

= And Still I Rise =

And Still I Rise is author Maya Angelou 's third volume of poetry , published by Random House in 1978 . It was published during one of the most productive periods in Angelou 's career ; she had written three autobiographies and published two other volumes of poetry up to that point . Angelou considered herself a poet and a playwright , but was best known for her seven autobiographies , especially her first , I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings , although her poetry has also been successful . She began , early in her writing career , alternating the publication of an autobiography and a volume of poetry . Although her poetry collections have been best @-@ sellers , they have not received serious critical attention .

And Still I Rise is made up of 32 short poems , divided into three parts . The poems ' themes focus on a hopeful determination to rise above difficulty and discouragement , and on many of the same topics as Angelou 's autobiographies and previous volumes of poetry . Two of her most well @-@ known and popular poems , " Phenomenal Woman " and " Still I Rise " , are found in this volume . She speaks for her race and gender in many of the poems , and again emphasizes the strength and resiliency of her community . Like her previous volumes of poetry , the reviews of And Still I Rise were mixed

The collection 's title poem , " Still I Rise " , was the center of an advertising campaign for the United Negro College Fund . Two others , " Phenomenal Woman " and " Just For a Time " , were previously published in Cosmopolitan . " Phenomenal Woman " was one of Angelou 's poems featured in the film Poetic Justice .

= = Background = =

And Still I Rise is Maya Angelou 's third volume of poetry . She studied and began writing poetry at a young age . After her rape at the age of eight , as recounted in her first autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings ( 1969 ) , she dealt with her trauma by memorizing and reciting great works of literature , including poetry , which helped bring her out of her self @-@ imposed muteness .

The publication of And Still I Rise occurred during one of the most productive periods of Angelou 's career . She had written songs for Roberta Flack and had composed movie scores . She had written articles , short stories , TV scripts and documentaries , autobiographies , and poetry ; she produced plays ; and she was named a visiting professor of several colleges and universities . In 1977 , Angelou appeared in a supporting role in the television mini @-@ series Roots . She was given a multitude of awards during this period , including over thirty honorary degrees from colleges and universities from all over the world .

Although Angelou considered herself a playwright and poet when her editor Robert Loomis challenged her to write Caged Bird , she was best known for her autobiographies . Many of Angelou 's readers identify her as a poet first and an autobiographer second , but like Lynn Z. Bloom , many critics consider her autobiographies more important than her poetry . Critic William Sylvester agrees , and states that although her books have been best @-@ sellers , her poetry has " received little serious critical attention " . Bloom also believes that Angelou 's poetry was more interesting when she recited it . Bloom calls her performances " characteristically dynamic " and says that Angelou " moves exuberantly , vigorously to reinforce the rhythms of the lines , the tone of the words . Her singing and dancing and electrifying stage presence transcend the predictable words and phrases " .

Angelou began , early in her writing career , alternating the publication of an autobiography and a volume of poetry . By the time And Still I Rise was published in 1978 , she had published three autobiographies , eventually going on to publish seven . In 1993 , she read her poem " On the Pulse of Morning " at President Bill Clinton 's inauguration . The following year , her publisher , Random House , placed the poems in And Still I Rise in her first collection of poetry , The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou . Also in the 1994 collection were her two previous collections , Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ' fore I Diiie ( 1971 ) and Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well , along with her two volumes published afterwards , Shaker , Why Don 't You Sing ? ( 1983 ) and I

Shall Not Be Moved ( 1990 ) . Angelou 's publisher placed four poems in a smaller volume , entitled Phenomenal Woman , in 1995 .

Two of the poems in And Still I Rise , " Phenomenal Woman " and " Just For a Time " , appeared in Cosmopolitan in 1978 . In 1994 , the title poem , " Still I Rise " , was part of an advertising campaign for the 50th anniversary of the United Negro College Fund .

= = Themes = =

According to scholar Carol E. Neubauer , the themes in the poem in And Still I Rise , as the title of the volume suggests , focus on a hopeful determination to rise above difficulty and discouragement . Neubauer states , " These poems are inspired and spoken by a confident voice of strength that recognizes its own power and will no longer be pushed into passivity " . Angelou focuses on the same themes as her previous volumes , including love , loneliness , and Southern racism , but with the added twist of the nature of women and the importance of family . They cover a wider range of topics , including springtime , aging , sexual awakening , drug addiction , and Christian salvation .

" Phenomenal Woman " , a crowd @-@ pleaser that Angelou often performed for audiences , has been called her " personal theme @-@ poem " . Neubauer and literary critic Harold Bloom both consider it one of the best poems in the volume . The poem was featured in the motion picture Poetic Justice ( 1993 ) , directed by John Singleton . Bloom calls it a " hymn @-@ like poem to woman 's beauty " . Angelou " skillfully engages " in some word @-@ play with the word " phenomenally " . As Angelou often does in her poetry , " Phenomenal Woman " is paired with the one that follows it , " Men " , in which Angelou uses a raw egg metaphor to contrast dominant masculinity with fragile and cautious femininity . She celebrates both " her slightly mysterious power " and the excitement created by men . The poem is characteristic of Angelou 's style , with terse and forceful lines and irregular rhymes . The short and often monosyllabic words , as Neubauer states , " create an even , provocative rhythm that resounds with underlying confidence " . Angelou said that she wrote the poem for all women , regardless of their race or appearance . She also stated , " Now , I know men are phenomenal , but they have to write their own poem " .

