

THE IDEA OF BLACK FEMINISM IN MAYA ANGELOU'S POEM "STILL I RISE"

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Abstract

This research investigates the idea of black feminism in Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise". It used library research to analyse the issues and used black feminism and the ideas of metaphor, simile, symbol, repetition, and tone to analyse the concept of black feminism. The analysis's findings indicate that there is conflict between black women and white people, and that black women would do anything to escape the oppression of both black and white people.

Keywords; Feminism, Black Feminism, Simile, Metaphor, Symbol, Tone, Still I Rise.

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is an idea of a cultural shift that occurs to promote social equality between men and women. It is based on the belief that women should have the same liberties as men. A subset of feminism known as black feminism emphasizes the serious drawbacks that gender, class, and race have on black women's or African American women's lives. Black feminists say that earlier feminist analyses mirrored the unique and specific concerns of white women and deny the assumption that there is a single, undivided gender injustice that is suffered uniformly by all women. The historical connection between white feminism and racism is a key theme in black feminism. Focusing on the past and present battles of Black women opposing racism and gender inequality at home, at work, in their towns, and additionally in the dominant society as a whole. Black feminism is a yearning for a harmonious and advanced perspective of social equality.

Black women's liberation was a movement, particularly in the US. Black women were at the bottom of the list and experienced prejudice in all spheres of life. Black women grappled with racism in addition to feminism. Black women experience two forms of injustice. Maya Angelou, a black woman who was born, too went through it, as evidenced by the poems she wrote.

Maya Angelou, who has been described as America's finest black female autobiographer, writes her poems in a distinctive manner. She uses both the fact of her own particular existence and the actively shifting and modified aspect of her physical individuality. She highlights the value of a unique circumstance, particularly in light of a woman's uniqueness.

The poem "Still I Rise" is characterized as a song of passion for Angelou. She used

straightforward, commonplace language in this poem to reflect her daily realities. Her challenges and sorrows, particularly from her early years, are depicted in this poem. With its capabilities, skills, and aspirations for a future life, this poem has touched and influenced the lives of countless individuals.

Significance of Study

This study will contribute to a richer understanding of feminism, especially black feminism, in the poems. This research will give you a thorough comprehension of Maya Angelo's poetry. Additionally, people who are interested in analyzing Maya Angelo's poems, particularly from a feminist standpoint, will find this research to be useful.

Research Questions

What is the theme of Angelou's "Still I Rise"?

How is black feminism portrayed in Angelou's "Still I Rise"?

Objectives of Study

To gain insight into the "Still I Rise" theme.

To learn about the black feminist concept in "Still I Rise."

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Approach: This study took a feminist literary critique perspective. Given that, "Still I Rise" is a poem about black women.

Method of Study: The research strategy used by the researcher is library research. The poem "Still I Rise" served as the primary source for the majority of the information in this study. The majority of the secondary sources used to examine this work came from the internet and encyclopedias, which both include pertinent information.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of the poem, "Still I rise"

You may write me down in history (L1)

With your bitter, twisted lies, (L2)

Maya Angelou wishes to discuss about how she overcame obstacles and fought back bravely. Since it remains hazy in the first stanza, it is shouted opposing something. She claims that she gives someone permission to record her past. If someone in line 2 says anything negative about her, it is a giant falsehood because the principles have been distorted to make it sound that way. She acknowledges that someone is trying to drag her back in time and give her a false past.

You may trod me in the very dirt (L3)
But still, like dust, I'll rise. (L4)

In the extremely filthy environment, she lets someone step on her or squish her. She wishes to claim that she permits someone to mistreat her. The concept is around underestimating and despising someone. She perseveres, nevertheless, and maintains her optimism. Line 4 makes it clear that she will rise and remain motionless at all times. The simile "like dust" is used to describe how passionately she rose to power. She compares her rise to that of dust, which, when blown by the wind, rises and flies higher.

In Second stanza,
Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

She starts to enquire as to why she is despised and underappreciated. She inquires as to whether her "sassiness" enrages someone who despises her. The definition of "sassiness" is murky. The adjective "sassy" denotes vivaciousness and fashion sense as well as being impolite or disrespectful. If they are related to the first stanza, then either interpretation is appropriate. The question, "*Does Angelou's sassiness upset someone,*" has two meanings. The first is that, in response to the injustice she has experienced in the opening line, Maya Angelou feels indignant. Angelou's absence of appreciation for the person in question can be what irritates them. Another reading is that Maya Angelou assertively inquires in the second verse as to whether anyone is upset or jealous of her because she is stylish and outgoing.

