

Feminism Between the Written and the Spoken Word

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Abstract

By evaluating the audience's reaction to and involvement with feminism themes offered in both page poetry and spoken word poetry, the author attempts to determine which is best suited to reflect on these concerns, and what makes one a better communicative medium than the other. Both poetics and hermeneutics theories will be utilized to trace these variations in order to conduct an in-depth investigation of the work's structures, form, and aesthetic qualities that would have particular impacts on the reader. The theories used will also allow the author to analyze the works under study's verbal and nonverbal signals. Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, and Jackie Hill Perry are the poets chosen for this research. They were chosen primarily for their reputation as feminists and civil rights activists, as well as for their fame in the realm of poetry. The three were well-known poets, yet their material took on distinct forms. The study reveals that, while page poetry excels in language, musical features, and more in-depth and original images, it does not thrive in public-opinion issues. When it comes to audience recognition and interaction, spoken word poetry is the most intimate and effective at generating a response, especially when it comes to women's issues. The paper's ultimate purpose is to have addressed a research gap in appraising spoken word poetry in this specific subject of critical themes.

Keywords: Feminism, spoken word, written word, research work, social interaction, Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, Jackie Hill

1. Introduction

Spoken word poetry differs from page poetry in terms of form, structure, and societal and personal reactions. Regarding form, spoken word poetry is divided into thoughts in the same way that formal poetry is divided into lines and stanzas. Therefore, rhyme and rhythm can be observed at the endpoints of concepts and thoughts in spoken word poetry when they are applied to lines in page poetry. There are no restrictions on form, structure, rhyme, or even rhetoric in spoken-word poetry. Because of this, it cannot be categorized as either blank verse or sonnets, but it is close to free verse, which has no fixed number of lines, stanzas, or other structures.

Spoken word poetry differs from recitation in the literal sense as well when the speaker usually keeps the basic gaps between stanzas and, most often, lines and adheres to a formalized reading of the poem. He or she must do it to maintain the poem's rhyming pattern and other aesthetic elements that might otherwise be lost. Breaks and pauses in spoken word poetry are flexible and determined by each improvisation, the audience, the delivery style, and the content of the poem. But, first and foremost, why is it called poetry?

Spoken word poetry is more like prose with poetic elements. It is a marvelous synthesis of what is greatest in each. It combined the simplicity and flow of prose with some poetical characteristics that reinforce meaning and give it depth. It is free of any restrictions that may limit the choice of words and the capacity of speech. It is poetry simply because it says more and says it more intensely than ordinary language, which is the traditional definition of the term 'poetry.' It also has a distinct, yet unfixed, rhythmic beat that differentiates some sections from others that are closer to prose than verse. Individual words can include rhythm, and it can be complete or partial. Other musical devices, such as alliteration and onomatopoeia, can coexist. Its greatest strength is its emotionally charged nature, which is unique to every poet. It also relies on synonyms and the distinctive emotional recitation imbued with emotions and compassion rather than figurative speech to further develop meaning or add depth to the poem. It even has its own preferences for what figurative language to employ and

which imagery to incorporate. Not every figure or image is appropriate for this type of art. Spoken word poetry promotes audience comprehension and involvement over metaphorical language or form sophistication, which would rather impede the desired enjoyment of the topic being addressed. That is why it is known as societal poetry.

Because of its diverse audience, which includes the uneducated as well as the literate and cultured, spoken word poetry may generate more interaction and authentic responses on the themes addressed. The distinctive manner in which each spoken word poet performs, with his or her own body and facial gestures, enunciation, and choice of other supporting techniques as the use of hip-hop or blues, makes of this type of art a more powerful means of gazing inside the minds and hearts of the people. It is a form of both protest and healing. People laugh, sob, and interact enthusiastically with spoken word poetry. But, in terms of issues of public opinion, will the linguistic and aesthetic characteristics of page poetry be sufficient to elevate it above spoken word poetry? To determine which form can have a more effective engagement with the audience, the study examines some of the most well-known feminist poems of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as well as some feminist spoken word poetry. The study takes into account the linguistic and aesthetic characteristics of both types of art, as well as the social feedback.

