

= I Shall Not Be Moved ( poetry ) =

I Shall Not Be Moved is author and poet Maya Angelou 's fifth collection of poetry , published by Random House in 1990 . Angelou had written four autobiographies and published four other volumes of poetry up to that point . Angelou considered herself a poet and a playwright and her poetry has also been successful , but she is best known for her seven autobiographies , especially her first , I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings . She began , early in her writing career , of alternating the publication of an autobiography and a volume of poetry . Most critics agree that Angelou 's poems are more interesting when she recites them .

The poems in I Shall Not Be Moved focus on themes of hard work , universal experiences of humans , the struggle of African Americans , and love and relationships . Like most of her poetry , the collection has received little serious critical attention , although most reviews have been positive .

= = Background = =

I Shall Not Be Moved is Maya Angelou 's fifth 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 .

Although Angelou considered herself a playwright and poet when her editor Robert Loomis challenged her to write Caged Bird , she has been best known for her autobiographies , and 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 poems are more interesting when she recites them . 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 " .

Early in her writing career she began alternating the publication of an autobiography and a volume of poetry . By the time I Shall Not Be Moved was published in 1990 , she had published five autobiographies , eventually going on to publish seven . Her publisher , Random House , placed the poems in I Shall Not Be Moved in her first collection of poetry , The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou ( 1994 ) , perhaps to capitalize on her popularity following her reading of her poem " On the Pulse of Morning " at President Bill Clinton 's inauguration in 1993 . Also in the 1994 collection were her four previous collections , Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ' fore I Diiie ( 1971 ) , Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well ( 1975 ) , And Still I Rise ( 1978 ) , and Shaker , Why Don 't You Sing ? ( 1983 ) . Angelou 's publisher placed four poems in a smaller volume entitled Phenomenal Woman in 1995 .

= = Themes = =

Critic Lyman B. Hagen states that much of Angelou 's poetry and most of her writings , especially " Worker 's Song " , the first poem in I Shall Not Be Moved , praises the laborer . He says , " In Angelou 's writings , rarely is there anyone who does not work . Everyone of her characters ? singers , dancers , railway workers , etc . ? works hard " . Critic Hazel Rochman , who calls the poem an " exquisitely simple worksong " , states that Angelou connects physical action with wit and longing . She compares it to the performances of singer Paul Robeson and to Langston Hughes ' poem " Florida Road Workers " . Michele Howe calls I Shall Not Be Moved " a collection that testifies to the undaunted spirit of oppressed people everywhere " , and states that it " relates a history of hard work , pain , joy , and the affection and heartbreak often associated with love " . She also mentions " Worker 's Song " in her article in the New Jersey newspaper The Star @-@ Ledger ,

stating that it describes the struggles of the workers that " keep the whole world running " .

Howe says that although Angelou writes about the Black experience , she draws from the experiences of all ethnic backgrounds . Howe considers the poem " Our Grandmothers " , which relates the struggle of a woman attempting to overcome her enslavement and oppression , one of the most poignant poems in the volume and its focal point . The poem uses the title phrase ; according to Howe , Angelou 's use of the personal pronoun signifies the universal experience of mothers and grandmothers and their struggles to overcome obstacles . Howe also discusses the poem " Coleridge Jackson " , which she considers another significant poem in I Shall Not Be Moved . The poem describes a man who " wouldn 't take tea for the fever " ? someone incapable of creatively dealing with his suffering at the hands of his employer . Angelou informed Howe that she believed that " Coleridge Jackson " was one of the most powerful poems she had ever recited in public .

In the poem " Love Letter " , Angelou describes the power of love to empower people to be themselves in their relationships , and to be equal with their partners . Angelou 's poem " Human Family " focuses on the similarities of all people , especially the line " We are more alike , my friends , than we are unlike " . According to Howe , this line sums the themes found throughout the volume .

= = Reviews = =

Rochman , when she compares " Worker 's Song " to Hughes ' " Florida Road Workers " , states that like Hughes , Angelou 's poem combines rhythm and sense . She considers the poem the best in the volume , calling many of the other poems in I Shall Not Be Moved " too polemical " . Rochman says that the sensuous details in Angelou 's best poems enlivens her abstractions , and finds no false sentiments in them . She also states , " The dying fall of many lines combined with the strong beat reinforces the feeling of struggle and uncertainty " .

= = Poems = =

The volume 's title , according to Angelou , comes from her desire to encourage young people to " have a moral stance " and never give up , despite the tendency for people in power to ignore , deny , or neglect their duty to use their positions and abilities to change the world . It is dedicated to her mother Vivian Baxter and Mildred Garriss Tuttle .