

Themes of the Poem of Maya Angelou "And Still I Rise"

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ABSTRACT

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Maya Angelou's poetry becomes a call to action against injustice, rather than just a rhythmic collection of words. Angelou seeks to challenge traditional male-centric prejudiced representations of women through her poetry, replacing them with true, real, and alive selves. She uses her writing to challenge and change the ideas, hegemonies, and practices that have silenced and marginalized black women. The poem "And Still I Rise" is a reaction to the struggles experienced by African-American women in the long history of oppression and discrimination in America. The differences among human beings are the issue about race which the concept about race emerges racism. One big issue about race is African-Americans were got the racial discrimination and they became the minority in the United States. The researcher wants to examine the themes of the minority which reflect in Maya Angelou's poems. The researcher chose Maya Angelou's poem since she is the most influential African-American woman through her works, especially in poetry. The purpose of this study is to investigate the theme of her poem "And Still I Rise" by analyzing the poem to explore the themes that Angelou has talked about and to understand the literary meaning in her work. The model used in the current study is the model of Crystal and Davy (1969) it is concerned with permanent features of speech and writing which distinguish someone from others as a specific person. This study concludes that the major themes of this work are self-empowerment, perseverance, and injustice, her effort has succeeded in raising African Americans' self-awareness by urging them to maintain and enjoy their black culture. Angelou encourages African Americans to inherit their African cultural history and claim their black identity by analyzing her poem "And Still I Rise."

1. Introduction

Maya Angelou, born in 1928, lived through some of the worst oppression and inequality for African American people. Although slavery had been long abolished, Angelou saw its effects on society and the African American people. "And Still, I Rise" is her declaration that she, for one, would not allow the hatefulness of society to determine her success. Maya Angelou was an African-American memoirist, poet, historian, musician, dramatist, dancer, stage and screen producer, director, performer, singer, and civil rights, activist. She identifies herself as a contemporary black female writer by infusing her work with a continuous cultural consciousness, personal and cultural experience. Her poetry explores African American themes of survival, progress, and self-discovery. Angelou is acutely aware of the need to deconstruct the cultural order and dismantle the binary opposition between dominant and subaltern. **Janoušková (2005).**

Dimarco and Hirst (1993) mention that Greek rhetoricians such as Corax of Syracuse established methods for the systematic instruction of written texts as early as the fifth century B.C. Scholars such as Isocrates and Aristotle later created highly significant rhetorical standards.

Zeru (1996) stated that the investigation and analysis of style include tests of the writer's choice concerning his selection of words, paragraphs, rhetorical devices, and the way he uses them.

According to **Leech and Short (2007)**, stylistics is described as the (linguistic) study of style, which refers to the use of words. They remark that style is normally studied to interpret something, but literary stylistics, in general, exposes the covert or overt relationship between language and creative function, which is the goal of the interpretation.

A stylistic analysis of literature and poetry is a branch of linguistics and the scientific study of language and a central phenomenon in the studies of stylistics. By this, analysis is unarguably an offshoot of linguistics. It is an observable reality, that critics often mistake stylistic analysis for literary criticism. **Nkopuruk and Saheed (2019)**.

The poem has 43 lines which are divided into 9 stanzas. The first 7 stanzas are quatrains because they are made up of four lines. The rhyme scheme is not consistent. The five quatrains in the poem rhyme in the scheme of ABCB while the other two quatrains' scheme is ABCC. The poem ends in a sermon tone repeating 'I rise' three times.

Many researchers have taken this poem as a subject of the study such as **Febiyanto (2010)** focused, through Maya Angelou's poems, on understanding black feminism in the United States. According to the study, there was a conflict in "and still, I Rise" between black women and white people and black males. Black women would go to any length to free themselves from the oppression of white people and black males.

According to **Ayuni (2019)**, Maya Angelou uses four types of diction in the three poems "Still I Rise," "Touched by an Angel," and "Equality," which are concrete, abstract, denotation, and connotation.