2. Review of Literature

Several studies on the philosophy of poetry in transmitting meaning were conducted in the twentieth century, calling for the need for wider kinds of poetry. Karen Simecek's 'New Directions for the Philosophy of Poetry' is one such study. Simecek analyses the relationship between poetry, feeling, and expressiveness. For her, the signs and play of words in poetry involve the reader in forming links to draw meaning, which deepens and provides significance to the meaning. However, the author of the current paper agrees with Sherri Irvin, who opposes the requirement for complicated metaphoric language to establish meaning in poetry, labelling such poems as 'unreadable poems.' This refers to any poem that appears to prevent the reader from having a straightforward grasp of the poem.

Simecek proposed exploring new areas of poetry, such as spoken-word poetry, which has recently gained popularity in reaction to similar past studies. Many scholars then examined, analyzed, and even celebrated spoken word poetry for its remarkable expressiveness and connectivity with the audience, and thus a better manner of speaking out one's voice during difficult times. When it comes to the urge to unsilence the silenced topics, spoken word poetry was the first option among students. 'Hopefully this motivates a bout of realization: spoken word poetry as critical literacy,' Megan Call-Cummings and other writers write about how youth in the Northern Virginia region utilized this type of poetry to fight school-level policies through an after-school workshop. Because of their use of spoken word poetry as a vehicle for addressing social issues, this genre has become a subject of study in critical pedagogy and critical literacy. The leaflet also served as a call to school adults to assist pupils in speaking out.

'A bridge across our fears: understanding spoken word poetry in troubled times' is written on the same issue and the function performed by spoken word poetry in bringing youths' voices to the world, as well as the particular traits that enable it to carry out this mission. The research discusses the role spoken-word poetry plays in establishing counternarratives, which aids youth in constructing their identities and overcoming adversity. According to the authors, spoken-word poetry, through counternarratives, can interrupt stories of dominance and resist oppression.

Natalie Marshall wrote her paper 'Poetic care: the orientations and relations of spoken word performance at three venues in East London' on the connectivity of spoken-word poetry with the audience, exploring the performance of spoken-word poetry through observation at events and interviews with performers. Marshall's investigations revealed the rationale behind the adoption of this genre, which turned out to be the urge to express responses to personal issues.

Another recent study looked at how this type of poetry is used to address larger concerns like gender inequality and marginalization. The author in "The voice in twenty first century spoken word poetry and confessionalism: An analysis of performances" by Lozada Olive, Benaim, and Vaid-Menon explores how spoken word poetry has changed and how it has become a focal point for both the critical and social debate. Three of the most well-known slam poetry contestants, whose works are among the best-selling ones, were included in the author's study. He talks on the development of their political and personal voices as a movement against marginalization and the silencing of their voices in the sociopolitical sphere.

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between stage poetry and activism. In her work, "Activating Politics with Poetry and Spoken Word," Valerie Chepp explores how Millennial activism, often misunderstood

and criticized, discovers a fresh avenue for expression through the resurgence of spoken word poetry. Chepp discusses how this art form serves as a versatile tool for advocacy, community organizing, and mobilizing like-minded individuals toward a common cause. Spoken word poetry, she argues, provides Millennials with a powerful means to engage in political activism and effect social change.

In the article “Poetry is on its Way Back Up,” Daniel Xerri delves into the relationship between stage poetry and social change. Xerri posits that there is a strong correlation between the two, suggesting that stage poetry has the unique ability to captivate and engage young people. By taking poetry onto the stage, it becomes more accessible and appealing to younger audiences, allowing them to connect with the art form in a modern and interactive way.

And, while spoken word poetry has been studied in situations of self-expression, there is still a significant research gap when it comes to women's issues, which are notably one of the most trending topics of spoken-word poets and the most presented in poetry slam.

3. Methodology

The main goal of the paper, which is to identify the best poetic expressive and communicative form in Feminism issues, necessitates an examination of the structure and rhetorical features of the two forms under consideration, as well as the meanings of the works and how this meaning is conveyed and received by the audience. Poetics and hermeneutics are thus used to achieve the intended goals, as the former will aid in the comprehension of the poetical works, and the latter in the specific relationship they generate with the audience and, if any, the social reaction they elicit. This would help to address the question of whether language and obsession with images and rhetoric are more essential in eliciting a social reaction, or meaning and the manner in which its effect is formed.

And because hermeneutics is both empirical and reflective and encompasses written, verbal, and non-verbal communications, the author first investigates the written experience of the poets under examination (empirical activity), and then analyses and interprets their meanings (reflective activity), through an analysis of their verbal and non-verbal channels of communication. In order to research reflective behaviors, it is important to pay close attention to audience feedback and social interaction on various social media platforms.

