British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies
Vol.3, No.1, pp.8-13, 2022
Print ISSN: 2517-276X
Online ISSN: 2517-2778
Website: https://bjmas.org/index.php/bjmas/index
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

Bob Marley and Gender- Friendly Lyrics: A Critical Discourse On Feminist Response On "No Woman, No Cry"

Oluchi Chris Okeugo *(PhD)
School of General Studies; Use of English Unit, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, and Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Jane Onyinye Obioha (*PhD)*
School of Midwifery Alex Ekwueme Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki Ebonyi State

Babatunde Dele Adetunji
Department of English Language, African Thinkers Community of Inquiry College of Education, Enugu

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0007 *Published: 09th October, 2022*

Citation: Okeugo O.C., Obioha J.O.,Adetunji B. D)2022) Bob Marley and Gender- Friendly Lyrics: A Critical Discourse On Feminist Response On "No Woman, No Cry", British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies, 3 (1) 1,8-14

ABSTRACT: *The existing great strides on cultural feminist demonstration towards developing techniques to preventing domestic violence, and other forms of social construct against women, navigate through resistance and pragmatic ingenuity as a commendable role in appraising the songs of Bob Marley, owing to the constructive criticism the diction of his lyric songs possess. The Jamaican society where Marley's songs are set is a physical, social and economic violence society which is against women, most especially the poor women of colour, who are perpetuated in part by top down globalization. This article demonstrates how resistance permeates through pragmatic ingenuity and feminist metaphors to embellish and address a set of approaches to legal scholarship rooted in feminist and anti- racist critical traditions, thereby reconceptualizing the human right problems facing Black women who migrate between the United States and Jamaica. Marley's cultural feminist song "No Woman No Cry" depicts that Jamaica (Caribbean) women have become the private solution to the public problem of fundamental race, class, and gender inequalities in United States. Admissibly, critical race feminist approach requires prospective strategies to be pragmatic and metaphorical, as well as theoretical. It, however, requires a difficult process of building coalitions among women and men who sometimes resist seeing their common interest being trampled on. This scholarly work, therefore, aims at adopting post-colonial feminist theory as a theory that permeates through the subject matter of Marley's lyric song and attempts to give a critical appraisal of the song from the post-colonial perspective through his poetic diction of the post- colonial feminist society.*
KEYNOTE: Bob Marley, resistance, pragmatics, cultural feminism, post-colonial feminism, feminist metaphors.

British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies
Vol.3, No.1, pp.8-13, 2022
Print ISSN: 2517-276X
Online ISSN: 2517-2778
Website: https://bjmas.org/index.php/bjmas/index
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

INTRODUCTION

Nesta Robert "Bob" Marley was a Jamaican singer-songwriter and musician who achieved international fame and acclaim. Marley remains the most widely known and revered performer of reggae music. He is credited with helping spread both Jamaican music and the Rastafari movement to a worldwide audience. Marley's music is heavily influenced by the social issues of his homeland, and he is considered to have given voice to the specific political and cultural nexus of Jamaica.

He is considered as one of the most influential musicians of all time and credited with popularizing reggae music around the world as well as serving as a symbol of Jamaican culture and identity, and his song depicting resistance and pragmatic ingenuity as a tenacious tool for fighting a colonial society like his. Marley has also evolved into a global symbol and inspired numerous items of merchandise. Bob Marley is not just a reggae legend, he is also a revolutionary. He uses regggae as his weapon of resistance to injustice, racism, poverty, and colonialism to imperialism, thereby embellishing his skills with a conspicuous sense of pragmatic quintessence. Besides that, his song **"No Woman, No Cry"**, gives a connotative meaning and contextual meaning then a message for someone who loves his songs. The other reasons why the researcher chooses Bob's lyrics as the object of his research, is to do a critical appraisal of his song through the breathtaking line-light of his songs central messages, such as: revolution, resistance, agitation, just to mention but a few. And his key ideas try to expose the meaning that contains inside his reggae music through his hypnotizing sense of pragmatic ingenuity; also the researcher wants to prove to some lyrics which are really associated to religious term. The other reason is to change people stereotype about reggae music that assumed as violence. Knowing the real meaning of the song becomes an important aspect to change people's views on reggae music.

