Decoding and Generating Poetry: Demonstrating Maya Angelou's Writing as Activism

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Introduction

"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

Maya Angelou

The thesis examines how rhetoric is effective within poetry, specifically by using persuasion through repetition as a literary element. With a focus on repeated words, blackout poetry will be created to provide figure data.

In identifying repetition within Maya Angelou's poetry and nonfiction that captures persuasion to her audience and identifies critical social justice issues that many individuals otherwise neglect, emphasis on rhetorical strategies will be presented in demonstrating strategic methodologies within rhetoric. Word cloud mapping will be used to determine repetition within the poems, and this data will be used to help generate keywords for the blackout poetry.

Maya Angelou's poetry reflects time and space from real-life experiences of racial discrimination, poverty and injustice. Utilizing Google Earth, the 3D mapping model demonstrates life experiences that influenced activist language, rhetorical strategies, and alignment with Civil Rights agendas for Black women's rights.

Methods

- 1.Word Cloud Mapping
- 2.Google Mapping
- 3.Decoding

Market Street

- **4.Pattern and Observation Theory**
- **5.Textual Evidence**

Word Cloud Mapping and Google Mapping refer to the process of retracing Maya Angelou's real-life experiences and their impact on her literacy. Word cloud mapping is then used to determine repetition and patterns that help identify rhetorical strategies in larger works by decoding the rhetorical strategies. Figure B demonstrates the title created based on the word cloud above.

Doed Justiner Holler Holler Holler Justiner Holler Holler Holler Justiner Holler Ho



bird (8) caged (6) sings (6) wings (3)

Title: Bird Wings, Caged Sings



Figure A. The image of Maya Angelou showcases her embodied practices in addition to her words. Maya Angelou has brought her words to life through embodied rhetorics and captured the essence of the language by creating specific beats of tone, movement, and exaggeration.



Figure B. This image represents her bodily gestures that corresponded to her language. When reciting her poems, she used gestures to create meaningful connections based on her background in dance.

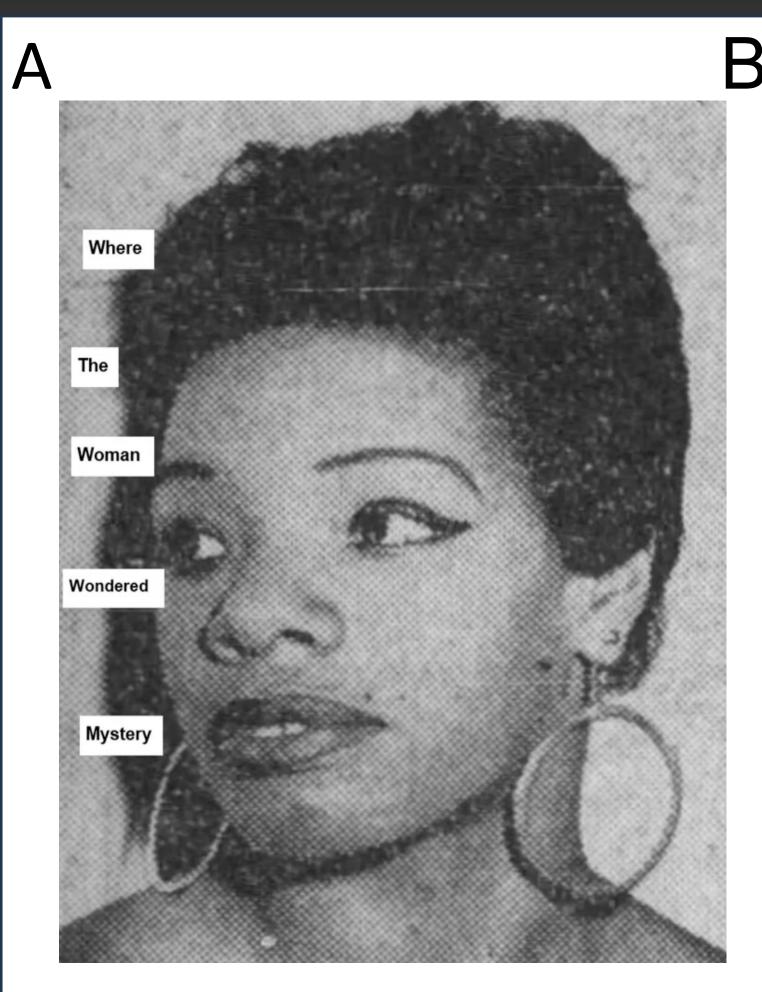
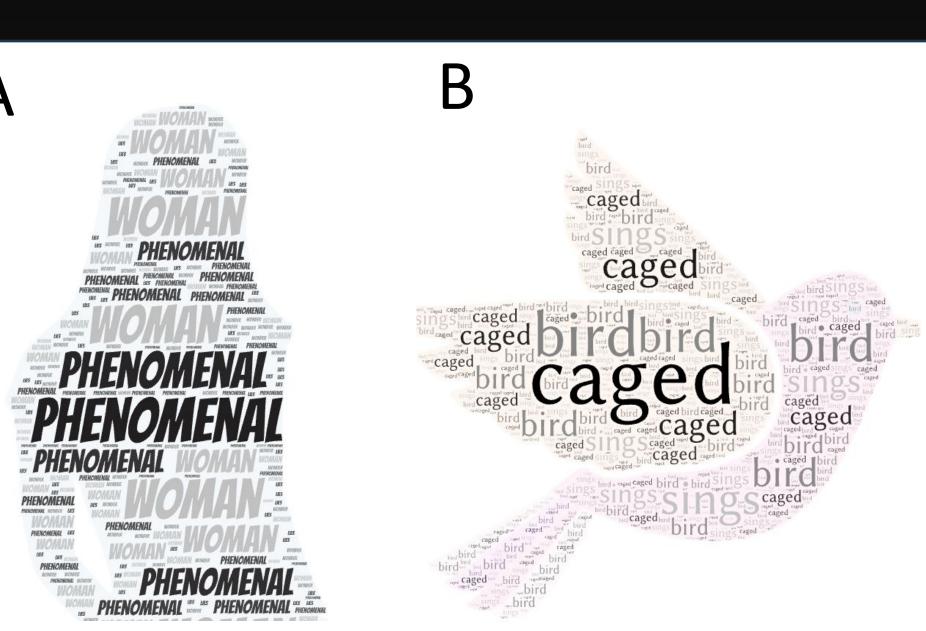