It is obvious that these studies did not concern with the themes that Angelou include in her poem, so in this study, we will take themes of the poem as a subject of the study

2. Statement of the Problem

Maya Angelou's "And Still I Rise" is a powerful poem that draws on a range of influences, including her background and the African-American experience in the United States. Its message of liberation and survival was a consistent theme in Angelou's work. Years after it was published in 1978, the poem continues to reach readers and audiences, cutting across racial lines and national boundaries. Angelou herself commented on its appeal in a 2008 interview: "You know, if you're lonely you feel you've been done down, it's nice to have "And Still I Rise." **Palupi (2014)**.

While it is a nice poem and has the interest of critics and researchers, we need to read this poem carefully, analyze and explain themes in it because it has many issues that we faced in everyday life.

3. The Objective of the Study

The aim of this study seeks to do is to undertake an analysis study of Maya Angelou's "And Still I Rise" to show the themes that the poet talks about and the issues that reflect in her poem. In order to help critics and researchers who are studying the same poem.

3.1 Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that many themes are concerned with issues that we faced through everyday life.

4. Methodology

Any literary piece has its theme or the work has no meaning. In the current study, we will analyze the poem "And Still, I Rise" to see the themes that the poet talks about and how she expresses the theme through her poem.

4.1 Model

The model adopted in this study is the model of **Crystal and Davy(1969: 66-77)** it is set as an approach for analyzing simple and complex speech and writing, it is concerned with those permanent features of speech and writing which distinguish someone from others, it also covers the analysis of utterance which indicate exclusively diachronic information – the temporal provenance of a piece of language.

4.2 Data Collection and Procedures

In the present work, we will explain the themes of the poem "And Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou 1928-2014. We will take the themes that the poem includes as a subject of the study to explore what themes the poet wants the reader to know about and what themes reflect in her poetry.

4.3 Data Analysis and Discussion

This study seeks to use Crystal and Davy (1969) as a theoretical guide in the analysis of our data, Maya Angelou's "And Still I Rise." The analysis would be done to reveal the themes of "And Still I Rise" we will take the poem stanza by stanza to explore the themes used by Angelou in her poem.

Stanza 1

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.

Maya Angelou pours her heart and soul into this poem, declaring that nothing and no one can oppress or hold her down. She doesn't give a damn about what the history books say since she knows they're full of "twisted lies." She won't let the fact that others "trod" her "in the very soil" affect her. She declares that she will rise like dust if she is trodden in the soil. In this stanza the main theme is confidence.

Stanza 2

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 poses an inquiry in the second stanza. This is an intriguing question because she refers to her own tone as "sassiness" and wonders if her sassy tone is distressing to the listener. When the poet succeeds, she realizes that the people in her society are "beset with sadness." She raises an objection to this. She recognizes her accomplishments in life, writing, and as a woman. Her success is symbolized by the "oil wells pouring in [her] living room." The theme in this stanza is a success.

Stanza 3

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

The speaker compares herself to timeless natural elements, implying that her strength is as consistent and unchanging as "moons," "suns," and "tides." No one should doubt her ability to overcome challenges—she always will, just as the sun and moon rise and the ocean tides ebb and flow. She will rise in the same manner that people increase their hopes for wonderful things in life. The speaker is irrepressible, and her bravery and drive are as natural as the passage of time indicated by natural elements' movements. The theme in this stanza is the strength of hope for oppressed people to rise over injustice.

Stanza 4

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.

Weakened by my soulful cries.

The poet is dubious about the enemy's desire to see her broken. It serves as a constant reminder of American slavery, which subjugated African-Americans to servitude. They want to watch her walk around with her head lowered, unable to look them in the eyes. The poet compares the victim's shattered shoulders to teardrops. The narrator thus refuses to give in to the victims' vulnerability, which is expressed in their passionate sobbing. The theme here is the oppression of African- American people.

Stanza 5

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 backyard.

In the fifth stanza, the speaker returns to a confident and arrogant demeanor and irritates the oppressor by using the word "offend," which is paradoxical given that the speaker is the one who has been offended.