The idea that she is content as if she had a significant amount of money because she discovers the oil wells is expressed using a simile. She produces and distributes the oil into the living room because she has sufficient of it in the wells.

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

To convey the sense of how far she wishes to go, she utilizes a **simile**. She says she will rise very high, just like the moon and sun. In addition, she will inspire the best expectations ever. Hope is a good thing, and in her opinion, ambition is what causes hope to rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?

*Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.*

She believes that someone is expecting something from her and is hoping to see her fall with her head and eyes down in desperation. Someone believes she is incapable of rising or having a spirit.

Maya uses specific phrases like "broken," "weakened," "teardrop," "cries," and "soulful" to convey that someone despises her and wants to see her fail. These are the unfavorable phrases and gloomy, strained bodily gestures, such as "bowed head," "lowered eyes," and "shoulders falling down." These phrases convey unpleasant attitudes, behaviors, or feelings.

*Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.*

She feels that someone or something is insulting her. It might be domination or supremacy. Someone seems to be envious of her, in her opinion. She employs the word "haughtiness," which refers to a sense of superiority. This phrase might be used to degrade someone. She does not take this person's envy seriously. She simply beams with joy and laughs heartily, as though she had discovered gold mines in her own backyard. She employs a simile once more.

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

What someone does to her doesn't bother her. She lets someone do everything to bring her down. She makes an analogy. "Shoot me with your words," someone once said. She consents to someone making offensive or inaccurate statements about her. She also permits someone to act cruelly against her or to cast an unflattering glance her way. Here, repetition is employed. Actually, the pieces of the phrase in lines 21, 22, and 23 share the same form, particularly in the word "you may." Each line contains three repetitions of it. Maya Angelou makes an effort to highlight what somebody done to her. Anyone can continuously try to undermine her, but she does not give a damn, and she will still stand up in the end.

*Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds*

At the meeting of my thighs?

The genuine "you" may be one of two things. The first option is that the person in question is a lady or a female. Angelou inquires once more if her sexiness offends anyone. Given this comment, there is a strong likelihood that the "someone" Angelou is referring to is a woman because a woman will either feel jealous of or upset by the sexiness of another woman. A male, on the other hand, will be drawn to a woman's sexiness. As if Angelou's happiness and attractiveness are solely due to the diamonds on her finger, the woman is asked if she is astonished to see Angelou dancing.

Out of the huts of history's shame

I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain

I rise

Regardless of how much someone attempts to push her aside, she shows how she rises. When Angelou expresses her rage and burns her spirit by bringing up her ascent constantly, repetition reappears. She explains how and why she rises in this stanza. In order to give the poem a spirit, she repeats the line "I rise."

In her metaphor, Maya says, "Out of huts of history's humiliation I rise." She rises and leaves her past, which indicates that she does not let shame be a burden. She rises from the terrible past, as shown by the metaphor in line 31: "up from a history that's entrenched in agony." She succeeds by being present.

*I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear*

I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise

Maya imagines herself as a vast, dark sea that is jumping and spreading in response to the flow. It is symbolic. Angelou makes an effort to convey her strength and goodness. With the flow, the ocean is rising and growing. Like the waves of the water, which rise and occasionally grow larger than usual as the ocean rises and falls, she wishes to convey that she will go forward in both good and bad circumstances. Additionally, she departs from the "nights of terror and fear" that were described by someone to a marvelously clear morning where there is no panic or worry with her seriousness and determination. The word "night" is used to describe how terrifying or gloomy the emotions are. In contrast, the phrase "wonderfully clear morning" conveys her joy at having left the fear and anxiety back.

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

The person's gender is the second factor. "Man" includes both white men and men of colour. Angelou describes the slave in line 40 as the slave's ambition and yearning. Slaves and enslaved black women have hope in Maya Angelou. She battles with white men's hostility against black women, which is on the rise. Not just white people but also black men are to blame for the suffering of black women. She emerges from a painful experience caused by both white and black males in line 31. She gives up the horror and fear that the black and white males had implanted in her in line 35.

In some lines, particularly in the eighth stanza, Angelou claims that she will rise, while in others, she says that she has already risen. It implies that she transforms the notion of rising into a physical motion of lifting.