Furthermore, while some scholars express a preference for hermeneutics over poetics, or even suggest that hermeneutics can entirely replace poetic theory, the current study emphasizes the importance of both. It argues that a balance between the two is crucial for an optimal outcome. Neglecting poetics may result in a poem resembling an essay, while ignoring hermeneutics may render it inaccessible to the audience, who might perceive it as overly complex and obtuse. Therefore, a harmonious integration of poetics and hermeneutics is essential for a poem to strike a chord with its readers.

4. Discussion

Feminism problems have been raised throughout the history of English literature through many styles of poetry, including free verse and dramatic monologues. Many of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' most celebrated poets, including Maya Angelou, Andre Lorde, Ai Ogawa, Margaret Alwood, and others, used poetry as an outlet for their gender issues. Spoken word poetry evolved as a form of expression quite recently, in the 1990s. A thematic and technical comparison of both forms of page poetry and spoken word poetry on this specific issue, as well as their feedback loops, will allow us to determine which form is best used to discuss critical issues and which is capable of placing them ahead of officials and creating societal reactions.

The first to be studied is Angelou's “Still I Rise” (Angelou, 41–42). The poem was first published in 1978 and later performed live by Angelou. The poem's language is simple, more slang and streetwise. Images can also be easily understood. It seems as though Angelou wrote it with this purpose in mind—to be more moving and accessible to readers than poems with intricate wordplay that might limit reader interaction. Therefore, similes were mostly used instead of metaphors to make it clearer and straightforward like ‘like dust, I rise,’ ‘like I've got oil wells,’ ‘like teardrops,’ ‘like I've got gold mines,’ and ‘like air,’ etc. Only in the last two stanzas of the poem, after she has already committed the reader to the poem, does she begin utilizing metaphors like ‘I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,’ and ‘I'm the dream and the hope of the slave.’

Starting the poem with something simple to accept was not the only tactic Angelou employed to entice readers and establish a rapid and stable bond with them. She also chose to plunge them into the poem's completion by dangling a small scene in front of them every now and then. ‘...trod me in the very dirt,’ ‘...oil wells pumping in my living room,’ ‘shoulders falling down,’ and ‘... gold mines digging in my own backyard’ are few examples of this tempting method. Structure and rhyme scheme employed the same strategy used to commit the reader first to the poem and subsequently to new grounds in terms of figures of speech. As a result, the first seven stanzas adhered to the precise meter of a quatrain and a consistent rhyme scheme of abcb, with Angelou changing the

manner only later. Consequently, while the reader begins the poem indifferent to the poet or the content, s/he finds himself or herself dedicated to it until the finish. She was building the groundwork for her powerful rebellion in the end, 'I rise,/ I rise/ I rise,' so there can be no doubt about her motivations. So what began with exclamations and light assertions became a large celebration of her ability to triumph.

This technique was used in a way that most effectively supported the topic. The poem is a ferocious critique of the dominant masculinity and a powerful affirmation of women's ability to succeed. The poem's straightforward language is intended to get its point over to the greatest possible audience, and adding a beat makes it easier for people to remember it and pass it on from reader to reader and from one country to another. Angelou wanted to make sure the reader would stick with the poem all the way through because of the significance of the message it conveys. Sandra Cookson says of Angelou's message and the poem's social significance: "Angelou speaks harshly to whites. She asks poignant questions of them and challenges their tolerance of a black woman who is sassy... She calls upon them to examine their prejudices... Amidst the cries of pain and bitterness, she propounds the ability to overcome it all and embrace life" (800).

And despite the fact that "Still I Rise" addresses a crucial feminist issue on a global scale, the poem received mixed reviews: "Newspapers reviews categorized it as quite radical while other critics paid it less attention than it deserved" (Gale). Individual reactions also differed. Some readers thought it was a bland, artless attempt at providing fresh insight into a cliché, drawing strong parallels between its sentiment and content to Gloria Gaynor's song "I Will Survive":

Oh no, not I, I will survive

Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive

I've got all my life to live

And I've got all my love to give and I'll survive

I'll survive, hey, hey. (What are your thoughts on Maya Angelou's poem 'Still I Rise'?)