Similar to the second stanza, the last two words of this stanza portray the speaking voice as carefree and happy, as if she were wealthy. Her lighthearted laugh this time may imply that she has gold mines in her own backyard: she may be oppressed, but her self-assurance is gold. The themes here are pride and courage.

Stanza 6

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 this stanza, she declares that no matter how much society tries to oppress her, it will fail. The poet makes it clear that society will not be able to defeat her with words or appearances. She declares that society will not be able to defeat her, even if it is able to murder her as a result of its hatred. She claims that she will continue to soar "like air." The themes here are challenge and determination.

Stanza 7

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 speaker's authority and confidence as a woman are the centers of the seventh stanza, which does not discuss race. The

seductive tone presents her as a free-spirited woman who dances as if she has "diamonds" between her thighs. Dancing conjures up images of freedom, a carefree attitude, as well as beauty and sexuality. The speaker is well aware that she embodies these characteristics, and she is well aware of the oppressor's surprise and discomfort at this disclosure.

This stanza is the first to explicitly state that the speaker is a woman, not just an African-American person in general, but a sensual black lady in particular. The themes here are the power and confidence of the speaker as a woman and the injustice against the female gender.

Stanza 8

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.

The speaker discusses her struggles as an African American woman and how she overcame them. She discovered the strength and faith she needed to carry on with her life, overcoming the misery she'd been describing throughout the poem. The phrase "rooted in pain" alludes to the injustices perpetrated and the grief brought on by segregation.

She describes herself as a "black ocean" of strength, alluding to her race and describing herself as a force of nature, full of power and might, capable of withstanding the oppressors' tidal wave. The themes here are struggle and racism.

Stanza 9

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.

The speaker takes a bold stride forward in the last stanza, leaving behind the terrors of the past. She declares her desire to rise

above the past and realize her ancestors' ambitions and hopes. This stanza also contains the first explicit mention of former slavery, which had been hinted at but never explicitly declared.

She directly acknowledges slavery and positions herself as a symbol of African-Americans who lived under racial segregation by referring to herself as the "dream and the hope of the slave."

Her forefathers aspired and dreamed of independence, and she will "rise" above their sorrow and suffering, ensuring that their battles were not in vain through her striving and perseverance.

The last three lines' repetition of "I rise" is a powerful expression of hope that lends the stanza a meditative aspect, almost like slaves praying and singing melodies. The themes here are the strength, determination to rise above all that reject her success.

5. Conclusions

1. We have concluded that the major themes in the poem are Courage, pride, and injustice.
2. We have seen that the poet discusses society's harsh criticism of people with dark skin.
3. The speaker is extremely proud of her identity, which she expresses in various ways throughout the text.
4. We discovered that she wants to live a happy and confident life rather than wallowing in stress and fear.
5. "And Still, I Rise" is a poem that is both a declaration of her own determination to rise above society and a call to others to rise beyond the society in which they were raised.
6. The speaker, who is often assumed to be Angelou, addresses her own oppressor throughout the passage.
7. The "you" she alludes to is a metaphor for the various injustices that people of color, women, and other oppressed groups have faced throughout history.
8. She sets aside a previous self-derogatory style of thinking and speaks warmly and proudly to herself.
9. The poet wants to empower herself, as well as anyone who has ever doubted their own abilities, strength, or worth.

6. Recommendations

1. The researcher recommends that the readers should be careful when choosing a poem to read, the reader should choose something that helps him to change his way of thinking about the oppression and injustice, in the way of life in general.
2. The analysis of themes is pedagogical, allowing students to widen their area of investigation in literary works while also learning the language from perspectives other than literary critique.
3. The researcher advises readers to pay attention to the differences in themes, which might lead to varied interpretations depending on the reader's attitudes, beliefs, and values.

7. Suggestion for Future Research

1. A Statistical Approach to Syllabic Alliteration in "The Onset" by Robert Frost could be used as a subject for future studies.
2. A Stylistic Analysis of figures of speech of the short story "The Lamp" by Agatha Christie.
3. A Stylistic Analysis of the novel "The Old Man and The Sea" by Ernest Hemmingway. Could be conducted as a subject for future study.

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