaced peoples of African descent. In a complicated sequence in *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes*, Angelou cites several references to the slave trade from Malcolm X’s speeches in Ghana. If racism in America ceased, he argued, then the civil-rights movement would be as unnecessary as the public sale of slaves once was. Malcolm X stressed the unity of all
black people, encouraging Angelou to come home and organise his political alliance, as she had once coordinated Martin Luther King’s.

His congenial manner dwindles, though, when Angelou, as she drives him to the airport, makes some injudicious remarks about middle-class black organisations like the urban league and the NAACP. He further admonishes her criticism of Shirley Graham, Du Bois’s still mourning widow, for failing to relate to the African American protest movement. Once again Angelou expresses bitterness at Shirley Graham’s prestige among the Ghanaians, having earlier compared her to Kilimanjaro. Malcolm X bluntly labels her comments “very childish, dangerously immature” (144). Stung by his scolding, she is in tears. After his departure from Ghana, she avoids any personal analysis of Malcolm X’s chastisement using the collective rather than the singular pronoun to describe the sadly altered state of the so-called Revolutionist Returnees. Malcolm’s parting reduced them to “a little group of Black folks, looking for a home” (146).

Angelou draws on vivid episodes like the visit of Malcolm X to create dynamic characters. These confrontations, interspersed with her own larger narrative of self-development, read like short stories or vignettes. Most of them are focused not on renowned world leaders but on the natives of Accra and its outskirts.

Angelou’s interchange with the African houseboy, Kojo, is the most delightful of these character sketches, since it entangles her once again in a reluctant maternal role. She is required to go to Kojo’s school to discuss his grades with the headmaster. She, Vicki, and Alice are coaxed into supervising homework assignments in Mathematics and mapmaking. Maya is forced into a dialogue with a mere boy of fourteen, who insists on
his right to debate personal issues such as whether she should or should not accept the gift of a refrigerator from her Malian suitor.

For two months Angelou assumes that the often irritating houseboy is poor and that he is manipulating her. To her surprise, in the yard one morning she discovers a group of richly clad people who are Kojo’s relatives, who have come with container upon container of vegetables to thank Maya and her roommates for helping educate him. “Auntie Maya” is so struck by the splendour of the gifting ceremony that she falls apart after the family leaves. She lies in bed drinking gin and pitying the unwanted children of Africa.

Angelou’s relationships with contemporary Africans have a positive effect on her self-awareness and her personal growth. Seeing Maya’s disintegration following Guy’s car crash, Julian Mayfield reproaches her for becoming a wreck: “Hell, it’s Guy whose neck is broken. Not yours” (10). He introduces her to a prominent African woman folklorist Efua Sutherland, Director of the National Theatre of Ghana, a woman of compassion and sensitivity. Their friendship is spontaneous from the start. Through the solace of Brother Mayfield and sister Sutherland, Maya is able to cry for the first time Guy’s accident. Sutherland retains a strong connection throughout the autobiography, offering advice and reinforcing Angelou’s sense of belonging to the Ghanaian intellectual community. Angelou strengthens their friendship by helping design costumes and train actors at Efua’s National Theatre.

A less typical friendship involves Comfort Adday, neither a colleague nor an intellectual but a stenographer/hairdresser. Comfort is lively and amusing; she loves to laugh and tease Maya about her age, her hair, her single child and her sex life.
Regrettably, Comfort starts to lose weight and strength over a period of several months. She confesses to Maya that she is the victim of a spell put on her by her lover’s wife and leaves for Sierra Leone to consult a woman who will cleanse her and remove the Voodoo spell. Refusing Angelou’s offer of money, she requests only that her client be there when she returns. A few weeks later Maya learns that Comfort died in Sierra Leone.

Another short-lived friendship is with Grace Nuamah. Ghana’s most esteemed folk dancer, Nuamah has the responsibility of performing at major state functions. She also teaches dance at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, where Angelou holds her job of administrative assistant. One day Nuamah announces that her faculty pay is missing. Maya later recovers Grace’s missing money, which she discovers in a brown envelope on the desk. In thanks, Nuamah generously introduces Maya to a Mr. Abatanu.

Unfortunately, Abatanu dislikes Maya’s directness and his pretensions. After the failed matchmaking, Grace expresses disappointment with Maya’s behaviour, for she had offered the valuable male friend as a favour. A woman trained in African traditions, insists Grace, would have accepted the kind offer. Angelou’s insensitivity to African customs signals the end of their closeness. She mentions Grace Nuamah only one more time in the text, listing her among the group of colleagues bidding her farewell at the Accra Airport.

Angelou is not always so discouraging when approached by African men. Recalling her affectionate portrayals of dancing partner R.L. Poole in *Gather Together in My Name* and of Fiance Thomas Allen and Allen’s rival Vus Make, in *The Heart of a Woman*, it is apparent that she has enjoyed her physical intimacy with black men. The
most romantically depicted male in *Travelling Shoes* is Sheikhali, a wealthy importer from Mali, a country Southwest of Ghana. She describes him as “sublimely handsome,” (66), very tall, with dark skin and elegant robes. She agrees to go to his apartment and soon afterward Sheikhali proposes marriage, but there is a hitch. As is customary among Muslim men in West Africa, he already has eight children from two women, only one of them his wife. He wants Maya to be his second wife, willing to adapt to the marriage customs of Mali and reject her “white woman way” (94) of being impatient. As a strong and independent woman, Maya finds his proposition unacceptable.

Many of the African men whom she admires are prominent in Ghanaian politics. She is an ardent supporter of Kwame Nkerumah, the Ghanaian President who helped found the Pan-African Movement in the 1940s and 1950s and the organisation of African Unity in 1963. His leadership was overthrown in 1966, a few years after Angelou’s departure. After he was deposed, Angelou stated that her presence there would be unstablising and that she would not return (Carwana 1989: 33).