As poetry aficionados and professors, they felt the poem lacked engaging language, intelligent imagery, and poetic artistry. When asked about their thoughts on the poem, numerous poetry fans provided the following feedback: "Maya Angelou was many admirable things, but a good poet was not one of them. Her poetry is universally dreadful. Noble and well-intentioned, sure, but as Wilde famously quipped, "all bad poetry is sincere" (What are your thoughts on Maya Angelou's poem 'Still I Rise'?). However, the negative reactions focused solely on the poem's poetic sense, which is understandable given the poem's lack of original imagery or interesting language.

These poetic criticisms have fueled more debate over the poem's poetic merit. Researchers began to examine the poem's language qualities in order to establish a more linguistic-based objective view. Imkan Nkopuruk investigates the multiple linguistic levels of Angelou's 'Still I Rise,' including syntax, semantics, lexis, graphology, and phonology, in his work "Objectifying Intuitive Response in Stylistic Analysis: Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise' as a case study." Some of his conclusions, which obviously undervalued the poetic aspect of the poem, were subjectively rationalized in favor of the poem. The purposeful use of apostrophes, as in 'I'll,' 'cause,' 'Don't,' 'I've,' 'That's,' and 'I'm,' for example, "indicate the colloquial nature of the language use in the poem" (2018). However, he suggests that this was meaningfully used to "show the care-free attitude of the poetic persona to her uncaring audience (the white masters)" (2018). According to Rabab Abdel-Fattah (2020), such casual, informal language is inappropriate for the nature of poetry: "plain informal language that would deliberately disturb the audience's poetical taste" (p. 261).

When it comes to images and structural pattern diversity, they are used in a very limited way. Nkopuruk claims that "simple and complex sentences are used in a considerable proportion" (p. 9), but what he means by "considerable" is simply one single idea articulated differently with a single word change: 'But still, like dust, I'll rise,' and 'But still, like air, I'll rise.' Images, on the other hand, are relatively limited in kind, employing only similes, metaphors, and one personification. And, while this may be done effectively in order to reach a wider audience, it is yet another trait that is improper for the nature of poetry: "limited use of imagery turns the poem into a more abstract text, more like prose lines lined in verse form" (Abdel-Fattah, p. 262).

In contrast to the divisive poetic reactions sparked by the poem's absence of any notable poetic qualities, the poem's content, where it was a call for self-confidence and battle, garnered more laudable responses: "Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise' holds importance in my life as confidence in who I am as well as my values is something that I have, and continue to struggle with... Angelou's poem resonated strongly with me as motivation to protect my values from hostile scrutiny through appropriate categorization of other and self-assured responses to hateful

criticism” (Ibukun, 2017). After Angelou’s live performance of the poem (“Still I Rise”), it gained millions of views throughout the globe and received positive feedback from the general audience. Its worth as a spoken-word poem was strengthened by the content as well as other characteristics, such as the simple language, and straightforward diction.

The responses were unanimously favorable, with many appreciating the content and her inspirational recitation. Some of the crowd reactions to her live performance of the poem are as follows:

“At this point, I don’t even know how many times I’ve played this” (GazaNieka)

“I cracked up laughing when she laughed and said “Does my sassiness upset you?” I love this poem so much. What a pillar of strength this woman is” by (quietstorm0508)

“If I watch this, every morning, for the next month, I could conquer the world” by (refilwelioma8868)

“The way she says STILL I RISE is just enchanting!” by (abenakwabuwa)

“This is one of the greatest, most profound performances I’ve ever witnessed” by (aarongreen2735)

“Her reading her own poem to us touches and inspires me even more...” by (reddragon874)

“She reminds me that reading poetry isn’t just reciting, it’s performing” by (tristanlozuaway)

With the help of the live performance, the poem was transformed from a purely critical object to an instrument for social activism that promoted awareness and change. Along with the resonant content and simple language and diction, Angelou’s distinctive performance, which included diverse facial expressions, voice modulation, and caustic laughter, gained the poem more notoriety as a spoken-word poem than as a page poem. A more thorough examination of Angelou’s performance helps to explain the enthusiastic reception it received. First of all, despite the fact that the poem was a protest against important social concerns like racism, discrimination, and the dehumanizing macho system generally, Angelou did not appear upset during the entire poem. Despite this, Angelou had a cynical smile and a snarky demeanor that demonstrated how resilient she is in the face of hardship and how unaffected by people who would “trod her in the very dirt.” With every “still I rise” affirmation, the smile becomes even more joyful and intensely uncaring. It is a triumphant declaration, and the smile is the ideal facial expression to convey this sense of triumph over hardship. Angelou’s adorable cynical smile serves not just to display her strength and sense of success, but also to establish strong communication with the audience and make a great impact: “to build bridges of constructive communication, you must appear approachable. Smile, coupled with a good-natured sense of humor, ranks high among likability factors. And you want people to like dealing with you” (Arrendondo 41). Similarly, Angelou wanted to put her audience at rest rather than put them on alert and create negative perceptions.

