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RADICAL FEMINISM IN POETIC UPRISING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MAYA ANGELOU'S STILL I RISE AND IJEOMA UMEBINYUO'S CONVERSATIONS WITH BROKEN GIRLS

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Abstract

This paper examines the radical feminist aesthetics of Maya Angelou's Still I Rise and Ijeoma Umebinyuo's Conversations with Broken Girls, focusing on how both poets articulate resistance to patriarchal structures through poetic form, language, and subjectivity. Drawing on radical feminist theory, the study situates the two poems within a tradition of feminist literary activism that foregrounds the personal as political. Angelou's poem represents bold defiance and collective triumph over historical and racial oppression, using affirming diction, rhythmic repetition, and celebratory tone to assert female agency and resilience. In contrast, Umebinyuo's piece, employing minimalist structure, confessional tone, and fragmented imagery to reveal the inner world of female pain and survival, portrays the intimate trauma of women living in patriarchal silence. Despite their different stylistic approaches, both poets transform poetry into a space of healing, resistance, and reclamation. The findings highlight the convergence of form and feminist politics, demonstrating that poetic structure itself can be a radical tool of empowerment. Ultimately, the study affirms that Angelou and Umebinyuo centre the female voice not only to confront systems of domination but also to construct alternative narratives of identity, survival, and power.

Introduction

Radical feminism is a strand of feminist theory that seeks to eliminate patriarchy by challenging society's very roots of gender inequality. Unlike liberal feminism, which advocates for equal rights through gradual reforms and legal adjustments, radical feminism views patriarchy as a deeply entrenched system that must be completely dismantled rather than simply reformed. This study focuses on the structural and institutional mechanisms that privilege men and women. These include family, religion, law, culture, and language. Radical feminists assert that women's oppression is the most fundamental form of oppression, as it predates and underpins other systems of domination.

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The foundation of radical feminism rests on several core issues. Among them is the belief that male supremacy is perpetuated through the control of women's bodies, voices, and choices (Obika 17). It also critiques the heterosexual nuclear family as a central site of women's subjugation, arguing that societal norms condition women to accept domestic roles that limit their autonomy (Ezeaku 21). The movement's insistence on dismantling systemic oppression structures reflects its broader goal of transformative justice. Radical feminists seek not only inclusion but also revolution. Their critique extends to language, religion, and cultural practices that normalise women's subordination.

Radical feminists further argue that male-defined sexual norms contribute to women's objectification and sexual exploitation (Chukwuemeka 33). In the literature, radical feminist analysis investigates how texts reproduce or resist these mechanisms (Amechi 5). This study applies this lens to the poems *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou and *Conversations with Broken Girls* by Ijeoma Umebinyuo. Both poems serve as artistic resistance, turning language into a site of emancipation. Through their poetry, Angelou and Umebinyuo expose, challenge, and reimagine the patriarchal conditions under which women live and speak.

In Angelou's *Still I Rise*, radical feminism emerges through the bold affirmation of Black womanhood against centuries of racial and gendered oppression (Ame 4). The speaker rises in defiance of those who wish to erase her history and silence her voice (Obasi 13). Her message resonates across generations, offering hope and strength to women silenced by structural injustice. The depicted resilience is not passive survival but active defiance. Angelou turns personal experience into political protest.

Angelou's lines resonate with political undertones, suggesting that the act of rising is not just personal empowerment but also collective resistance (Okoroafor 27). Umebinyuo's *Conversations with Broken Girls*, on the other hand, explores the painful realities of patriarchal trauma in both private and communal spaces (Nwachukwu 15). Her poem interrogates how experiences of abuse, silence, and survival often shape emotional vulnerability and intimacy. The "conversation" between women becomes a sacred space where pain is shared and not erased. This perspective aligns with radical feminism's critique of normalised emotional violence and internalized suffering.

Her poem is a critique of the myths surrounding love, memory, and womanhood. The broken girl, now three times more powerful, becomes a symbol of survival, even in fragmentation (Korie 19). Both poets, though writing from different geographies and histories, embody radical feminist concerns through their poetic voices. Drawing from lived experience, they reject abstract theorizing and bring feminism to bear on everyday pain. Their poetry collapses the distance between the personal and the politics. In doing so, they reclaim narrative space for women's truth.