Figure A. Computer software poetry allows the author to create a digital image as the poem's background that further artistically enhances the message. By including the image of the author, it allows the reader to further appreciate the erasure poem and its origins along with the new meaning and creative piece. These pieces were included in an animated digital story that incorporated music, textual animations, and relevant imaging. The erasure poem derived from Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman. It showcases Angelou's courage and persona in her identity by placing her at the center of her work.

Figure B. An additional original erasure poem was created, representing a more universal demonstration of the strength of women and the progression made in equality and feminism. Each poem was included in a final digital animation video, which was presented as the beginning and end of the narrative showing what Angelou's words have impacted for women.



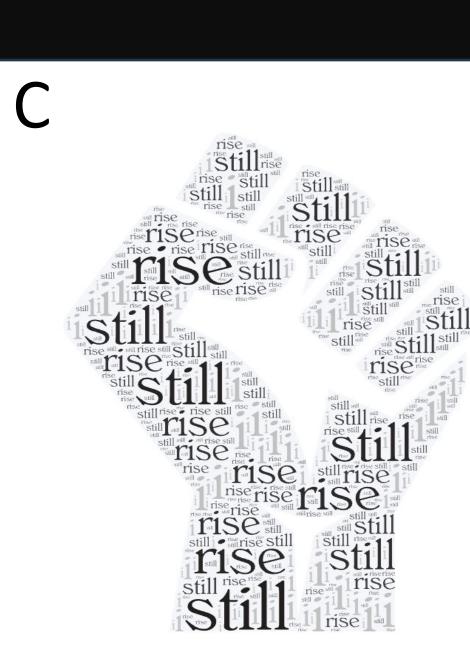


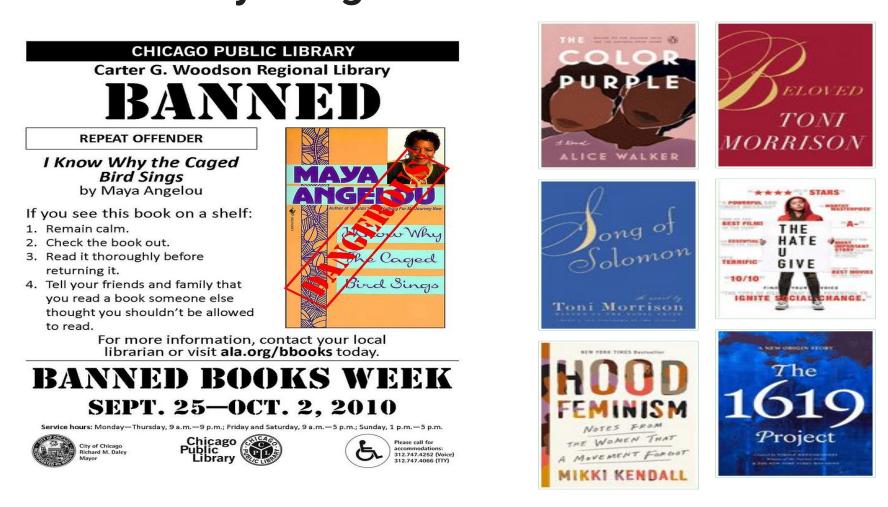
Figure A. Utilizing TagCrowd, a word cloud generator, the most repeated words in the poem, "Phenomenal Woman," were used to convert to the silhouette of a woman.

Figure B. The bird correlates with the poem "Caged Bird," representing freedom and creating juxtaposition with concepts of slavery and limitations.

Figure C. The justice symbol is created to capture the essence of "Still, I Rise," which acknowledges the power of Black women such as Maya Angelou.

Conclusions

"I'm always sorry that people ban my books. Many times I've been called the most banned. And many times my books are banned by people who never read two sentences. I feel sorry for the young person who never gets to read." – Maya Angelou



Real-life experiences influence activist language and connect impactful social changes. Black women face extreme book banning due to interactive poetic designs centered around female voices that often get overlooked in traditional curriculum and studies due to their willingness to discuss topics closely related to the abuse and discrimination in their lives. Banning books prevents adolescents from receiving proper resources when placed in similar situations and limits marginalized voices from sharing their stories and truths.

In order to keep Maya Angelou's voice alive, we must continue to honor her legacy by promoting social change through her rhetorical strategies across new obstacles and barriers in social justice concerns. My future research will continue pursuing this line of inquiry and aim to consider the digital lens of poetics by advocating for interactive poetics through gamification and a concentration on marginalized voices.

Resources

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my incredibly supportive chair committee for all of their guidance on this project.