Eye contact is also a fundamental aspect of Angelou’s live performance, and, like facial expressions and tone of voice, it was used on purpose. The science of Oculistics (the study of eye contact) states that “Eye contact is one of the most dynamic forms of nonverbal behavior and is an essential biological skill necessary for effective social interactions...Reginald Adams and Robert Kleck assert that direct gaze is associated with approach tendencies” (Neulipe). Angelou maintained eye contact throughout her performance to maintain a social bridge with the audience and demonstrate that, whereas men’s eye contact can infer power and position, her eye contact conveys strength, defiance, and even threat.

The tone of Angelou’s voice has the same impact. Her tone of voice is reasonable, calm, and composed throughout the poem, supported by her rate of speech that is neither too fast nor too slow, and her times of silence that constitute the right vocal approach to deliver her message. Lani Arredondo suggests the greatest vocal style for alerting the listener to sit up, take notice, and pay attention: “Ever so subtly, lower the pitch, slow the rate, speak more softly when you make the point_ then pause... (A moment of silence)” (40). Angelou’s tone of voice is also caustic whenever she doubts the listeners’ (in this example, the oppressed’s) power when it is threatened by her potentials: ‘Does my sassiness upset you?/ Why are you beset with gloom?/ ‘Cause I walk like I’ve got oil wells/.../ Does my haughtiness offend you?/.../ Does my sexiness upset you?/ Does it come as a surprise?/. Sarcasm, according to Arredondo, “undermines trust...Derogatory remarks that demean people are often said sarcastically. And criticism is often veiled in a sarcastic tone” (39). Employing such strategies were indeed Angelou’s defense mechanism against those racist oppressors.

Audre Lorde’s “A Woman Speaks” is another inspiring poem to study in this context. The enchantment and strength of this poem, like Angelou’s “Still I Rise,” are not driven by poetic qualities of creative figures of speech or a distinctive rhythm. And, despite the poem’s revolutionary subject matter, it was written in straightforward language with no misleading figurative language. Lorde demonstrated the strength of black

women in simple sentences like “I seek no favor/.../ I do not mix love with pity/ nor hate with scorn/.../ Beware my smile/.../ I am/ woman/ and not white./” and in simple and straightforward images like “but when the sea turns back/ it will leave my shape behind./ and if you would know me/ look into the entrails of Uranus/ where the restless oceans pound/.../ I am treacherous with old magic/ and the noon’s new fury/” (Lorde, *Chosen Poems* 5). As a socialist and a feminist, she desired a language that was accessible to the general public, both educated and uneducated: “to read means to undress a text’s meaning and free it from the rhetorical fetters” (Marchesi 12). She wished to turn what was referred to as ‘private suffering’ into a matter of public debate. Now she is not the exclusive owner of the poem and its subject matter because, as Simon Marchesi points out; “It is difficulty to state that the author is the only person legitimately in charge of retrieving meaning from a poem” (Marchesi xii)

The poem is written in free verse, which some may perceive to be against the poetic code, or, as William Butler Yeats famously remarked, “all that is personal will rot if it is not packed in ice and salt,” referring to ‘rhyme’ as ‘Ice,’ and ‘meter’ as ‘salt.’ Those were the preservatives in Yeats’ day, and without them, the poem loses a lot of its poetic appeal. However, it was clear that Lorde’s departure from the confines of poetry was meaningful. She clearly did not wish to be constrained by rhyme and meter in her word choice or ideas flow. She prioritized the strength of self-expression over the beauty of poetry and the limits of rhyme or rhythm since she was a bright and passionate socialist. Even Dante, formerer of poetics and the beauties of language, emphasized its communicative aspects and for this reason in specific preferred prose over poetry. It was the impulse towards a theory that values both the author and the reader: “Dante’s former emphasis on the communicative aspects of language [led] to a theory that values its expressive and ethical qualities...in the poem, to a search for a model in which ‘beauty and goodness’ could be intrinsically joined; in a coordinated move, to the author-centered hermeneutics” (7). This move aimed at incorporating both the author for the form and the audience for interpretation. Taking this into consideration, both spoken word poetry and this new move would go hand in hand. Spoken word poetry ensures valuing the reader or receptor equally as the author’s in creating and enacting the content, and therefore directs the hydraulics of the poem towards literal reading in the most of the work to facilitate understanding and ensures interaction. It is indeed Dante’s ultimate defense of poetry against accusations that poetry sets itself aloof from any communication with the audience: [Dante’s] renewed interest in a theory of meaning that valued the reader over the author (and correspondingly, literal readings over allegorical ones)” (7).