The radical feminist issues addressed in these poems include the erasure and silencing of women's voices, the violence embedded within the institution of the family, the control of female sexuality, the objectification of the female body, and the dehumanising impact of patriarchal culture (Adigwe 23). Through poetic defiance, Angelou reclaims voice and dignity in *Still I Rise*, countering historical narratives that devalue Black women (Ezema 7). Her assertion of identity operates as both personal healing and social confrontation. The repeated "I rise" becomes a weapon against historical silencing. Angelou transforms language into liberation.

Through *Conversations with Broken Girls*, Umebinyuo exposes the psychological and emotional toll of intimacy under patriarchy (Egbunike 10). Both poets reject the passive victimhood often assigned to women and instead assert an active voice that challenges injustice. Their resistance is grounded in lived experiences and layered with historical memory. Poets write not only as individuals but also as cultural witnesses. Their voices break the cycles of erasure.

One major issue radical feminism critiques is the idea of the "ideal woman" as self-sacrificing, obedient, and emotionally restrained (Iloabuchi 13). Family expectations and societal norms that demand silence from women who suffer perpetuate this myth (Mordi 21). In Umebinyuo's *Conversations with Broken Girls*, the speaker's pain is not only personal but also symbolic of a wider culture that rewards women for endurance rather than justice. The poem becomes an indictment of normalised suffering. Umebinyuo's act of speaking out disrupts cultural complicity.

In *Conversations with Broken Girls*, the speaker's pain unfolds in layered fragments—conversations, silence, and haunting repetition (Chidubem 12). Radical feminism calls out this distortion, insisting that silence is complicity (Ajuzie 6). The poet's decision to speak out becomes a revolutionary act. Umebinyuo aligns her work with radical feminist objectives by naming the pain and shattering illusions of love and memory. Her poetry reclaims brokenness as political truth.

Another key concern is voice and subjectivity. Historically, women have been denied the right to define themselves in their own terms (Uba 10). Angelou's *Still I Rise* addresses this directly. The speaker refuses to be reduced to a stereotype or historical footnote (Ekuma 24). Instead, she carved a new space for Black female identity. Her voice becomes an affirmation of being.

The repeated line "I rise" becomes an assertion of subjectivity. In contrast to the shame and inferiority that patriarchy enforces, the speaker claims her space with confidence and audacity. Radical feminism supports this reclamation of voice, seeing it as essential to dismantling internalised oppression and rebuilding identity on a woman's own terms (Ilechukwu 11). Angelou's voice is thunderous and not tentative. It becomes a force that shifts cultural memory.

Controlling female sexuality is another important radical feminist concern. Patriarchal societies often stigmatise women's sexual autonomy, portraying it as deviant or shameful (Agbasiere 20). In *Still I Rise*, Angelou counters this by celebrating the female body's sensuality and power. Her use of metaphors such as "sassiness" and references to her hips emphasise the joy and pride she takes in her womanhood. Instead of hiding or apologising for her femininity, the speaker embraces it as a source of strength.

This open affirmation of sexuality contradicts patriarchal expectations that women should be modest, submissive, and invisible (Mbah 13). Umebinyuo's *Conversations with Broken Girls* takes a different, yet equally radical, approach to female sexuality. Rather than celebrating, the poem reflects on exploitation, emotional vulnerability, and how women's bodies become sites of loss and remembrance (Onuoha 12). The brokenness is not only emotional but also existential. It gestures towards a life suppressed by inherited silence.

The speaker grapples with internalised pain, which is often inherited from generations of women who were taught to suppress themselves (Nkemdirim 14). Radical feminism recognises that this repression is structural and not accidental (Okpara 9). Women are often socialised to accept pain as part of their destiny. Umebinyuo's poem confronts this illusion and calls for a reckoning with these inherited wounds (Nduka 3). The poem becomes a cry against generational complicity.

The role of language is also crucial. Radical feminism recognises that language can either reinforce or resist a patriarchal ideology (Ikenna 25). Angelou uses rhythm, repetition, and rhetorical questions as resistance tools. Her tone is assertive, playful, and mocking, especially when addressing those who try to break her spirit. The use of the future tense—"I will rise"—create a sense of inevitability. It marks resistance as both a promise and a prophecy.