The legendary Nana Nketsia satisfies Angelou’s yearning for a place within both cultures. He holds impressive British degrees and is the first African Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana; at the same time he is a tribal leader, paramount Chief of the Ahanta people of Ghana. One evening Nana Nketsia sends his Chauffeur to Maya’s bungalow with instructions that she come to his *Ahenfie*, the “house of the Nana” (108). She is impressed with the elegant sofas and spacious surroundings. He introduces her to nationally recognised poet Kwese Brew. During the conversation, Nana reveals his booming voice and his fierce pride at being an African, what Angelou ironically calls “the passion of self-appreciation” (110). Kwesi Brew, more even tempered, explains
Ghanaian traditions and proposes a toast in honour of the African character. These two powerful men appear occasionally in the book. Brew, in fact, becomes a special friend, someone who protects her when they travel together. Angelou repeated to an interviewer what Brew said about her to a foreign authority: “she may not be a Ghanaian, but she is a sister” (Randall-Tswuta 1989: 106). Both Nana and Brew participate in her sendoff at the Accra airport.

Most of Angelou’s encounters with African women and men are positive ones that contribute to her growing intoxication with Africa as she tries to learn about her heritage. Angelou’s identification with the Mothers Continent is personal and patriotic. Her stature and skin color, indicate her African ancestry, but so do the cultural contributions of American/African people, whose blues songs, shouts, and gospels echo the rhythms of West Africa. Le Roi Jones affirmed the connection between African and American Negro Music in his book *Blues People* (1963), when he wrote that the blues and other black forms “could not exist if the African Captives had not become American Captives” (17).

Maya Angelou, as both narrator and central character in her own story, is concerned with capturing the rhythms of Africa as they affect her reinvigorating ties with her ancestors. In her travels through West Africa she discovers certain connections between her American traditions and those of her ancestors. She considers herself almost home when an African women, Foriwa, identifies her as one of the Bambara group on the basis of similarities in heights, hair, and skin colour. She connects with a number of African mother figures, among them Patience Aduah, who, like Momma Henderson, is generous in giving away food to the people of her village.
When she first comes to Accra Angelou wants to nestle into Ghana “as a baby nuzzles in a mother’s arms” (19). This fantasy subsides as she realises that the Ghanaians are not interested in extending the embrace. She notices that the black Americans in her group share similar delusions of being loved by the Ghanaians. The Revolutionist Returnees come to Africa full of desire, the hate being ignored or misunderstood in their new home.

Always in search of home, Angelou realizes that she must remain a while longer in Ghana if she is to uncover the fullness of spirit and depth of character toward which she strives. Her ambivalent attitude toward living in Ghana provides *Travelling Shoes* with its richness of texture and depth of analysis. Angelou invariably tries to make connections to decrease the difference between the culture of the ancestors and the culture of the slaves.

When Angelou listens to one of Nana Nkestia’s speeches, for instance, she notices that the chief’s majestic voice captures the rhythms of black preachers and that the African experience is similar to her own background. She is caught between identifying with things African and using African culture as a way to acknowledge the abandoned country of her birth. Her need, here and elsewhere, to underline Ghanaian associations with African American parallels demonstrates what Dolly A. McPherson calls Maya’s “double-consciousness” – a vision of herself containing both African and American components (1990: 113). Through her identification with Africa, Angelou finds the context in which to explore her selfhood and to reaffirm the meaning of motherhood.

Angelou’s self-discovery is augmented when she temporarily leaves the African continent in the mid 1960s to tour Berlin and Venice in a limited number of performances.
of Genet’s *The Blacks* with the original cast. Her view of Berlin involves a meticulously
drawn account of the German mentality, which is balanced against the warm reunion with
the original off-Broadway cast, among them familiar names such as Cicely Tysons, *The
Star of Sounder* (1972) and the *Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1974); Lou Gossett
Jr; who has had numerous supporting or leading film roles, including *The Deep* (1977)
and *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982); and the actor James Earl Jones, more recognized
today as the voice of Darth Vadar in the *Star Wars* series (1977-1983) and for his throaty
commercials for Bell Atlantic than for his outstanding performances in such films as *The

In the foreign, theatrical setting of Berlin, Angelou revives her passion for African
American culture and values, putting them into perspective as she weighs them against
Germany’s history of military aggression. In 1914, in the First World War, Germany, in
alliance with Austria-Hungary and several other nations, declared war on France and
Russia. Twenty-five years later, in 1939, Germany occupied Czechoslovakia and then
Poland. In the Second World War, more than six million Jews were exterminated because
the leader of the Nazi party, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), deemed Jews, as well as Negroes
and Gypsies as racially inferior.

Angelou and the other actors angrily recalled the story of U.S. athlete Jesse
Owens, the track star who won four gold medals in the Olympic games of 1936, which
were held in Berlin Owens set several Olympic records during these games, as well as a
world record with the United States 400-meter relay team. But Hitler, then Chancellor of
Germany, refused to recognise Owen’s triumphs because they invalidated his theory of a
master race – a race of Aryans genetically superior to other ethnic groups on the
argument that Jesse Owens was racially inferior, Hitler denied the athlete his rightful claim to the medals.

One morning, fortified by the presence of an uninvited Israeli actor named Torvash, Maya accepts a breakfast invitation with a well-to-do German family whom she suspects shares similar notions of racial inferiority. At the gathering, family members and guests take turns telling stories about race. Angelou relates the Brer Rabbit story in which the threatened animal outwits the oppressor. The German tells a parable in which a bird, symbolising a Jew, is trampled in dung. The verbal violence of the narratives escalates to such a point that Angelou becomes sick in the garden. Her disgust is by no means lessened when she learns that the host, a collector of African art, has only invited her to his home because he hopes that she will get him some good buys in Ghanaian folk art.

Angelou says little about the performances in Venice, other than to mention the disturbing fact that angry protesters picketed *The Blacks* for its sexual content, calling Genet’s play “filth” (175). Despite the potential for confrontation, the coast manages to go onstage without major incident. The theatre sequence ends and Angelou retrace her steps, reentering Africa by way of Egypt. Although her character growth is primarily nurtured in a West African setting, her encounters in Italy and especially in Germany help shape and broaden her constantly changing vision. The mixture of fascist surroundings, black performances, and Jewish survival sharpens her perceptions of African Americans at home and abroad. These perceptions contribute to her reclaiming herself and her evolution as a citizen of the world. The universality of experience in *Travelling Shoes* anticipates, to some degree, the acclaimed poem, “On the Pulse of
Morning” read three decades later at the 1993 inauguration of President Bill Clinton. In this powerful Ode, Angelou addresses all the people of the world, including the Germans. The evocative poem has a worldly wise maturity to it, a wisdom that must be attributed in part to her knowledge of the countless places she has been.