Language’s simplicity is maintained by the unique structure of the poem. The second and third stanzas are only one sentence apiece because the entire poem is composed in run-on sentences. The opening section, however, has two rather than one sentence. Lorde decided to halt at her intimidating declaration to her adversary that she cannot be undone or erased even by the strongest forces—“Leave my shape behind”—because she is both strong and resistant and her magic cannot be undone or deleted. Ending the sentence with this concept is to keep it dangling in front of the reader’s eyes and mind. She added a period after it because it is an established and unarguable truth.

Additionally, individual words are given entire lines to increase their impact and significance. Therefore, the last three sentences contain more than just their literal meaning. The simple use of “I am” was intended to emphasize the speaker’s existence. She also wanted to emphasize that being a woman should enhance rather than detract from her character. When Lorde was asked if it was still true that men do the thinking and women are only being emotional, she responded, “No, not at all. That is, I believe, a real distortion of reality... If we cannot anchor that rationality in our feelings and have it lead toward a future..., then rationality has no meaning” (Lorde, *Conversation with Audre Lorde* 148). Her final line concludes her ominous statement that because she is a black woman, she is an even more formidable individual. The final three lines serve as a kind of summary of the entire poem, delivering a succinct conclusion in extremely straightforward yet impactful language.

Lorde enjoys structure as well as shrewd play. She makes it clear that her ‘smile,’ which some people would interpret as a sign of capitulation or surrender, is merely one of many cards she plays. With some cards turned over and others left face down to plan for a crucial action, she is both transparent and enigmatic at the same time. So, while a sophisticated reader might argue that ambiguity in language or images adds richness to the poem, giving it texture, Lorde stressed reaching out to readers over poetic norms. Joan Wylie Hall said about Lorde in an interview with her, “Brilliant. She does not obscure her vision with intellectual jargon but writes simply, yet eloquently” (128). When asked to explain the distinction between poetry and rhetoric, Lorde stated, “that is exactly the difference. When I say that the difference between poetry and rhetoric is being ready to kill ourselves instead of our children, I mean, if we are really ready to put ourselves behind what we believe, then we can bring about change. Other than that, it is only empty rhetoric” (Lorde, *Conversation...148*). One of the fundamental characteristics of spoken word poetry is the emphasis on content over form, as Marc Smith and Joe Kraynak

explain in their book *Take the Mic*; “It’s not an art form...it’s an experience that’s artistic, entertaining, educational, spiritual, reflective, and above all life-changing.” They go on to say about Slam poetry (a competitive verse performance of spoken-word poetry in front of an interactive audience), “Slam is not meant to be a serious determination of who’s the mightiest poet...Slam is not an art form that lets an elite few decide what’s of value and what’s not” (6).

Therefore, “A Woman Speaks” was studied and indeed praised for its message rather than its aesthetic. On the charm and importance of Lorde’s poetry Barbara Christian comments; “she championed the complexity of life, named it a blessing and gave that blessing to us” (167). Lorde picked poetry as her mode of battle, and she made certain that it was not constrained by poetry’s restricting aesthetics: “As Lorde has so profoundly expressed, it is often in poetry that we imagine that which we have been afraid to imagine_ that poetry is an important source of imagining new ideas for change” (Christian 18). As a result, scholars disseminated Lorde’s works as ideas rather than poems with distinct poetical features: “...Audre Lorde, whose thoughts filtered into universities as well as society at large through the work of scholar activists” (Christian 221). Lorde was known as a highly political writer, not for a single poem; “Lorde’s books of poetry have established her reputation as a highly political writer, one unafraid to speak truth to power, pointing out the ravages of racism, classism, misogyny, and homophobia in American society” (Cucinella 220).