In contrast, Umebinyuo's language is more solemn and introspective (Ezimora 7). Enjambment and fragmentation are employed to reflect emotional rupture (Ugwoke 19). Her quiet tone belies the weight of her message. The silence in her poem speaks louder than words. She enacts radical critique through structure and form.

The metaphorical technique is also central to both poems. Angelou likens herself to dust, air, and a black ocean—elements that are resilient, uncontainable, and omnipresent (Nnorom 20). These metaphors reinforce the idea that women, particularly Black women, cannot be erased. Umebinyuo, on the other hand, uses metaphor to depict emotional fragmentation—women "twice broken," sons who "burn [women] into ashes." These poetic choices are not merely aesthetic but also ideological. They challenge the narratives that keep women voiceless.

Radical feminism embraces such metaphors as tools for awakening consciousness (Iroegbu 9). Tone, imagery, repetition, and enjambment are all part of the poets' arsenal. Angelou's uplifting tone contrasts sharply with Umebinyuo's solemn mood, but both convey strength. Angelou's repetition of "I rise" turns her poem into a chant of liberation. Their imagery choices—a rising sun in Angelou, broken girls in Umebinyuo—are deeply symbolic. Through these techniques, they both articulate the core radical feminist message: women's voices matter, and their pain is political. Umebinyuo's pauses and quiet lines mirror the heaviness of inherited trauma (Chukwuma 17). The personal and political meet in poetry. These poems become rupture and healing sites. Radical feminism exists in every line.

Literature Review

Recent scholarly work affirms *Still I Rise* as a seminal text in the canon of feminist and African American literature. Oyinlola argues that Angelou's poem functions as "a rhythmic blueprint for Black female empowerment," noting how the poem's structure and diction reflect a conscious reappropriation of historical trauma into performative strength (5). Similarly, Eze 92 contends that the repetition of "I rise" operates not only as affirmation but also as an act of "linguistic rebellion against colonialist and patriarchal narratives that render the Black woman invisible" (Eze 92). This interpretation aligns with contemporary feminist thought, which views poetry as a tool for political reclamation. According to Adeyanju, Angelou's use of sensual imagery, such as "diamonds at the meeting of my thighs," challenges traditional portrayals of Black female sexuality as deviant, reasserting agency over the female body in ways that subvert heteropatriarchal expectations (Adeyanju 44).

In analysing the language of *Still I Rise*, Nwachukwu notes the use of non-standard rhetorical questions and metaphor as tools to confront systemic silencing, writing that "Angelou's tone of sarcastic interrogation places the burden of discomfort on the oppressor" (Nwachukwu 37). According to Okeke, Angelou's poetic voice "emerges not as a victim but as a cultural insurgent whose language breaks the cycle of inherited defeat" (Okeke 73). In a more recent study, Olawale argued that Angelou's poetic form mirrors the oral traditions of African American protest music, citing the influence of gospel rhythm and blues in the cadence of her lines (Olawale 11). Ekundayo similarly emphasises how Angelou's confident repetition performs a "ritual of resistance" that actively reshapes literature's narrative of Black womanhood (Ekundayo 58).

In the poem, Njoku explores the relationship between resilience and trauma, arguing that the speaker's unyielding tone masks a deeper psychological defence against racial and gendered violence (Njoku 91). Similarly, Ogundipe asserts that the poem can be read through the lens of Afrocentric feminism, positioning Angelou's speaker as an archetype of African diasporic survival and self-reclamation (Ogundipe 26). These perspectives contribute to a growing body of scholarship that interprets *Still I Rise* not only as autobiographical empowerment poetry but also as a strategic, politicised intervention in literary and cultural discourses. Several scholars, including Adefemi, have also explored how the universal tone of the poem allows it to transcend personal narrative and resonate as a global anthem of marginalised voices (Adefemi 40).

However, scholarly engagement with Umebinyuo's *Conversations with Broken Girls* has grown in recent years as part of a broader interest in the poetry of African women. Iwuh describes the poem as "a sparse, emotionally layered composition that centres the aftermath of patriarchal neglect in domestic life" (61). Uchechukwu views the poem's minimal punctuation and fragmented syntax as deliberate stylistic choices that mirror the speaker's

fractured emotional state, arguing that the poem "refuses poetic ornamentation in order to communicate the rawness of internalised pain" (Uchechukwu 88). Thus, scholars interpret the stylistic austerity of *the broken home* as an ideological stance wherein form becomes a metaphor for emotional disrepair.