Angelou describes the struggle of emerging in this poem. She initially aspires to fly like breeze, hoping that it will soar tall, but she eventually makes it serious since she is sick of people mistreating her. She rises because she is capable of overcoming her previous mistreatment and put it behind her; she rises because she is the slave's inspiration and hope for a brighter future; and she elevates because she is able to effectively let go of her anxiety and apprehension.

The representation of black feminism in "Still I Rise"

Maya Angelou states that she allows white people write in the history everything about Black women's bitterness and fact that is untrue about them in the past. She allows White people to treat them badly and underestimate the Black women. In last line of first stanza, Maya Angelou states that black women will rise in the White people oppress.

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may tread me in the very dirt But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Maya is considering Black women as mule, doing sexual harassment to Black women, creating bad images, and enslaving Black women are the facts that White people want to see Black women broken. Maya Angelou states in fourth stanza. She asks White people whether they want Black women broken with bowed head and lowered eyes so that White people can take advantages of them.

Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Angelou shows that Black women as strong-willed resister. In lines 3 and 4, she shows that White people treat them bad, but Black women still want to rise, because they know they are not defenseless victims.

*You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

Angelou shows that White people say untrue or unpleasant thing about Black women, White people gaze at Black women in unpleasant way, and White people do something terrible to Black women, but in the end Black women do against White oppression. Black women show that they are strong-willed resistor of oppression and racism; they demand respect and want to rise so that White stop doing the oppression and discrimination.

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

In last stanza, she repeats 'I rise' several times. She challenges and orders Black women to rise from White oppression. In lines 39 and 40, Maya Angelou says to Black women that they should be proud of their origin because they bring the gift that their ancestors gave to them. They are also the hope and dream of the slaves who are oppressed. Because of that, they should rise.

*Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.*

An Overview of the poem:

The author claims that the "I" in "Still I Rise" stands for black women. In this poetry, Maya Angelou talks on how black women persevere in the face of discrimination from the white culture, particularly the male members. Black people were first brought to the new world by the British to be traded as slaves because white people required many laborers to develop the buildings and work on the fields. White people perceived black people as the ideal cure to their labor shortage. In order to trade in black people as slaves, the white people recruited them from Africa. In the procedure, they choose black women to be slaves rather than black males since they can have offspring just as easily as animals, and those children are the slave owner's valued possessions.

CONCLUSION

In "Still I Rise," Maya Angelou frequently used similes. Maya Angelou employs a simile before declaring that she will rise to convey the fervor of her rise and another simile after acting to convey her happiness. In "Still I Rise," she uses metaphor to convey white men's animosity for black women and how, because of this animosity, white males will stop at nothing to damage black women who can only accept and cannot resist. The other lines use metaphor to show that she has overcome her unfortunate past (ownership and inequality faced by black women), is living in the present, and has forgotten her past. Metaphor is frequently used to show the strength of black women. In "Still I Rise," Maya Angelou uses repetition to highlight the spirit of black women to rise. The tenor of "Still I Rise" demonstrates Maya Angelou's upbeat attitude as she challenges black women to rise. In "Still I Rise," there are no symbolic words. The reader is led to believe that there is a conflict between black women and white people (both male and female) and black males through the examination of "Still I Rise" word for word. Because white people handle black people poorly and treat them like slaves, black women struggle and will do anything to escape the captivity of white males. They are truly despised by black men, and they do not value them as wives. It is clear that black feminism is present in "Still I Rise" from the explanation of the solution to the first challenge. Reflecting on an analysis of black feminism, the second problem formulation illustrates how black women are oppressed.

The poems' exposure to black feminism was the second issue. Black women who wish to rise above the oppression of white people and black males are the subject of the poem "Still I Rise." Because black women were cheap, stupid, capable of bearing children, and could be abused like animals during the time of slavery, white masters sought to have as many of them as possible as slaves. In spite of the fact that black men ought to be natural defenders of black women, they also oppress and degrade them. Maya Angelou hopes that these truths will help her and other black women succeed. Black women rise up and fight racism, misogyny, and slavery. Black women demonstrate to the world that they are remarkable, strong, and not to be undervalued.

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Appendix

"Still I Rise" By Maya Angelou

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.
Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.
Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high
Still I'll rise.
Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.
You may shoot me with your words,
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Does my sexiness upset you?
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That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?
Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear*

*I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise,
I rise,
I rise.*