

Dr. Pallavi Gogoi*

MAYA ANGELOU. *Mom & Me and Mom*.
London: Virago, pp. 201, 2013. Price: UK £8.99
ISBN: 978-1-844408-915-4.
Category: Autobiography

In a complete reading of Maya Angelou's seventh autobiography titled *Mom & Me and Mom* (2013) it becomes simply evident that the work must have been very close to the writer's heart given the fact that it centers on her special bonding and relationship with her mother, Vivian Baxter who had sailed her through the most crucial and difficult years of her life. The autobiography stands apart from the earlier string of Angelou's autobiographical series in terms of the presence of a central figure around whom the narrative revolves, apart her own self-representation, together with her free-flowing and rambling style of narration that gives an informed reader the impression of reading a collection of autobiographical essays rather than an episodic autobiography. Moving away from her earlier style of presentation with distinct chapterisation in the autobiographical volumes, the present narrative is divided into two sections entitled 'Mom & Me, 'Me & Mom' underlining the shared experiences of both mother and daughter as well as their role reversals. The autobiography is special for the reasons that it encompasses detailed accounts of her selected life experiences that had previously found only passing references in the earlier volumes and that it neatly ties up all the open ends of her narrative with a special tribute to her mother. Angelou chips in all the missing pieces of her interesting anecdotes and experiences to provide a fuller picture of her eventful life to the reader.

The absence of Angelou's mother during her childhood years spent in Stamps, Arkansas together with the traumatic experiences of rape and racial prejudice had left her all the more sensitive, skeptical, perplexed and brooding by nature. However, the reentry of Vivian Baxter in the frame of her life, had transformed young Angelou into a more confident, matured and an accomplished individual. With Vivian Baxter standing at the crossroads of her life, the young girl had blossomed into her own person, taking up her own share of struggles

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with courage, leading a life of fulfilment and celebrating the beauty of a mother-daughter relationship. *Mom & Me & Mom* is a heartwarming narrative of Angelou's extended family, their influential role in her formative years and challenging life as an adolescent, recounting the memorable experiences of her growing up that had in time taught her the best lessons in life. Some of the highlights in the first section of the work are the memories of both her grandmothers; glimpse of their family history, her mother's "big city ways" (33), accounts of her rape as a child, experiences of motherhood, struggles as a single mother and the influence of her mother's practical wisdom. The second section presents Angelou's own carefree days as a youngster, her disturbing experiences of brutal violence in the hands of an old lover; sincere attempts at saving her marriages; the experiences of her grown-up son; brother Bailey's battle with drug addiction; the sprouting of new literary interests; her own accomplishments as well as her sincere gratitude to the contributions of Vivian Baxter in her own life and the lives of countless others in the society.

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S. HUSSAIN ZAIDI AND JANE BORGES. *Mafia Queens of Mumbai*.
New Delhi: Tranquebar Press, pp. 290, 2011, Price: INR. 250
ISBN: 978-93-80283-77-7.
Category: Non Fiction and Crime
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Mafia Queens of Mumbai almost instantly engrosses one into the firsthand accounts and narratives of the Mumbai Underworld which to the reader's surprise is dotted with some of the fearless and influential female criminals who had navigated their way through these dangerous waters. Most of them were ordinary women who had dared to operate through these established criminal networks by taking up the numerous risks inherent in their professions and figuring out

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