Nnaji emphasises the intergenerational theme, stating that "Umebinyuo crafts a maternal lineage of silence and endurance, exposing how trauma is passed down through unspoken traditions of suffering" (Nnaji 22). In agreement, Olumide highlights that Umebinyuo's speaker "learns how to disappear within her own life—a motif that challenges the romanticized narratives of motherhood and familial unity often promoted in African literature" (Olumide 49). These critiques reinforce the radical feminist position that the family can be a central site of female subjugation rather than a sanctuary.

Scholars have drawn parallels between Angelou and Umebinyuo's poetic strategies. Adebayo suggests that while Angelou asserts identity through volume and repetition, Umebinyuo resists through fragmentation and silence, making both poems "complementary feminist responses to the same patriarchal structures, expressed through differing tonalities" (Adebayo 13). Chikere adds that both poems "foreground the body—either as triumphant or traumatised—as the primary canvas for feminist resistance" (Chikere 60). Despite stylistic differences, both poets exemplify a feminist poetics that centres the personal as a space of political contestation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in radical feminist theory, which emerged in the late 1960s as a revolutionary critique of patriarchal power structures. Unlike liberal or Marxist feminism, which seeks gender equality through legal reform or economic redistribution, radical feminism views patriarchy as the most fundamental and pervasive system of oppression. It identifies male dominance as systemic, deeply entrenched within the very institutions of society—family, religion, law, education, language, and media. The aim of radical feminism is not mere reform but the complete dismantling and restructuring of these institutions to eradicate gendered hierarchies at their root. Pioneers, such as Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, and Andrea Dworkin, argue that patriarchy operates through both material and ideological mechanisms. In *Sexual Politics*, Millett famously, defined politics as "power-structured relationships, where one group controls another." (Millett 33). In her view, gender relations are inherently political, and male dominance is not natural but culturally enforced and socially institutionalised. This definition reframes personal relationships, especially within the family, as sites of power and control, thereby challenging the romanticised notion of private life as apolitical.

In *The Dialectic of Sex,* Shulamith Firestone extends this argument by asserting that gender oppression begins with the biological division of labour, especially around reproduction. According to Firestone, the family is not a neutral space but the "cell of the patriarchal organism" (Firestone 61). She advocates the abolition of the family as we know it and the use of technology to liberate women from biological reproduction, thereby breaking the cyclical transmission of patriarchal values through generations. Firestone's radical approach positions biology as a political battlefield.

Dworkin and MacKinnon shift the focus to language, sexuality, and the law. They emphasise that patriarchy is maintained not only through physical control but also through epistemic domination—the control of knowledge, truth, and representation. MacKinnon argues that the law has historically reinforced male power by defining harm, justice, and consent from a male perspective (MacKinnon 29). In her critiques of pornography and media, Dworkin maintains that women are socialised to internalise subjugation and silence through symbolic systems such as literature, advertising, and cultural myths. Their scholarship reframes sexual violence, objectification, and even emotional labour as political acts of domination.

A key tenet of radical feminist theory is that the personal is political. Women's everyday experiences—emotional trauma, domestic abuse, reproductive burdens, and sexual objectification—are not isolated incidents but

manifestations of systemic control. This politicisation of the person validates female testimony as a legitimate form of knowledge. Emotional expression, often dismissed as irrational or weak, is reclaimed as a source of power and resistance. Thus, radical feminism makes space for new epistemologies rooted in female subjectivity, embodiment, and affect.

Language is another central concern. Radical feminists critique how language has historically privileged male expression and rendered women's speech invisible or incoherent. Firestone contends that male-centric language shapes what is considered rational, authoritative, and true, thereby marginalising women's voices (Firestone 64). Following this tradition, feminist scholarship calls for the reclamation and transformation of language itself—a feminist poetics that allows women to speak in ways that challenge patriarchal norms and express truths that dominant discourse suppresses.