As a character, Maya clearly demonstrates her maturity in *Travelling Shoes*, she matures as a mother who, concerned for the well-being of her son, is apparently willing to let him go his own way, both in terms of his sexual options and his determination to reside in Ghana. She matures as a woman, no longer the victim of good-looking men but one who can assess mutual motives and feelings. She matures as an American, able to perceive the roots of her identity and capable of cultivating those roots into a consciousness that affects her whole personality.

The themes that Angelou develops most fully in her fifth volume are motherhood, race, and the search for an African identity. As we have seen throughout this work, motherhood is Angelou’s most consistent theme and in *Travelling Shoes* it is consistently presented, from its beginning where Maya awaits reports of her son’s injuries, to its close, where she ends her conflict with her son, bidding him farewell. The theme of motherhood does not, however, consume the text, as it does in *Gather Together in My Name* or *Singin’ and Swingin’ and Gettin’ Merry Like Christmas*.

In *Travelling Shoes*, perhaps because she is a seasoned mother or perhaps because she is looking for a positive way to close the series, Angelou develops a theme of motherhood which suggests liberation. Her initial response to Guy’s announced independence is to retreat quietly into the corners of his life, knowing that she can no longer keep him under her wing. These feelings are complicated by a mutual recognition
that part of motherhood is letting go: they both need to be free of one another. The narrator keeps confrontation at a minimum with the mother/child opposition dramatized only twice, first, when she challenges Guy with the news that he is having an affair and second, when he announces, following her return from the Genet tour, that Maya’s mothering is finished and that his life “belongs to me” (186).

It seems that by the time the autobiography ends, Guy has reached that stage of development where, as one of God’s children, he has earned the right to wear travelling shoes. While these shoes will carry him away from his mother, they simultaneously confirm his autonomy, his independence. Yet it is not the end, for as Angelou insists, motherhood is never over. From her account of Guy’s car accident, to her affectionate remarks about her own mother and grandmother, to placing her son in an Africa from which she herself felt excluded, Angelou infuses her autobiographies with maternal consciousness. What is more, the theme of motherhood is reflected in numerous sub-themes: Angelou’s affection for Kojo, the Ghanaian houseboy; her delight in being called by the African title “Auntie” by Nana Nket sia’s charming children and other children from Cairo on the outskirts of Accra. The phrase has a maternal connotation that pleases her.

In *Travelling Shoes*, the theme of motherhood parallels the theme of race, indicated on one level by Angelou’s quest for acceptance by Mother Africa. The paradoxical term Mother Africa, which she uses occasionally, is a popular one that has been articulated by numerous West African and American writers of this century. The Senegalese poet David Diop, for example, uses the phrase as both title and subject in “Africa (to my mother)” (1961). From a more critical perspective, race is a theme
through which Angelou illustrates connections and confrontations. She extends her awareness of racial antagonisms to include not only the struggles between Africans and Americans but also between Germans and Jews. The racial components of these cultures interwoven and inseparable, provide Angelou with rich opportunities for thematic development.

Finally, Angelou links racial matters to her relationship with Africa and to her desire to be rooted. The Dark Continent calls so loudly that it becomes a desired presence, embodied in the figures of a dancer, a chief, a laughing ancestor. Lyman B. Hagen, in his 1997 book on Angelou, compares her quest for identity to the one Alex Haley describes in *Roots* (1976), a book that heavily influenced African American attitudes toward Africa. However, becoming African is an unattainable goal that falls outside of her desire for assimilation: “whether she likes it or not, she begins to discover that she is a Black American, and that in Africa she is a Black American in exile” (McPherson 1990, 113).

Woven into her self-discovery are her feelings of guilt as a citizen of the United States of America, a country instrumental in maintaining a slave trade for almost 250 years. By extension, the theme of racial identity encompasses a variety of other motifs: ancestry, cultural differences suffering, inequality, and homecoming. These thematic issues function simultaneously with a plot to lend a dynamic configuration to Angelou’s autobiographical statements.

In *Travelling Shoes* Angelou makes superb use of language in recording moments of emotional intensity. At the beginning of the narrative she describes going back and forth from the hospital, emerging from the cool interior into the bright sunlight as she
herself drifts in and out of her son’s pain, which is also her pain. During the summer of 1962 she feels “gobbled” down. The days remind her of “fat men yawning after a sumptuous dinner” (4).

Later, she records the horrors of slavery as she travels through western Ghana, known for Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle, the former holding forts for slaves. Angelou imaginatively captures the agony of being a slave. She observes the now quiet forts and envisions bloodied people, silently enduring their chains: “they lived in a mute territory, dead to feeling and protest” (97). The potency of the passage is reinforced through simple language and repeated images of silence, an image Angelou has used in other volumes. Her use of the word mute emphasises the silent misery of the slaves and Angelou’s connection to them and their agony. Her written words in this eulogy attempt to break the silence of that “mute territory” (97) inhabited by the enslaved Africans, who were never free to respond to their assailants or to narrate the grim story of their captivity.

Angelou’s language in capturing the final separation from Africa of her ancestors has an awesome potency, a feeling of loss. But she does not allow the book to end on a desolate note, choosing instead to create, in the last full paragraph, a praise song that stands apart from her softer, more subtle style. In an extremely condensed history of slavery in America, she evokes the blues, the dance, the gospel, as they were carried through the streets of Massachusetts and Alabama, changed but still African; for Africa is still in the body and in the hips, in a “wide open laughter” (209). This passage, which represents the author at her most jubilant, is followed by one simple concluding statement: “I could nearly hear the old ones chuckling” (209). In a book that constantly
alternates between African and African American voices, Angelou gives the last words to the “old ones,” to her Ghanaian ancestors, but filtered through her own experiences and the rich traditions of the spiritual and cultural forms that are part of the oral folk tradition. Yet her identification with the oral tradition of West Africa is not a permanent choice. For Angelou recognises, at the end of All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes, that if she is to become a contemporary writer, she must put on her travelling shoes for the long journey home.

