

“Anger”- an Unrecognized Tradition in African American Women Diasporic Narratives

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African American Women Diasporic Literature

Diaspora it's a community of people from the same homeland who have been scattered or have migrated to other lands. The term diaspora comes from the Greek verb diaspeiro meaning “to scatter” or “to spread about”. As first used in ancient Greece, diaspora refer to people of dominant countries who voluntarily emigrated from their homelands to colonize conquered countries. We recognize two kinds of diaspora: forced and voluntary. Forced diaspora often arises from traumatic events such as wars, imperialistic conquest, enslavement or from natural disasters like famine or extended drought. As a result, the people of a forced diaspora typically share feelings of persecution, loss and desire to return to their homeland.

In contrast, a voluntary diaspora is a community of people who have left their homelands in search of economic opportunity, as in the massive emigration of people from depressed regions of Europe to the United States during the late 1800s. Unlike diaspora created by force, voluntary immigrant groups, while also maintaining close cultural and spiritual links to their countries of origin, are less likely to wish to return do them permanently. They take pride in their shared experience and feel a certain social and political “strength-in-numbers.” Today the needs and demands of large diaspora open influence government policy ranging from foreign affairs and economic development to immigration.

During the Atlantic trade of enslaved people of the 16th to 19th centuries, as many as 12 million people in western and central Africa were taken captive and shipped to the Americans, made up mainly of young men and women in their childbearing years. The native African diaspora grew rapidly. These displaced people and their descendants greatly influenced the culture and politics of the American and other new world colonies. African- American history predates the

emergence of the United States as an independent country, an African- American literature as similarly deep roots. Lucy Terry is the author of the oldest known piece of African American literature, “Bars Fight”. Terry wrote the ballad in 1746 after a Native American attack on Deerfield, Massachusetts. She inaugurated a vital and vibrant literary tradition- African American women’s literature. Throughout history, African American women writers have chronicled and critiqued the American experience as did Lucy Terry in the 18th century. Once marginalized, if not ignored, by mainstream America, African American women writers are now central, indeed essential to American letters and culture. If, as Francis Smith Foster an American researcher an emeritus professor of African American studies and women’s history asserts, African American women writers have “used the word as both a tool and a weapon to correct, to create, and to confirm their visions of life as it was and as it could become.”

African American women writers have written since the eighteenth century, this distinct literary tradition and its importance went largely unnoticed and unacknowledged by literary critics until the emergence of African American women literary scholars and African- American woman writers in the 1970s. Like Lucy Terry, who was inspired to create by the historical circumstances surrounding her in Massachusetts, African American women writers have been similarly inspired by their historical circumstances, be it colonial America, the Revolutionary War, slavery, the civil war, reconstruction, modernity, the Great Depression, World War II, Jim Crow America or the civil rights movement. The Black feminist movement developed in response to the experience of black women in Black Liberation Movements, which include the civil rights movement, the Black Nationalist movement, the Black Panther movement, and other women’s movement.

Black women often found themselves facing sexual oppression within Black liberation movements and racial oppression within the women's movement. White feminist often refused to see themselves as racist, projecting an antiracist attitude that was not reflected in either their ideology or practice. As far back as the slave narratives, African American women have been asserting their desire for sexual as well as racial equality. The genre of the slave narrative also emphasized the significance that gender played in the life of the enslaved. When we observe slavery was hard for black men, but it was much harder for black women whose sexuality was often used against them, with this emphasis on sexual abuse, the slave experience that was often minimized in the male slave narrative. Thus, the foundation of black feminism was being developed and from the onset the questioning of sexual oppression was paralleled by a questioning of racial oppression.

In this study of literature by black feminist writers' projects where in anger was central: consciousness raised by making women aware of how justifiably angry they were, solidarity built by recognizing the shared conditions that had made them angry, and oppressive institutions productively attacked by channeling this anger into political and social activism. "Anger" is a "mode of analysis" in which one looks for the presence of anger in the text. It is also the basis of an aesthetic in which one studies the strategies through which women give literary expression to anger. The women's anger is an ethical response to oppression and injustice, although it requires clarification and proper direction if it is to serve the common good. The righteous anger admittedly necessary for nation-building. While women were not only denied the right to express anger, but even the capacity to feel it. As a result, women who did express anger were perceived as animals or lunatics. Denying women, the right to be angry as well as the right to articulate it, helped keep them second-class citizens. Accordingly, women who recognized and expressed anger constructively were claiming the right to be citizens. But expressing anger acceptably was a difficult undertaking. Women writers developed an artistry of indirection, dissembling, splitting, masking, and coding to get their anger out into the public sphere. Each woman reconciles the tensions between concealing and expressing anger by writing from "behind the mask" and "between the

lines". "Anger" is fuelled by a sense of the wrongs done by American society to its black citizens. The "best" women, white and black are those whose anger focuses on domestic violence, sexual abuse, slavery and racism.

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