Other poems on common topics will be highlighted to show Lorde’s prioritization of content over poetical qualities in cases of public importance. In ‘Summer Oracle,’ for example, the topic is about future prophecies and hopelessness, which sounds more like a common topic than one that communicates any of Lorde’s primary concerns about racism, classism, or misogyny. As a result, the level of figurative language utilized in the poem is radically different. It’s full with strong and original figures of speech and images that demand greater attention and study. It’s even safe to say that the entire poem is a metaphor with a central picture “the image is fire.” A variety of rhetorical and musical elements, as well as figures of speech, were employed. Such is the alliteration in ‘small summer’ and ‘old country,’ metaphors as in ‘fire/ blackening the vague lines into defiance across the city,’ ‘cold country/ barren of symbols for love,’ ‘...fire/untouchable in a magician’s coat,’ and ‘cry sour worms,’ oxymorons as in ‘destruction and birth,’ similes as in ‘burning off excess/ like the blaze...,’ and personifications as in ‘the image is fire...under its clock of lies.’ Images are also employed in their various forms, including auditory images as in ‘blowing over,’ and ‘cry sour worms,’ olfactory images as in ‘I smell it...,’ visual imagery as in words like ‘fire,’ ‘flaming over,’ and ‘blaze.’ These are only samples, not limitations of the figurative language utilized. When compared to ‘A Woman Speaks,’ there is a clear contrast in the vocabulary utilized, whether extremely figurative or direct, as well as the specific choice of words.

It is remarkable how spoken word poets tend to use clear language and simple images if they are attempting to address a provoking issue, even if their work would approach prose forms in this manner. It is this form that directs meaning to the audience. In his self-commentary movements, Dante himself favored prose over poetic forms when it was about retrieving meaning; “When Dante comes to hermeneutics, to the instruments he sees as appropriate to retrieve meaning from poetry, he privileges the expository prose... over the actual poetic texts he has already produced.” In explaining this he added that “Poetry may be in charge of originating meaning, but prose controls it” (Marchesi 84). The only difference between spoken word poetry and page poetry would thus be that the latter is presented live rather than being written down. This demonstrates once more how much more effectively spoken-word poetry emphasizes content over form while retaining its broad appeal and passion than written poetry.

Jackie Hill Perry’s spoken-word poem ‘what is a woman’ is an example of a spoken-word poet who performed exceptional feminism poems. Perry uses pictures and figures of speech sparingly, only when they are necessary to preserve a fluid flow through the poem and do not cause a pause in time or perception on the side of the audience. As a result, simple metaphors such as ‘...she needed not a man or moon to keep her in orbit,’ as well as similes such as ‘she moved about as wind and breeze,’ and ‘a siren to be as Moschetti as I may,’ were utilized. The employment of figures of speech and imagery was limited in order to ensure a smooth and direct reception of her message. Rhyme was also utilized sparingly since, unlike page poetry, it is not as important here. The main emphasis is on meaning; it is the true hydraulics of the poem. As a result, the listener can only be engaged with Perry’s messages throughout her recital, with no interruption of what this image or figure might signify, or what other poetic elements would indicate.

Furthermore, the employment of poetic aesthetics was to provide aesthetic pleasure. This is what distinguishes spoken word poetry in general, and the spoken word poems under consideration in particular: they have not abandoned their original beings as a form of poetry, and thus include, albeit on a limited scale, poetic aesthetics to ensure aesthetic enjoyment in addition to their main goal of reaching the audience, combining the most

beautiful aspects of poetics and hermeneutics. Radhika Koul's paper "Navigating the Space Between Hermeneutics and Aesthetics: Dhvani and Comparative Poetics" emphasizes the aesthetic effect of a poem that is grounded in the poem's meaning and aesthetic features, implying that unrelenting emphases on a poem's hermeneutic activity may neglect its poetic aesthetics and the emotional response that results.

Perry is demonstrating her own reciting style, which is distinguished by emotional intensity and a thorough illumination of each thought or message before going on to the next. It is where she pauses at the end of each sub-idea, allowing her audience an opportunity to internalize it before moving on to the next. For example, after her first contact, she pauses to say, 'there was a woman who hated being a woman.' The first section has no breaks and is read as a single piece until she delivers the tragic ending that inspired the creation of this poem. The second message asks, "What is meant to be a woman?" This enquiry serves as the cornerstone for the entire poem. Then there are the messages: 'a woman was independent,' '[a woman was] autonomous,' '[a woman] needed not a man or the moon to keep her in orbit,' and so on.