In recent years, radical feminism has expanded through intersectional engagement, especially in the fields of African, Asian, and Indigenous feminist thought. Scholars such as Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyewùmí and Nkiru Nzegwu argue that Western radical feminist models must be recontextualized within non-Western frameworks, where kinship, motherhood, and gender roles are constructed differently. Nevertheless, they maintain a radical commitment to dismantling oppressive systems, particularly those embedded in colonial and neocolonial institutions that extend patriarchal logic across cultures.

In summary, RFT provides a rigorous, deeply political lens for analysing how power operates through gender. It emphasises systemic control, critiques ideological institutions, validates personal experience as political knowledge, and calls for the total restructuring of society. This framework foregrounds the interplay between the body, voice, and power and, allows for a critical interrogation of how institutionalised patriarchy silences, disciplines, and objectifies women across diverse contexts.

Textual Analysis

Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise* and Ijeoma Umebinyuo's *Conversations with Broken Girls* are poetic manifestos crafted with linguistic precision and emotional power against patriarchal violence. Each poem emerges from a context in which the female voice has been historically silenced. Through the radical feminist lens, both poems articulate a rebellion that is not just personal but profoundly political. Angelou's voice is assertive and unrelenting, while Umebinyuo's is intimate and ruptured. Yet both converge in their demand to be heard on their own terms.

In *Still I Rise,* Angelou opens with a direct confrontation between historical distortion and character assassination. "You may write me down in history/With your bitter, twisted lies," she declares, referencing the systemic manipulation of narratives to disempower women, especially Black women. This is a radical feminist move: to name how institutional powers, such as history and education, collude in shaping oppressive myths. The poem refuses this erasure, instead insisting on self-definition. Her recurring question—"Does my sassiness upset you?" functions as a provocation rather than a query. The radical feminist assertion here is clear: her voice, her pride, and her existence challenge the comfort of a patriarchal gaze.

Angelou's imagery also disrupts traditional femininity. She compares herself to natural forces—"Just like moons and like suns, / With the certainty of tides." In a society where femininity is often constructed as passive, the elemental is reclaimed as feminine and uncontrollable. These images assert that her rising is not a decision that others can influence—it is as inevitable as the laws of nature. The repetition of "I rise" becomes a mantra, a form of incantation that insists on her resilience despite efforts to subdue her. This pattern of repetition is a feminist strategy that reclaims control over rhythm, breath, and voice despite institutional violence.

Conversely, Umebinyuo's *Conversations with Broken Girls* operates through a quiet but equally devastating feminist critique. The poem begins mid-conversation—"She calls you on the telephone/screaming for help"—plunging the reader into a space of female vulnerability and shared pain. Unlike Angelou's overt defiance,

Umebinyuo builds resistance through emotional exposure. The speaker is not delivering a declaration but is bearing witness. The fragmented structure and fluid point of view of the poem depicts the instability of trauma and the disorientation of patriarchal harm. Radical feminism locates power not only in speech but also in naming silence—and Umebinyuo names it with precision.

Throughout the poem, the speaker listens as the woman recounts her memories—"men take and take," she says. Her repetition, her faraway look, and her refusal to respond directly allpoint to an interiority that patriarchy has tried to erase. The speaker becomes both a witness and a companion, holding space for another woman's brokenness. This relationship between women is radical in itself. It resists isolation, invites solidarity, and insists that pain deserves attention and not suppression. When the woman says, "I already had baby names", and "you hear the walls wail," the poem expands from individual lament to communal grief. The personal is political—and this pain is systemic.

Angelou's tone is triumphant. Her body is a battlefield, but she does not emerge wounded; she emerges victorious. "Does my sexiness upset you? / Does it come as a surprise / That I dance like I've got diamonds / At the meeting of my thighs?" Here, she reclaims not only her voice but also her body. Angelou's body is neither shameful nor submissive. It is opulent, sacred, and joyful. She places her erotic agency in the centre of her resistance.

By contrast, Umebinyuo's tone is tender and bruised. The speaker does not ask to be seen in defiance but in brokenness. "Twice broken, / three times more powerful." This quiet assertion of strength born from pain is a radical feminist act. The speaker does not reject vulnerability—she elevates it. Her strength lies not in overcoming pain but in carrying it. The line "Your son does not know how to love a woman/without trying to erase her from herself" indicts a culture that trains men to dominate. Love becomes violence. Intimacy becomes erasure. The speaker's naming of this cycle is political resistance.