Many of Angelou 's poems focus on racial subjects and themes . They continue the themes of mild protest and survival also found in her autobiographies , and inject hope through humor . In " Ain 't That Bad ? " , she uses the Black English vernacular word " bad " to connote positive connections with Black culture , mores , customs , and leaders , and to help build Black pride . Scholar Lyman B. Hagen calls it a " shouting poem " due to its short lines and repetition . In " Lady Luncheon Club " , Angelou humorously describes an overly intellectual speaker at a woman 's club .

Critic Robert B. Stepto states that the poem " One More Round " is heavily influenced by the work and protest songs of the past . The even @-@ number stanzas in the eight @-@ stanza poem create a refrain like those found in many work songs and are variations of many protest poems . He is impressed with the creation of a new art form out of work and protest forms , but does not feel that Angelou develops it enough .

In Angelou 's favorite poem , " Still I Rise " , which shares its title with a play she wrote in 1976 , she refers to the indomitable spirit of Black people , using repetition and the categorization of injustices against them . She quoted it during interviews and often included it in her public readings . Despite adversity and racism , Angelou expresses her faith that one will overcome and triumph . Hagen compares " Still I Rise " with spirituals that express hope . As she does in " Phenomenal Woman " and throughout her poetry and autobiographies , Angelou speaks not only for herself , but for her entire gender and race . Reviewer Ellen Lippmann calls " Still I Rise " a " proud , even defiant statement of behalf of all Black people " . Angelou , during an interview in 1997 , stated that she used the poem to help sustain her during hard times , and that many people , both Black and white , used it in the same way .

Two of the poems in And Still I Rise , " Woman 's Work " and " Momma 's Welfare Roll " , speak about women positively . " Woman Work " , without explaining or complaining , lists the mundane chores a stay @-@ at @-@ home wife and mother must accomplish . Neubauer compares the poem to " Phenomenal Woman " , both of which share the same strong rhyme scheme , forceful

rhythms , and theme of women 's vitality . In " Momma Welfare Roll " , Angelou speaks about the courage of a mother who goes on welfare , and acknowledges the demeaning turmoil she experiences when accepting government assistance .

= = Reviews = =

Like many reviewers of Angelou 's poetry , Ellen Lippmann of School Library Journal finds Angelou 's prose stronger than her poetry , but found her strength more apparent in the poems in this volume than it was in her first autobiography . Mary Silva Cosgrave , in her review in Horn Book Magazine , praises Angelou for finding rhythm in everyday life and is impressed with the poems in *And Still I Rise* , especially " Phenomenal Woman " ; Cosgrave states , " To her third collection of poems the author has brought a life full of zest and style that is phenomenally her own " . Harold Bloom states that although " Phenomenal Woman " has received few reviews , it is one of the most popular and powerful poems Angelou recites in her public appearances .

Stepo considers the poems in *And Still I Rise* as slight and " thin stuff " , and expresses his disbelief that Angelou 's poems would be produced by a major publishing house while poetry written by other lesser @-@ known talents could not . He is able to see the possibilities of what he considered good poetry in her writing , and states that her best poems borrow " various folk rhythms and forms and thereby buttresses her poems by evoking aspects of a culture 's written and unwritten heritage " . He places Angelou 's work in the tradition of other Black poets , and compares the poems in *And Still I Rise* to the works of Langston Hughes , Gwendolyn Brooks , and Sterling Brown . For example , many of Angelou 's poems remind Stepto of Brown 's poems . " Still I Rise " reminds Stepto of Brown 's most famous poem , " Strong Men " . Stepto explains Angelou 's success and popularity as a poet with her autobiographies , which he calls " marvelous " and the real reason for her success as a poet . He states that her poetry serves as explanatory texts for her prose works , which he calls " more adeptly rendered self @-@ portraits " .

Joyce Boyarin Blundell is positive in her review of *And Still I Rise* in Library Journal . She recognizes many of the same themes in Angelou 's autobiographies , but calls the poems in this volume uneven . Blundell finds the poems similar to speech patterns and songs the most effective , while she finds others " mired in hackneyed metaphor and forced rhyme " . Despite the volume 's weaknesses , she considers it successful as a statement of a Black woman 's experiences and of her determination to survive and grow .

= = Poems = =

*And Still I Rise* consists of 32 poems , divided into three parts . The first part , entitled " Touch Me , Life , Not Softly " , has been called " joyful " and affirms the poet 's strength as a woman and as a lover . Part Two , " Traveling " , focus on the hardships , such as drug addiction , child abuse , inner @-@ city life , and conditions in the Old South , that the author and others have experienced . Part Three , " And Still I Rise " , which gets its name from the volume 's title poem , reiterates the themes in Part One and emphasizes the strength she finds in herself and in her community . The volume is dedicated to Jessica Mitford , Gerard W. Purcell , and Jay Allen , whom Angelou calls " a few of the Good Guys " .