Perry uses body language and verbal acrobatics in addition to speaking to increase audience involvement. Incorporating nonverbal communication in addition to verbal communication ensures a complete communication cycle. It is one of the primary distinctions between spoken word poetry and page poetry: "It is not a form of poetry that is made for the page." It is poetry to experience through the ear and by watching the visual presentation of the poet. Some poets use props, and others engage their entire bodies in the performance (Pitre 66).

Perry's first hand movements, the repetitive short and minor hand wavering broken with clasping of hands and wiggling of fingers, imply something separate from but substantially complementary to the statement "hated being a woman." As Geoffrey Beattie points out, "the slightly wavering hand movement is an abstract gesture (a so-called metaphoric gesture) accompanying 'very strange feeling' (the wavering movement representing 'strangeness')" (10). The unusual feeling here can be 'disapproval,' 'contempt,' 'fury,' 'frustration and tension,' or 'nervousness and apprehension,' accompanied by hand clasping and finger fidgeting: "A hand clasped behind one's back could be a sign that someone is anxious, depressed or angry. The rapid tapping of fingers or fidgeting could indicate that someone has become bored or impatient or angry" (Harvard).

This is how Perry sees the whole male-domination issue. Furthermore, the preparation phase of the gesture (the starting point) is close to the body, which is the continuum of these various feelings of nervousness and anger, whereas the stroke phase (the meaningful part of the gesture) is always out and away from the body, indicating that the source of problems is external (males). Perry herself came from a shattered household and was a victim of sexual abuse. Using hand gestures in this series of phases creates a nonverbal counternarrative along with her verbal one. Creating a counternarrative provided an outlet for her oppressed feelings as well as a "valued opportunity through which to invite interaction" (Blake 138). "poets can disrupt stories of domination and resist oppression. Counternarratives first identify the elements of the master narratives that are oppressive and serve to misrepresent individuals... Next, they retell the story about the person or the group to which the person belongs in such a way as to make visible the morally relevant details that the master narrative suppressed" (Curwood 50). The counternarrative in Perry's 'What is a Woman?' began with herself and the "woman as brown as melanin in my daughter's eyes" who declared "she hated being a woman," then moved to the vast feminine population to change her or the brown woman's experience from individual to global.

This sort of communication is just as important as verbal communication:

It is extraordinary that people have tried to dismiss the movements of the hands and arms which people make when they speak as merely coincidental movements—virtually random flicks and twirls that are merely used for emphasis. But these movements are not insignificant, and they are not merely poor forms of communication about emotion or interpersonal attitudes. They are closely integrated with speech and may provide a unique insight into how speakers are actually thinking...Iconic gestures are not separate from thinking and speech, but part of it. (Beattie)

Returning to the poem, Perry employs iconic gestures such as waving her hand in a circle to replicate the movements of orbits in 'she needed not a man or moon to keep her in orbit.' These distinctive motions not only aid in visualizing the image, but also reflect Perry's mental representation of the action at hand. She may have presented it differently, from a different perspective. Instead of having the moon (represented by 'man' in the poem) to keep the earth (represented by 'woman' in the poem) stable, she may have considered that the earth is most likely the major reason for the formation of the moon, and that as a result, the earth is more livable. Indeed, the gesture Perry adds is to secure the desired interpretation of her statement and to reflect on her feminism.

And, while Perry's social reception was highly problematic for her own beliefs and actions, there was no

disagreement about her spoken-word poems on feminism, in which she also addressed other subjects. Perry's Twitter followers hit 700,000 before she deactivated her account completely. She was followed by female activists, advocates for justice and equality, trauma survivors, and believers.

5. Conclusion

While many readers appreciated page poetry for its unique rhetoric and music, there was a gap in many others' understanding and interactional processes, especially when it related to intriguing issues that required a swift and serious societal assessment and response. Hermeneutics claimed that poetics alone is insufficient for such social engagement, and new forms were produced as a result. Spoken word poetry achieves notable success in this regard, demonstrating that the best way to reach a wider audience is to free the poem from its rhetorical constraints, allowing people to extract meaning immediately and walk into the story and become a part of it themselves. The recent study, which evaluated audience feedback on both page poetry and word poetry, indicates that spoken word communicates louder than page poetry. This form speaks louder because it not only frees the content of any fetters that may distract attention and impede the immediacy and continuity of understanding, but also because it employs tactics of engaging facial expressions, voice intonation, and body movements.

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