Yet, in both poems, the voice is the method of healing. Angelou's voice is thunder, and Umebinyuo's is rain. Together, they compose a feminist storm that erodes centuries of patriarchal silence. What Angelou shouts, whispers Umebinyuo. However, both insist on being heard. Through language, both poets enact a rewriting of consciousness. They use poetry not to escape but to expose, challenge, and reclaim.

Ultimately, the two poems serve different purposes within the same movement. *Still I Rise* dramatises defiant survival in the face of racial and gendered oppression, while *Conversations with Broken Girls* documents emotional survival in the aftermath of relational violence. Whether by shouting or whispering, Angelou and Umebinyuo unearth what patriarchy prefers to bury—women's truth. In their diction, tone, and form, they undo the silence imposed on women for centuries.

Angelou's use of metaphor is one of her most powerful tools of feminist resistance. By comparing herself to oil wells, moons, suns, and tides, she aligns herself with natural, untamable forces. These metaphors elevate her from the realm of objectified womanhood into one of cosmic powers. The use of the simile in "I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide" further underscores her strength's vastness and depth. This image also resists containment—no walls, no chains, and no social norms can contain a rising ocean. Through metaphor, she becomes ungovernable.

In Umebinyuo's poem, metaphor operates through subtlety. The woman "carries herself like God," and the line "even the devil/will pray for forgiveness at the holy sight of her" reclaims the divine for female embodiment. This is radical feminism reshaping theology, language, and image. Her beauty, long used against her, is now sacred. The woman is not only surviving—she is being rewritten as powerful and, holy. Yet, this power is not triumphant; it is solemn. Her strength is forged in grief, not in glory.

Angelou's diction is bold, luxurious, and rhythmic. Words such as "sassiness," "sexiness," "gold mines," and "diamonds" are lush with connotations. They represent not only value but also an unapologetic celebration of

Black femininity. This deliberate lexical choice destabilises the white patriarchal narrative that has long defined Black female bodies as either invisible or hypersexualized. Her language dances—it resists the stillness of oppression.

In contrast, Umebinyuo's diction is intimate, sparse, and emotionally raw. Her lines move between declarative speech and poetic silence. Her language carries heaviness—"she is smiling as you bring her soup," "she says with pain stretching her voice," "you hear the walls wail." These are everyday acts steeped in trauma. Her form resists neatness. Her pauses resist resolution. This is radical feminism locating protest in the domestic, conversational, and broken.

Together, Angelou and Umebinyuo show that poetic resistance comes in many forms—loud, quiet, metaphorical, literal, abundant, or sparse. Both poems are united by their commitment to radical truth-telling and their refusal to be silenced. Through metaphor, repetition, tone, and diction, these poets reconstruct womanhood in their own image. They do not ask for space—they take it.

Findings

This study found that both *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou and *Conversations with Broken Girls* by Ijeoma Umebinyuo are powerful poetic embodiments of radical feminist ideology. They confront systemic patriarchy, reclaim the silenced female voice, and reconfigure literary form to reflect feminist resistance. Angelou uses bold, rhythmic affirmations to assert self-worth and female agency against intersecting systems of racial and gender-based oppression. Umebinyuo, on the other hand, offers a fragmented, intimate dialogue that captures the raw emotional wounds of women fractured by love, abandonment, and patriarchal entitlement. Both poets transform vulnerability into strength, reaffirming the radical feminist principle that the personal is political.

The two poems explore oppression, trauma, agency, and survival from distinct but converging perspectives. *Still I Rise* addresses historical and racialized oppression, reclaiming dignity in the face of centuries of silencing and violence. Angelou centres defiance, visibility, and ancestral pride. In contrast, *Conversations with Broken Girls* examines the intimate scars left by male possession, emotional abandonment, and bodily exploitation. Umebinyuo frames womanhood as a site of repeated betrayal, but insists on survival and spiritual regathering. Both poets articulate feminist resistance through collective memory and strength, and Umebinyuo through emotional honesty and reclaiming the broken female form as sacred.

