

Parallel Paths: Resilience in James Patrick Kinney's 'Cold within' and Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise'

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Abstract:

"Parallel Paths: Resilience in Kinney's 'Cold within' and Angelou's 'Still I Rise'" explores the common theme of resilience in two seemingly disparate poems. James Patrick Kinney's "Cold Within" portrays the consequences of selfishness and lack of empathy, while Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" celebrates the strength of marginalized individuals in the face of oppression. Despite their differences in tone and subject matter, both poems convey messages of hope and empowerment. Kinney's cautionary tale prompts reflection on the importance of compassion, while Angelou's empowering anthem inspires readers to persevere in the face of adversity. Through their exploration of resilience, Kinney and Angelou remind us of the enduring power of human spirit to overcome challenges. This comparative analysis delves into the universal themes of resilience and indomitable human spirit, revealing the parallel paths these poets traverse to convey their messages of hope and perseverance.

Keywords: Marginalization, Oppression, Importance of Compassion, Resilience

Introduction:

This research paper explores the theme of resilience in two iconic poems, "The Cold Within" by James Patrick Kinney and "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou. Both poems have a theme of resilience and tenacity in the face of misfortune, although having quite different stories and settings. This study uses a comparative analysis to look at how these poems emphasise the value of resilience, the methods the speakers use to get over obstacles, and the significance that they have for society as a whole. This paper aims to identify the similar routes of resiliency that connect these two classic pieces by examining the themes, images, and literary devices found in each poem.

American poet James Patrick Kinney (1923–1974) is best known for his poem "The Cold Within," which he penned in the 1960s. Though he produced numerous more poems, none of them were as well-known as "The Cold Within." Because The Cold Within sent a strong message against racial discrimination, it was deemed "too controversial for its time." It remains a poignant exploration of human nature, prejudice, and the consequences of selfishness. Kinney has also penned many poems, among which some are remarkable such as 'A Better World', 'I Can't Change You', 'Never Alone', 'The Secret of Life', 'Who am I?' and 'Who's to Blame'.

During the African American Civil Rights Movement (1954–1968) Kinney was shocked by the inhumane discriminatory views prevalent at the time and wanted to provoke some serious introspection. How

frequently do we have the maturity to put aside our egos? When we let our prejudices to rule us, how stupid are we? Its message is still important today because of the polarizing views that fuel violence and hatred in the world. The poem serves as a reminder to face our inner demons and keep an open mind to the wisdom of an egalitarian viewpoint, which holds that all people are created equal. In an effort to combat racism and intolerance, Kinney uses narrative poetry to tell a tale.

The poem opens with six people trapped by coincidence in the biting cold weather. Each one of them had a wooden stick. A fire was keeping them warm. But as the poem progresses, it becomes evident that each person has prejudices towards the others, which prevents them from contributing their piece of wood. The poem ends tragically, with everyone dying in the cold because none of them is ready to take the initiative to create a fire even though they have enough wood between them to do so.

"The Cold Within" is situated within the social and political milieu of the 1960s, a time characterised by momentous civil rights initiatives and continuous battles against bias and discrimination. It is possible to think of Kinney's poem as a criticism on the prejudices and societal divisions that were common at the period, emphasising the disastrous results of not being able to get over these obstacles and cooperate for the common good.

The poem has a straightforward, appropriate, and evocative title. The poet clarifies it in the final stanza.

"Their logs held in death's still hands

Was proof of human Sin

They did not die from the cold without

They died from the cold within"

The icy feelings we harbour within us are lethal and harmful. It keeps us from being compassionate towards others, from assisting and rescuing others as well as ourselves. It forces us to live immoral lives. The tragic deaths of the six people who held onto their sticks and let the life-saving fire to go out in the bitter cold outside demonstrate how appropriate the term is. The coldness in their hearts consumes them.

