

Counter Discourse in Maya Angelou's poem

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to present "Identity A Counter study" in Maya Angelou's poems. Identity is who one is, the way one thinks about himself or herself, the way one is viewed by the world and one's defining character. The works of Maya Angelou chosen for study are "**phenomenal women**" and "**still I Rise**". People like Maya Angelou, were not free to express their feelings and she had much obstacles to achieve her desires. Maya Angelou is an American poet, singer, best known for her seven autobiographies which focus on her childhood and early adult experience. Maya Angelou, an optimistic woman, was nominated for Pulitzer Prize, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011, and the humanitarian award, in addition for her best-selling autobiographies. The poem **phenomenal women** illustrates a confident woman and how she celebrates her body without any inhibition. This poem also talks about black women who live among the white. **Phenomenal women** describes the survival of the black woman, social custom faced by the people in America. The poem **still I Rise** is an empowering poem, fixating upon the oppression, persecution towards women especially African American. Through the poem **still I Rise** Angelou talks about her self-esteem, and or nothing that can stop her. Through this poem Angelou describes the humiliation and discrimination faced by the African women in society.

Key words:

Identity a Counter discourse study,, oppression, discrimination, obstacles, persecution, humiliation.

"Identity A counter study" in Maya Angelou's poem

"Still I Rise" is a powerful poem about the hardship faced by the African people in the society. It talks about the racial prejudice and slavery that black Americans have endured for many years. The main theme of the poem is discrimination.

You may trod me in the very dirt ,

But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Through this stanza Maya Angelou gives a counter that no one can subjugate or oppress her. She proclaims that if she is trodden in the dirt she will rise from dust.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

Cause I walk like I have got oil well

Pumping in my living room.

In this stanza Maya Angelou talks about her success in life, she gives a counter that she is richer than the richest. **I have got oil well , Pumping in my living room.** The hardness which gave her energy to rise up in her life.

Just like moons and like suns, with the certainty of tides,

Just like hopes springing high,

Still I will rise.

Through this stanza Maya Angelou compare herself with the object in nature like sun and moon and with the tide. The weather changes every day. She gives a counter that she overcomes the oppression like nature with the hope for her success.

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Shoulders falling down like tear drops,

Weakend by my soulfull cries?

This stanza talks about creulity of slavery faced by the African people in the society from this she counters that the determination prevailing in the hearts of African American people to fight against oppression.

Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin in my own backyard.

Through this stanza we can see optimistic view of life by African people that no one is richer like them, because they have got gold mines in their backyard. Pride of African people is highlighted in this stanza.

You may cut me with eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still like air, I will rise.

In this stanza she talks about the domination an oppression of the white people in the society she gives a counter that though the society may oppress her with words and hatefulness she will rise like air to overcome the obstacles in her life.

'Identity needs' include our need to present ourselves and be thought of in particular and desire.

In the poem **phenomenal woman**, Maya Angelou beautifully conveys her message, theme, and ideas of her own life experience through poetic devise. The poem as a whole celebrates womanhood. The tone of the poem is about strong and confident women.

Phenomenal women means an extra ordinary or stunning women. Phenomenal women is a lyrical poem which emits the important message to the world celebrating the female power, individuality and culture.

Pretty women wonder

Where my secret lies.

I am not cute or built to suit

A fashion model size.

But when I start to tell them,

They think I'm telling lie.

I say,

It's in the reach of my arms.

In the first stanza one can see that pretty women wonders since she is not “cute” or “fashion model size”. “I'm not cute not fair skin”. She looked attractive and is appreciated by people. She counters stating that it was not because of fair skin but a beauty which is her confidence, and her womanhood. The way she walks with decisive steps, stretched hips and the way she smiles are the secrets of her beauty and attractiveness.

I Walk into a room

Just as cool as you please,

And to a man,

The fellows stand or

Fall down on their Knees.

Then they swarm around me,

A hive of honey bees.

I say,

It's the fire in my eyes.....

In the second stanza the poet says when ever she enters into room in an ordinary way men bend down to their knees start staring like “a hive of honey bees” she counter it is because the passion in her eyes, springing waist, the way she dance make her attractive.

Phenomenal women,

That's me.

Men themselves have wondered

What they see in me.

They try so much

But they can't touch

My inner mystery.

When I try to show them,

They say they still can't see.

I say,

It's in the arch of my back,

The sun of my smile,

The ride of my breasts,

The grace of my style,

In the third stanza men wonder why do they find her so attractive, men question them selves. And she counters that men are attracted by her because of words like “arch”, “smile”, “grace”. It is her inner beauty which is common to all women makes every woman beautiful.

Now you understand

Just why my head's not bowed.

I don't shout or jump about

Or have to talk real loud.

When you see me passing,

It ought to make you proud.

I say.....

In all three stanzas she attracted people. In the fourth, final stanza she says that she does not need attention in traditional concepts of beauty. “ Traditional concepts of beauty is fair skin” . she counter that being proud , confident,enigmatic,erect made her beautiful.

The beauty of the women lies not on the basis of the traditional concept of beauty, because beauty is judged according to the inner self and not the outer appearance.

Thus the poem **phenomenal women** and **Still I Rise** celebrates the womanhood and makes the women feel proud to overcome the obstacles, prejudice in the society. One could conclude by saying that beauty is more than a skin deep. Through this the poem spirit of womanhood is highlighted.

One's identity changes as one progresses through life, but communication is the primary means of establishing our identity .

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