In terms of language, Angelou uses celebratory, assertive diction words such as "sassiness," "diamonds," and "hope" and the refrain "I rise" to emphasise invincibility and power. Umebinyuo's poem speaks with the cadence of a speech, its affirmations rhythmic and insistent. Umebinyuo, in contrast, uses deeply evocative, conversational language phrases to convey the interiority of trauma, such as "he loved how my skin felt against his," "I already had baby names," and "twice broken, three times more powerful." Her language is soft yet piercing, unveiling the psychological damage beneath the surface of a sugar-coated exterior.

Stylistically, *Still I Rise* is based on repetition, parallelism, and musicality. The recurring line "I rise" builds momentum, infusing the poem with resilience and hope. Angelou's confident and assertive tone constructs a public voice that counters historical erasure. In contrast, Umebinyuo's poem adopts a fragmented and minimalist style. Her lack of punctuation, short stanzas, and use of enjambment create a broken rhythm that mimics her subject's disjointed psyche. The tone is conversational, intimate, and mournful, inviting the reader into a space of whispered confessions and unresolved grief. The stylistic contrast reflects their differing approaches to feminist articulation. Angelou commands attention through volume and pride, while Umebinyuo compels reflection through vulnerability and emotional truth.

Technically, both poets use metaphor, tone, and voice with deliberate precision. Angelou compares herself to the natural forces of moons, tides, and black oceans, establishing her resilience as elemental and inevitable.

Umebinyuo's metaphors evoke grandeur, permanence, and generational strength. Umebinyuo, on the other hand, builds metaphors out of lived pain: a woman's smile becomes a mask, silence becomes inheritance, and brokenness becomes empowerment. Her metaphors are intimate and immediate, emerging from personal sorrow. Tone is critical in both poems. Angelou's triumphant and celebratory tone empowers and energises; Umebinyuo's melancholic tone invites contemplation and empathy. These techniques allow both poets to disrupt the patriarchal narratives of Angelou by asserting her invincibility and Umebinyuo by refusing to conceal emotional scars.

A major finding is the convergence between poetic structure and feminist politics. Angelou's structured repetition of "I rise" turns her poem into a chant, a call to arms, and a declaration of identity and survival. Umebinyuo's unstructured form reflects her subject's emotional disarray, making the form itself a mirror of brokenness. These structural decisions are not just aesthetic but also ideological. They represent how form can carry feminist meanings. Moreover, both poems broaden literary feminism's scope by illustrating how gender-based oppression intersects with race, memory, family, and trauma. They assert that the voice of a woman remains a site of resistance and rebirth even in pain, public or private.

Summary

This study explored the radical feminist expressions embedded in the works of Maya Angelou and Ijeoma Umebinyuo, *Still I Rise* and *Conversations with Broken Girls*, respectively. The two poems unravel the lived realities of women navigating patriarchal systems through thematic focus, linguistic elements, and stylistic nuances. Angelou's poem asserts confidence, self-worth, and triumph despite historical oppression. Umebinyuo's piece reveals the emotional landscape of wounded women who carry themselves through pain into quiet resilience. Both poems resist silence and reclaim identity through poetry as a form of healing and empowerment. While Angelou's tone is bold and affirming, marked by rhythm and repetition, Umebinyuo adopts a quieter, more introspective approach, marked by pauses, fragmentation, and confessional tones. Angelou's metaphors are wide and cosmic, likening the self to natural elements like tides and moons. Umebinyuo's metaphors are intimate and grounded in the body and personal memory. Despite these differences in style and voice, both poets achieve a shared goal—they centralise the female experience and confront societal norms that limit and violate it.

This study has shown that radical feminism in much African American poetry is not a monolith but manifests through various forms of resistance. Angelou offers a collective anthem of survival rooted in Black history and ancestral pride. Umebinyuo presents an individual, interiorised account that refuses to romanticize womanhood. However, both insist on voice, presence, and survival. Their poems affirm that the female voice is sacred and powerful even in brokenness or triumph.

In conclusion, the two poems are not merely literary works but also instruments of feminist advocacy. They provide emotional, spiritual, and intellectual responses to gender injustice. Through their unique voices, Angelou and Umebinyuo echo the truth that the opposites are to rise and to be broken. Both are acts of resistance. Both are feminist declarations.

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