Angelou’s two years in Ghana in the early 1960s provide the material for the fifth book in her continuing autobiography. The title, All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes is obviously desired from the popular spiritual, “All God’s Children Got Wings”. The clever reference to the ongoing search for place is couched in terms mindful of our ultimate home. Angelou’s love of the spirituals of her African-American people, and her deep sense of religion is threaded throughout her works. Writing this when in her fifties, Angelou looks back on life situations of her thirties. Once again, the current autobiographical canons of a black woman writer are addressed in this book.

All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes opens by going back in time to Angelou to mother, who anxiously waits at the hospital following Guy’s car accident. In an image that parodies the well-fed mother of The Heart of a Woman, Angelou compares her anxiety over Guy to being eaten up:

July and August of 1962 stretched out like fat men yawning after a sumptuous dinner. They had every right to gloat, for they had eaten me up. Gobbled me down. Consumed my spirit, not in a wild rush, but slowly, with the obscene patience of certain victors. I became a shadow walking in the white hot streets, and a dark spectre in the hospital (HW).
The months of helplessly waiting for Guy to heal are like fat, stuffed men, a description that evokes memories of Reverend Thomas, who ate at Momma Henderson’s chicken, and of Mr. Freeman, who ate in Vivian Baxter’s kitchen and raped her daughter. Guy’s accident has an effect similar to the rape; Angelou retreats into silence. She is a “shadow,” “a dark spectre,” (1990: 257), a Black mother silenced by the fear of her son’s possible death.

Guy does recover. Their relationship, which like the autobiographical form itself is constantly in flux, moves once again from dependence to independence, climaxing in a scene in which Angelou learns that her son is having an affair with an American woman a year older than herself. Angelou at first threatens to strike him, but Guy merely parts her head and says: “Yes, little mother. I’m sure you will” (1990: 257-76). Shortly afterwards Angelou travels to Germany to perform in Genet’s The Blacks. Guy meets her return flight and takes her home to a dinner of fried chicken he has cooked for her. Then, asserting his independence, he announces that he has “plans for dinner” (1990: 257-76).

Reading between the texts, we see Angelou alone again before a plate of chicken, as she was at the conclusion of The Heart of a Woman. In the Travelling Shoes episode, however, the conflicting feelings of love and resentment are more directly stated:

He’s gone. My lovely little boy is gone and will never return. That big confident strange man has done away with my little boy, and he has the gall to say he loves me. How can he love me? He doesn’t know me, and I sure as a hell don’t know him (1990: 257-76).

In this passage Angelou authentically faces and records the confusions of seeing one’s child achieve selfhood, universalising the pain a mother experiences when her “boy” is transformed into a “big confident strange man” who refuses to be his mother’s “beautiful appendage” (Gather Together).
Yet through much of the fifth volume, Angelou continues to separate herself from Guy and to form new relationships. She shares experiences with other women, including her two roommates; she befriends an African boy named Koko; she enjoys her contacts with the colony of Black American writers and artists living in Ghana; and she continues her sexual involvement with men. The love affair which seems most vital in *Travelling Shoes*, however, is with Africa herself. In her travels through West Africa Angelou discovers certain connections between her own traditions and those of her African ancestors. She takes great satisfaction in her heritage when she is mistaken for a Bambara woman. Among African women she discovers strong mother figures, most notably Patience Aduah, whose custom of giving away food by the campfire evokes memories of Momma Henderson’s having shared her table with Black American travellers denied rooms in hotels or seats in restaurants during the era of segregation in much of America. Through her identification with Africa, Angelou reaffirms the meaning of motherhood.

Although captivated by the oral traditions of Mother Africa, Angelou chooses to leave, at the conclusion of *Travelling Shoes*, in order to return to the rhythms of Southern Black churches, the rhythms of her grandmother. In so doing, however, she must also leave her son. The final scene in the book is at the Accra Airport. Angelou is saying farewell to her friends and, most specifically, to Guy, who “stood, looking like a young lord of Summer, straight, sure among his Ghanaian Companions” (1990: 257-76). Through this suggestion of Guy as an African Prince, Angelou roots him in the culture of West Africa.
If we look at the closure of *Travelling Shoes* on a literal level, then Angelou’s son is a college student, staying on to complete his degree. But if we accept a grander interpretation, Guy has become, through his interaction with the Ghanaians, a “young lord” (1990: 257, 76) of Africa, given back to the Mother Continent freely, not lost, like so many other children, in mid-passage or in slavery. Angelou lovingly accepts the separation, knowing that “someone like me and certainly related to me” (1990: 257, 76) will be forming new bonds between himself and Mother Africa. Guy is making an essentially free choice that centuries of Black creativity in America have helped make possible: “Through the centuries of despair and dislocation we had been creative, because we faced down death by daring to hope” (1990: 257-76).

As in the four earlier autobiographies, this one closes with the mother-son configuration. But in the final, puzzling line of *Travelling Shoes* Angelou swings the focus away from Guy and towards the edge of the Canvas: “I could nearly hear the old ones chuckling” (1990: 257-76). In this spiritual call to her ancestors Angelou imaginatively connects herself to the Ketans and the Ghanaians, to the people placed in chains, to all of God’s children who had “never completely left Africa.” Ironically, the narrator herself has not completely left Africa either. The rhythmic prose that concludes the fifth volume is an anticipated departure to a new world, with the narrator still at the airport. As in the other volumes, the closure is thus another opening into the next narrative journey.

In this book, the noted black playwright picks up life in her mid-30s. It is the eve of the near-death of her only son; and, the metaphorical loss of a mother whose man child claims independence. In self-conscious prose, Angelou recounts her adventures as an
Afro-American expatriate in the Ghana of the mid-to-late 1960s. There she rejoins a disgruntled and confused group of black Americans at odds with the fatherland that rejects them as first class citizens and the idealised motherland that fails to live up to their naive assumption.

In Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana, “by accident” Angelou discovers a representative cross section of urban and rural blacks which she subdivides into four groups—teachers and farmers, American government reps, businessmen, and political emigres. She aligns herself with the latter.

This extravagant peopling of All God’s Children is interwoven with adages and bets of folk/street wisdom salted with Angelou’s reflections as she contrasts the black American and the black African:

Was it possible that I and all American blacks had been wrong . . .? could the cutting treatment we often experienced have been stimulated by something other than our features, our hair and colour? Was the odor of old slavery so obvious that people were offended and lashed out at us automatically? Had what we judged as racial prejudice less to do with race and more to do with our particular ancestors’ bad luck and having been caught, sold and driven like beasts? (1991: 35).

The answer comes, ironically, later, from the splendid declaration of a black king: “we are black, BLACK! And we give no explanation, no apology” (1986: 4).

Maya Angelou tends to play the coquette at moments and confession is forthcoming only by way of device. Angelou’s pen wavers when the focus turns inward, and her language becomes careful. We can feel her not saying certain things. Her posture is discrete and ladylike as prescribed by protestant tradition. Sans philosophical weight, Angelou nevertheless recreates her attitude with dramatic clarity. She evokes the temper of the Civil Rights era with unquestionable authenticity. While its language runs
to the lay and not the literary, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* remains the contender for Angelou’s *magnum opus*. This should not and does not diminish *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* as a thoroughly enjoyable segment from the life of a celebrity. It is an important document drawing much needed attention to the hidden history of a people both African and American.

Because *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* is the fifth volume of Maya Angelou’s autobiography, it is tempting to ask how one writer could stretch a life through so many works. The easy answer is that she can do so because her life has been more exciting more adventurous, more fraught with challenge than most lives. But the truth is Maya Angelou could have probably written five volumes of her life if she had spent all of her days alone in a 12-by-12 room with nothing but a pen and paper.

Yet what endears Angelou to the reader is both none of this adventure and exotic variety and all of it. It is not her action, but the meaning she gives to each of them that makes her life story important. There is always present her Mother Wit, her humour, her sincere search for significance where there seems to be none. She not only lives history but in a quiet way gives us her interpretation of it, never imposing herself, but always provoking thought.

Only occasionally is the writing in *All God’s Children* brilliant, but when Angelou weaves her stylistic magic she does captivate: “The breezes of the West African night were intimate and shy, licking the hair, sweeping through cotton dresses with unseemly intimacy, then disappearing into the utter blackness” (1986: 11-12). That is the first sentence of the book and one of the more memorable.
As Patrice Gaines has observed, “Her true strength is as a story teller, although her first vocation was as dancer and actress. Just as Angelou the raconteur charmed an audience during lectures and readings, she chars her readers as well. She knows how to weave a tale, draw the most out of a moment, “play an audience to the hilt”. It is not the way Angelou strings words together that she will be remembered when this book is put away, but the stories of her life, the anecdotes about famous people are her heartfelt search for what she calls “home” (1986: 11).

This search or “home” centres on Angelou’s realisation that her son Guy has been a kind of personal home for her and she has been his home. The thought comes to her after Guy is in an automobile accident. Daily, she stands by his hospital bed, while he lies motionless in a body cast with one arm and one leg fractured and his neck broken. It was her son’s accident that put Angelou in Ghana. The two had travelled from Cairo where they had been living, to Ghana so Guy could attend the University of Ghana in Accra. Angelou planned to settle in Liberia.

But after the accident, needing to be near Guy in the hospital, Angelou joined the group of black American immigrants with ease, sharing with each member the need to find a “home” where they were neither hated nor abused because of their colour.

Frequently, the black immigrants were met with disdain from Africans, a reaction that grew out of cultural differences as well as years of miseducation about each other. Yet, on the surface, the two groups interpreted each other’s actions as arrogance.

Despite the clashes between cultures there are numerous times when the differences between the two groups dissolve and their histories mesh. In one incident, some Ghanaian women mistake Angelou for one of their own. So sure are they of their
assessment that they speak to her in their native tongue and wait for her answer. Tearfully they recount for her the story of how years ago many adults were dragged from their village by slave traders while the children escaped by hiding in the woods.

“They are sure you are descended from those stolen mothers and fathers” (1986: 11), an interpreter explains to Angelou, as the writer trembles with joy, tears trackling down her cheeks.

In all of its manifestations Angelou’s search for “home” – a place or condition of belonging – should be a universal journey understood by most readers. Although her story is one of an actual journey to another continent, it is also the story of a spiritual search that takes place inside every person who quests after self-knowledge.

No genre has captured the Afro-American literary imagination as has autobiography. Beginning with the slave narratives – Frederick Douglass’s Narrative Of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845) and Linda Brent’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) among the best examples—Afro-American writers have returned compellingly to the genre that selects and records the incidents of a life and shapes them into an image of self.

Volumes one to five cover miles of geographical territory and milestones of personal history. The fifth volume departs from the singular constant of Afro-American autobiography, the confrontation of a Black self with a racist American society that ever threatens to destroy it. Angelou’s first four volumes record that confrontation, illuminating an aspect unique to the Black woman. In her life, the oppression of race joins with the oppression of gender to create “the rust on the razor that threatens (her) throat” (1986: 17).
The personal survival and triumph recorded in *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* are not the consequence of a confrontation with a racist American social structure. This is, rather, a confrontation with an African heritage, a heritage she has viewed primarily in abstract and sentimental terms: Africa was an “ancient tribal soul,” “an all sepia paradise”, a mother into whose arms she could “snuggle down” much as “a baby snuggles in a mother’s arms” (1986: 17). The book records the sometimes painful process of exchanging that faulty and naive understanding of Africa for one more realistic and complex. Its unifying, if sometimes overdrawn theme and metaphor is *home*.