"The Cold Within" can also be interpreted as a timeless allegory that has relevance outside of its initial historical setting. It touches on universal issues of morality, human nature, and the value of teamwork and empathy in overcoming hardship. The poem continues to be studied and appreciated for its powerful message about the need for unity and compassion in a world often divided by selfishness and intolerance. Maya Angelou was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. Her ground-breaking autobiography series, which began with "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" (1969) and covers her early life and the struggles she encountered as an African American girl growing up in the South during segregation, is what made her most famous. Poems, essays, plays, screenplays, and other literary works of Maya Angelou all capture her experiences, insight, and resilience in the face of hardship.

The Civil Rights Movement, which gathered strength during the 1950s and 1960s, gave rise to the Black Power movement. The Black Power movement, while not a formal movement, was a paradigm shift in Black-White relations in the United States and in Black identity. They focused on overcoming centuries of humiliation by exhibiting self-esteem and racial pride, as well as recognising black people's cultural achievements around the world.

In this regard Angelou's poem "Still I Rise" is a poignant and inspirational composition that she released in her 1978 collection "And Still I Rise." In a broader sense, the poem asserts marginalized people's dignity and perseverance in the face of oppression. Because Angelou often wrote about blackness and black womanhood, "Still I Rise" can be interpreted as a critique of anti-black racism.

The poem is renowned for its celebration of strength, resilience, and defiance in the face of oppression

and adversity.

“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.”

In the poem the speaker declares that societal injustices will not weaken their unbreakable spirit. The speaker confronts the oppressive force - racism, sexism, and discrimination through a sequence of rhetorical questions and statements. Throughout the poem, the theme "Still I rise" is repeated, serving as a forceful affirmation of one's own worth and resolve to overcome any obstacle.

She talks on behalf of other black people without saying so. By referring to her forebears and openly referencing slavery near the end of the poem, she addresses her people's collective experiences and asserts that they are stronger than their oppressors. Whatever the oppressors do, she and her people will continue to live their lives.

The speaker will carry with her the "gifts that her ancestors gave": strength, optimism, and resolve. She will not inherit their anguish. She has inherited their great qualities, which will drive her forward in life. For the first time, the speaker directly addresses slavery while referring to herself as the "dream and hope of the slave." Her forefathers aspired and dreamed of independence, and she intends to make these dreams a reality.

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

The final three lines' repeated use of "I rise" gives the stanza a potent meditative character that almost seems like a prayer. At this point in the poem, the repetition makes sense because the prior reference of slavery evokes images of slaves singing and praying. The speaker's objectives are affirmed by these repeated words, which are a song, a meditation, a prayer, and a fearless proclamation of optimism.

Conclusion:

The analysis of these two different but thematically related poems in the paper: "Parallel Paths: Resilience in James Patrick Kinney's "Cold Within" and Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise"" reveals a profound meditation on the resilience inherent in the human experience. James Patrick Kinney and Maya Angelou both use poetry and distinct storylines to deliver important lessons about embracing inner strength and triumphing over adversity.

Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" is a monument to the human spirit's unwavering resiliency in the face of injustice and discrimination. Echoing the title's proclamation of overcoming hardship, Angelou's defiant tone and uplifting images encourage readers to rise above cultural constraints and proclaim their innate value.

On the other hand, James Patrick Kinney's "Cold Within" is a cautionary tale that highlights the negative effects of indifference and selfishness in societies. In spite of this depressing picture, the poem emphasises the need of empathy and solidarity in building resilience, offering avenues for collective growth and understanding.

Both poems highlight the tremendous relevance of resilience as a guiding force in managing life's adversi

ties. Whether through Angelou's celebration of personal strength or Kinney's study of collective responsibility, these works remind us of our ability to persevere and thrive in the midst of adversity. Thus, the examination of "Cold Within" and "Still I Rise" not only underscores the resilience inherent in the human condition but also invites reflection on the diverse manifestations and transformative power of this enduring quality. In a world marked by trials and tribulations, these poems serve as beacons of hope, guiding us towards paths of resilience, empowerment, and collective renewal.

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