

Angelina grimke's contribution to the harlem renaissance essay

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Angelina Grimke is one of the most famous writers who had a huge impact on the Harlem Renaissance. She was born to the family of mixed racial heritage; her father was black and her mother was white. Her literary works are all about the constant racial discrimination and injustice the black people in the US have endured. Her literary heritage constitutes plays, poems and short stories. The main themes highlighted by her works are sexuality, racial discrimination, violence and prejudice.

Grimke's most memorable work is the play ' Rachel' which was finished in 1916 but it was published 4 years later, in the year 1920. The play is about a woman who vows not to give birth to a child after seeing the horrors of racism within the society. Her play has historical significance because it focuses on the segregationist attitudes which many whites in the US had against blacks.

The play is set at the time when slavery was abolished but blacks were still treated as inferior race (Gates and McKay 968). Grimke's play was one of the first to be written by black authors highlighting the plight of blacks in the US. Many African Americans were victims of violent attacks by racist white mobs without any provocation from their side. Her work was instrumental in bringing to light racial prejudices that were deeply ingrained in the American society.

Her works touched on such themes as racism, love, black pride, life and death. Grimke's works influenced the Harlem Renaissance which occurred from the 1920's to the 1930's. Her works cleared the way for other African American writers based in Harlem, New York, to publish literature on racism

among other social issues. Her work inspired other African American writers to dwell on the ills and their impacts on the society.

The author uses metaphors to illustrate tough experiences African Americans faced, and the oppressive environment they had to survive in (Gates and McKay 968). She also came from the background of mixed racial heritage and as such, she understood what it felt like to be discriminated against.

Grimké's play *Rachel* dramatized real truths in the contemporary society. The play was a harsh indictment on American society's prejudices and attitudes towards people of other races. It involved an all-black cast; and it sought to rally support for a boycott against the film, *The Birth of a Nation*.

The film proved popular with many audiences but negatively portrayed blacks in the US. Grimké joined other activists to advocate for banning of the film because of its prejudices against blacks (Gates and McKay 969). Her play sought to criticize the oppression against African Americans.

She explores issues of sexual desires in her poems revealing that she is a lesbian. Such relations were not tolerated in American society which is very conservative up to now. Her works reveal her suppressed desire for the same sex lover; an act that was considered abominable at that time.

The issue of suppression is highlighted clearly in her works even when she stresses on the restrictions people of her own race face due to racial prejudices (Gates and McKay 969). The ideas and attitudes that Grimké

adheres to takes motivates other authors to use creative approaches to tackle negative impacts of racial segregation on African Americans.

Grimké's poem 'Eye of Regret' utilizes strong metaphors to describe the personal struggles that the main character in the poem has to face in his daily life. The poem illustrates how difficult it is for the disadvantaged to make it in a land where they are denied access to social and economic opportunities.

The poem reflects how African Americans who moved to northern cities in search of work had to toil in order to earn a living (Gates and McKay 969). Grimké's works link the past and the present by means of metaphors. Her other poem 'Trees' shows her objection towards the mistreatment of others because of their dark skin color. She uses unreal experiences and settings to illustrate the pain that Blacks go through for being considered inferior.

Grimké's poems are sentimental and speak of the pain the author felt at that time. Her poem, 'As We Have Sowed' reveals her emotions on the basis of the master- servant relationship between whites and blacks.

This poem discusses the prevailing attitudes in the American society at the time when blacks were only thought of as slaves or servants. She speaks out against this injustice that many in the society are accustomed to (Gates and McKay 970). Her other works such as 'The Closing Door', and 'Blackness' reveal her displeasure in regards to the way black women are disrespected.

Grimke's works had a significant contribution to the African American Literature in the United States of America. Her works raise themes that had a lot of significance during that period. She inspired the generation of other intelligent African American authors; she offered powerful insights into the issues of racial relations, sexuality and gender in the US.

Gates, Henry Louis, and Nellie Y. McKay. The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 2004. Print.