Like so many Afro-Americans in the sixties, Angelou regarded Africa as a haven from racist America. They formed an “unceasing parade of naive travellers who thought that an airline ticket to Africa would erase the past and open wide the gates to a perfect future” (1986: 17). In Africa, they would be received in “the welcoming arms of the family . . . bathed, clothed with fine raiment and seated at the welcoming table” (1986: 17). In other words, Africa would be the home that America never was and could never be. But this fantasy is shattered soon after Angelou’s arrival in Ghana.

Angelou arrives in a Ghana basking in its five-year-old independence and lauding the achievement and promise of its President, Kwame Nkrumah, W.E.B. DuBois is already living there as an expatriate; Malcolm X visits, enlisting support for his newly-formed organisation of Afro-American unity, designed to link the civil rights struggles of Black America with newly-independent African nations.

Against this backdrop of progressive politics, Angelou’s most startling and disappointing experiences stand out and take on added significance. When she looks for
employment at the Ghana Broadcasting office, she is first patronised, then scornfully treated by a receptionist who volunteers that “American Negroes are always crude” (1986: 17). The receptionist’s scorn seems mild, however compared to the treatment of Black Americans when they are suspected of involvement in an attempt on Nkrumah’s life.

Not all of Angelou’s experiences deal with the sober hardships of rejection and displacement, however, she is warmly welcomed, befriended and supported by some Africans, including the writer Efua Sutherland. Her accounts of these relationships are leavening, at times even funny. In one episode she hires an African beautician to braid her hair “Ghanaian fashion, instead, the woman gives her a style like that worn by pickaninnies to teach her a lesson on the foolishness of trying to ‘go native’” (1986: 17).

For a little over one-third of the book, Angelou manages to capture convincingly by these and other complexities of Black Americans living in Africa. She portrays with telling candour the Africa of shattered fantasies, the Africa that did not greet her homecoming with open arms. But finally, perhaps because of some vestigial longing for “home”, Angelou is seduced by those same fantasies, creating, at the end of the book, an “illusory place, befitting [her] imagination” (1981: 17). The latter part of the book seems to wash over all the earlier convincingly rendered details of rejection, unrecognition and displacement as it rushes to an unearned and unconvincing conclusion – an embrace, with the African mother who had earlier closed her arms. Blending cliches and stereotypes (however much their basis is in historical fact), Angelou fashions a reconciliation that seems schematic and false, the stuff of textbooks, robbed of feeling.
For example, on a weekend trip into the bush, she stops for gas in Cape Coast, the inglorious site of a former holding fort for captured slaves. Having avoided the place for a year, she hurries out of the town back onto the highway, but she cannot escape; “history had invaded [her] little car” (1986: 17).

But these passages seem prefabricated, dead to the feeling that the reader has come to expect of Angelou’s record of her African sojourn. It is their cumulative effect that creates a sense of inauthenticity and contributes to the reader’s detachment from her story.

Shortly before returning to America, Angelou visits Eastern Ghana and is given a tour of Keta, a town whose population was nearly decimated by the slave trade. There she is accosted by an Eve woman who “had the wide face and slanted eyes of my grandmother” (1986: 17). The woman appears hostile, but because of the language barrier she and Angelou are unable to communicate. The guide comes to the rescue, explaining that the woman has mistaken Angelou for the daughter of a friend, for a descendant “from those stolen mothers and fathers” (1986: 17) from the village of Keta. Angelou sums up this experience in terms that have a disappointingly generic ring:

I had not consciously come to Ghana to find the roots of my beginnings, but I had continually and accidentally tripped over them or fallen upon them in my everyday life. . . . And here in my last days in Africa, descendants of a pillaged past saw their history in my face and heard their ancestors speak through my voice. The women wept and I wept I too tried for the last people, their ancestors and mine. But I was also weeping with a curious joy. Despite the murders, rapes and suicides, we had survived. The middle passage and the auction block had not erased us. . . . There was much to cry for, much to mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live. We had crossed the unknowable ocean in chains and had written its mystery into “Deep River, my home is over Jordan” (1986: 17).
In this sense, *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* fits squarely in the tradition of Afro-American autobiography. As one student of the genre has observed, the “self” (1986: 17) of Afro-American autobiography is not an “individual with a private career, but a soldier in a long, historic march toward canaan” (1986: 17).

The promise of Africa, the part it plays in the construction of the Afro-American self, and the attempt to determine where the Afro-American belongs are the central concerns of *All God’s Children*. To be sure, there is the recognition that “years of brutalities, the mixture of other bloods, customs and language had transformed us into an unrecognisable tribe” (1986: 20) or that “an airline ticket to Africa would (not) erase the past and open wide the gates to a perfect future” (1986: 41). Yet there is the major dilemma that many Afro-Americans faced in the 1960s: the recognition that they were cut off from the continuity of their past and hence they were compelled to search for roots to supplement that loss. Angelou acknowledges her envy of those Africans who had remained on the continent and retained their culture intact. Even though they had been exploited by European colonialism they could still reflect through their priests and chiefs on centuries of continuity. The lowliest could call the name of ancestors who lived centuries earlier. The land upon which they lived had been in their people’s possession beyond remembered time. Despite political bondage and economic exploitation, they have retained an ineradicable innocence” (76). Once that quest for roots is exhausted, Angelou has to return to her homeland to participate in “her people struggle” (194) for justice. Africa gives her “their affection and instructed [her] on the positive power to literally knowing one’s place” (195). She needs that security to continue her work at home.
To the Afro-American, Africa remains a double-edged symbol, signifying the ancestral home, the site of a million humiliations. The physical sighting of Cape Coast Castle and Elmira Castle, holding forts for captured slaves who were taken to the Americas troubles Angelou greatly and reminds her of the petrified past. Yet, curiously enough, when she sees the United States Flag hoisted in that foreign land, “many of us had only begun to realise in Africa that the stars and stripes was our flag and our only flag, and that knowledge was almost too painful to bear. . . . I shuddered to think that while we wanted that flag dragged into the mud and sullied beyond repair, we also wanted it pristine, it’s white stripes, summer cloud white. Watching it wave in the breeze of a distance made us nearly choke with emotion. It lifted us up with its promise and broke our hearts with its denial” (127).

Against this double legacy and twined burden, the pronouncements of Malcolm X are located strategically at the centre of the text. Having returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he changed his opinions about many of his previous concepts, most of all, those of racism. For Angelou, it is Malcolm’s challenge to return to the United States, where there is much work to be done to free Afro-American people. As she notes, Malcolm’s “presence had elevated us, but with his departure, we were what we had been before. O little group of Black folks, looking for a home” (146). Such melancholy brings home to Angelou with unusual clarity the feeling that she is not “in the right place . . . I needed to get away from Africa and its cache of subtle promises and at least second-handed memories” (147-148).

Before Angelou can know where she belongs she also has to recognise the manner in which she differs from her African brothers and sisters, and how her “native
sassiness . . . had been softened by contact with the respectfulness of Ghanaians, yet, unlike them I did not belong to a place from which I could not be dislodged” (173-174) although she does not discover herself fully in Africa, her search has brought her “closer to understanding myself and other human beings” (196) and before she returns to America she is literally claimed by Africans and acknowledged as one of their lost sisters. As she says:

I had not consciously come to Ghana to find the roots of my beginnings, but I had continually and accidentally tripped over them or fallen upon them in my everyday life. Once I had been taken for Bambara, and cared for by other Africans as they would care for a Bambara woman. Nana’s family of Ahantas claimed me, crediting my resemblance to a relative as proof of my Ahanta background. And here is my last days in Africa, descendants of a pillaged past saw their history in my face and heard their ancestors speak through my voice” (206-207).

In the end, there is the affirmation of her Afro-American roots; her recognition that she and her people have withstood in the evil hour and hence her proclamation:

The women wept and I wept. I too cried for the lost people, their ancestors and mine. But I was also weeping with a curious joy, despite the murders, rapes and suicides, we had survived. The middle passage and the auction block had not erased us. Nor humiliations nor lynchings, individual cruelties nor collective oppression has been able to eradicate us from the earth. We had come through despite our own ignorance and gullibility and the ignorance and rapacious greed of our assailants.

There was much to cry for, much mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live. We had crossed the unknowable oceans in chains and had written its mysteries into “Deep river, my home is over Jordan” through the centuries of despair and dislocation, we had been creative, because we faced down death by daring to hope (207).

Her statement is a celebration of hope, a paean to love, and a tribute to the magnificent spirit of her people overcoming downpression. Having glimpsed their strength, recognised that America is home in spite of all of its cruelties, she must return to her
native land. As she notes, her first leave-taking from Africa was by force; this second one is by choice, since “my people had never completely left Africa. We had sung it in our blues, shouted it in our gospel and danced the continent in our breakdowns. As we carried it to Philadelphia, Boston and Birmingham we had changed its colour, modified its rhythms, yet it was Africa which rode in the bulges of our high calves, shook in our protruding behinds and crackled in our wide open laughter” (208).

Her identification with Africa is complete and the link is made. A journey that began in Stamps, Arkansas has taken her to strange places in search of her self and a place that she can call home. It ends in Africa with the recognition that a person is not complete until she locates herself fully in her time (history) and her place (geography). The recognition of self and the acceptance of one’s place, no matter how grievous or repulsive its legacy, is the ultimate refuge of life—hence the celebration we encounter at the end of the text and the reason that God’s children need travelling shoes.

Lynn Z. Bloom cites, “a radical transformation of American autobiographical canon, changing it . . . from an elitist group of works . . . by educated white men to literature much more representative of the American population, in gender, race and class” (1994: 9). The focal point of All God’s Children is Angelou the black, middle-class woman. She did not feel “threatened by racial hate” (1986: 29), while in Ghana and felt free to pursue her compelling desire to find her genesis.

All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes is another professional, rich, full, journeyman text. There is a polish of the writing in this book that exceeds her previous books. Her prose is often lyrical and soaring. Her literary accomplishments have resulted in an increased level of competency. She maintains her inventive metaphors and
continues her personification of abstractions: “For me sleep was difficult that night. My bed was lumpy with anger and my pillow a rock of intemperate umbrage (142). She notes that Malcolm X also employs metaphors when commenting on racism in American life.

Angelou becomes introspective and deeply moved during reflective moments in this volume. Selections written about an African bridge, the castle walls of a slave prison and on the village of Dunkwa are all especially emotional. Angelou visualises the chained masses imprisoned in the castle and hears the walls echo their cries. She reacts with great sadness and revulsion upon realising the insidious involvement of brother tribesmen in the evil slave trade. Angelou is particularly moved by the inhumanity of the participants. She recounts another story of betrayal – this time generic rather than strictly personal, but an integral part of her heritage. It is easy to forget that slave trading was at one time an accepted normal business activity with deep historical precedents. It was never an American invention nor unique pursuit. However, it became ingrained in the new world and tolerated particularly brutal behaviour and social indignities. America was slow to reject the practice. The descriptive passages are true to Angelou’s now well-developed style displaying vivid and captivating sentences and phrases. Both the content and the presentation lend themselves to quotable segments that lose no impact by standing alone: “These were the legions, sold by sisters, stolen by brothers, bought by strangers, enslaved by the greedy and betrayed by history” (98). Frequently, this genocidal involvement of Africans in slave-trading is deliberately over-looked or misrepresented by black writers. Angelou has the courage to face the realities
Angelou continues to sprinkle throughout the work amusing stories, jokes, and poems. Frequently, the jokes indict whites, as has been customary in the previous four books. She is not yet ready to toss off the stings of prejudice, but tolerance and even a certain understanding can be glimpsed. She carefully balances her weighty insights with lighter sketches. The device of flashback is utilised on occasion, as customary to traditional autobiographical formula. It is of particular importance to tie this book to its predecessor. Angelou speaks somewhat more philosophically in this volume. She maintains continuity with her earlier books dredging up ‘Mother Wit’ from her memory of early admonitions. She quotes one of her grandmother’s perceptive observations, “If you want to know how important you are to the world, stick your finger in a pond and put it out. Will the hole remain?” (135). Biblical quotes are frequently incorporated into this text demonstrating that Angelou has not lost contact with her family roots even in the face of her broader search.

The first few pages of *All God’s Children* repeat the closing events of *The Heart of a Woman*. This sets the scene and links the two books. As Guy moves to his own future he remarks to Angelou that perhaps she will now have her chance at growing up. This volume addresses that proposition. Angelou becomes totally involved in her search for a symbolic home and her admiration for Ghana. She revels in the vitality of the native and expatriate peoples she meets. She bonds with the landscape and the history of the country. Her ventures of inquiry produce moments of high emotion as she faces the places and people impacted by the earliest African slave activities. Her acceptance by natives and non-natives temporarily lulls Angelou into feeling that this thriving, progressive African state is indeed home. She eventually faces some of the weaknesses
and flaws of being one with what is essentially a foreign land. The stirrings of ancestral humours do not replace the call of a homeland, however difficult that place may be. Finding the roots in Africa serve to further validate feelings for America. Although secure in having found the village and tribe from which she is descended, Angelou, according to Lynn Z. Bloom, will forever keep Africa and its welcome table within. She has closed the circle of her quest for self by accepting that she is an American.

Once again, critics greeted *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* with generally kind remarks. Angelou was cited as “One of the geniuses of Afro-American serial autobiography” (1986: 14). The book makes “for absorbing reading” (1986: 64) and her “prose sings” (1986: 113). She maintains a consistency in her writing that continues to charm and amuse her readers, and please her reviewers, most of whom are white. She thus demonstrates her broad appeal. In addition, *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* offers the reader “a wealth of information and penetrating impressions of the ground, optimistic new country of Ghana” (1986: 113). Angelou tested the entire manuscript on her close friend and valued confidante Julian Mayfield, who was intimately acquainted with Ghana, having been a prominent expatriate at the time of her stay. He verified the book’s accuracy. He only questioned details mentioned about an assassination attempt on Nkrumah. Otherwise, he approved and praised the content. Mayfield’s acceptance and concurrence of her perceptions assured Angelou of the correctness of the text. Since so many of the people mentioned were still active and vulnerable, this was important. She had no wish to impact negatively on those who were working to develop a better world.
Julian Mayfield was close enough to Angelou, a brother figure, to write a fictionalised dramatisation exploring an alleged relationship paralleling Angelou’s affair with Vusumzi Make, which she details in *The Heart of a Woman*. His protagonists were thinly veiled replicas of Angelou and Make. This apparently did not draw condemnation from Angelou.

*All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes*, although a continuation of a chronological progression, can obviously stand alone as a separate entity for reading pleasure. Each volume of Angelou’s autobiographical series is a well-written, entertaining addition to the literature of a race seeking just recognition for its accomplishments. Life as experienced by Angelou provides insights into what it means to be black and female in a variety of settings. Her wit and talent with words captivate a wide audience, crossing racial lines by virtue of pure entertainment.

The structure of *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* follows Angelou’s pattern as an “anthology of anecdotes”. A wide swatch of white space separates one incident – one “chapter”, as it were, from another; Angelou has dropped the practice in this book of numbering each segment traditionally. She is sufficiently mature and confident in her writing to play about with form. Each incident or section is autonomous and therefore can be read or analysed individually and enjoyed without harm to the text’s coherence. Two previously mentioned incidents in *All God’s Children Need travelling Shoes* were reprinted in popular magazines. The segment about travel in Dunkwa appears in *MS Magazine* (August 1986) and her cerie experience related to the back-country bridge could be read in *Essence Magazine* (March 1986). There is less fictionalisation and fantasy in this book than in the earlier ones and its episodes lend
themselves more readily to independent quotation. The depth of observation in this book’s passages lends great credence to Angelou’s concentration on a search for self and home. Her respondents to the loci are penetrating and honest. Her readers are treated to unvarnished emotional insights.

The characters presented in *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* move a step beyond the other volumes in the series in that all of the familiar family figures are no longer prominent. Other than Angelou and Guy, the persons featured are new and old friends. Maya Angelou attracts people to her as easily as the proverbial flies to honey, each of her books is populated with a wide cross-section of the societies she encounters. She seems to find warm supportive friends wherever she goes and meets whoever of importance passes by. In the pages of this book, these associations replace and supplant family, indicative of greater independence. She is indeed a people-person and has come far from the mute, shy little girl of Stamps, Arkansas. She is now caged only by her own inclinations. Her winged adventures have given her a worldly stage from which she can assess her life events.

Angelou departs from purely personal activities and directs her attention to the Ghanian people. She admired the Ghanian domestic and foreign politics and the persons she encounters:

> Their skins were the colours of my childhood cravings: peanut butter, licorice, chocolate and caramel. I listened to men talk and whether or not I understood their meaning, there was a melody... (20-21).

She feels a kinship, mindful of her own real family.

The theme of racism has always been prominent in Angelou’s books. In this volume she opens her eyes to the prejudice among various black groups and faces the
realisation that racism is not the exclusive domain of whites. She examines her own prejudices after a gathering in Germany and modifies her perception. Malcolm X had also concluded that there are whites he can call brother. He said, Angelou paraphrases, that though his basic premise that the Untied States was a racist country held true, he no longer believed that all whites were devils, nor that any human being was inherently cruel at birth (130).

*All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* seems quieter in tone than its preceding stories although not devoid of flareups. As mentioned, while placed in another country, it contains a strong sense of home and a rediscovery of homeland. The hospitality, the welcome, the warmth, all contribute to a cocoon of belonging. There is not the constant shifting from pillar to post and uncertainly mandated by life’s responsibilities in Angelou’s other books. There is, as noted, much quiet reflection and introspection. This is an ending – to the dependent son relationship, to exile, to blind prejudice, possibly to Angelou’s revelations. The quest is complete. Her circle to herself is closed by the love she has shared in Ghana. The pain of baring one’s own soul has served its purpose. Maya Angelou emerges whole and in control. She discovers not only who she is, but where she belongs. But every sunset is followed by a new day, and every ending sets the stage for a new beginning. The faithful audience of Maya Angelou would no doubt welcome at any time another report on her new life in her old world.

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