"No Woman, No Cry": A Quintessential Feminist Insight

In an early chapter of Rita Marley's autobiography, proverbially entitled, "Who Feels It, Knows It," Rita Marley confesses her love of the stage, linking the power of performance to economic independence: "I loved performing live, under the bright lights and inside the music, being onstage. And it was a thrill to be earning a little money independently" (22). This quest for economic independence and the concomitant emotional freedom it affords is a recurring motif in the narrative. For though Rita does concede the bonds of almost sisterly affiliation that bind her to Bob, she also comes to fully understand the urgent need to disengage from a debilitating relationship in which she is reduced to the liminal status of celebrity victim. Her struggle to come to terms with the many female groupies in Bob's life is expressed in this way: "I tried to train myself to think of Bob as a good loving brother more so than a real husband, and made my peace with the situation. I asked God for help with the things I couldn't change. May be because there were so many women they grew less and less threatening . . ." (104).

But before the threat there was the fleeting sense of security in the sympathy Rita felt for her Robbie, her teenage love. As she puts it, "And poor Bob, you looked at him and you just felt sorry

British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies
Vol.3, No.1, pp.8-13, 2022
Print ISSN: 2517-276X
Online ISSN: 2517-2778
Website: https://bjmas.org/index.php/bjmas/index
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

for him! And I keep feeling this way about him even now. My love for him is deep, true, lasting love, of course – but there was something about worrying for him that is still in me" (46). Indeed, Rita testifies to the accuracy of the account of young love given in the song, "No Woman, No Cry":

Though the text of "No Woman, No Cry" resourcefully memorialises familiar rituals in a distant time of shared pleasure, the sub-text documents the heart-rending emotional fissures that provoke the tears of a woman who will not be seduced by memories of lost affection. The past, however romanticised, cannot erase the daily betrayals of the present. After all, Bob himself admits that he has "got to push on through." Deliberately replicating the title of the song, the book decidedly undermines its assumptions of compliant femininity. Similarly, the sub-title, My Life with Bob Marley, ironically acknowledges the fact that Rita Marley's full freedom is enabled by extricating herself from the bondage of paternalistic affiliation: her life without Bob Marley. Rita Marley's autobiography is a "feminist fable" in the familiar sense of "an allegorical story intended to convey some usefu and quintessential feminist insight."

Rita's fable is quintessentially feminist for it charts a journey of self-discovery that is premised on a rejection of patriarchy in all its oppressive forms. Rita's growth to feminist consciousness is manifested in the geographical, emotional, ideological and aesthetic journeys she makes. Her feet are her only carriage in the early days as she journeys from Trench Town to Nine Miles and back; and then to Bull Bay of which she says, "I still feel that this is where my life, my own independent life started" (105). The little house she built there becomes emblematic of a deep-rooted conviction: "So when people say to me, why don't you just sell it, get rid of it, you don't need it, I say no, no, no. This was my beginning – how could you want to sell your beginning?" (109). It is this same sense of rootedness that is articulated in "No Woman, No Cry:" "In this great future you can't forget your past." This line, deployed as one of the epigraphs to Rita's autobiography, is inaccurately reproduced as "this bright future" demonstrating yet again how easy it is for well-intentioned non-Jamaicans to enthusiastically misunderstand the nuances of language. Many German reggae fans, for instance, assumed that "No Woman, No Cry" meant that if you didn't have a woman you wouldn't cry. A song of explicitly heterosexual intimacy becomes an almost misogynist affirmation of the doubtful pleasures of exclusivist homo-sociality.

The landscape of the home Rita Marley has now made for herself in the hills of Aburi in Ghana is reminiscent of the topography of Jacks Hill. Yet again, this house on the continent of Africa assumes symbolic meaning, highlighting the aesthetic and ideological journeys Rita Marley makes from derided outcast to Rastafari royalty. In the very first chapter of the autobiography, "Trench Town Rock," Rita recalls the cruel insecurities of childhood: "Because I was very dark-skinned, the kids in school called me 'blackie tootus' (black and shiny with very white teeth). I learned discrimination early and underestimated my own value because of my color. Jamaica has a long history of colour consciousness and racial struggle" (3). The Dictionary of Jamaican English

British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies
Vol.3, No.1, pp.8-13, 2022
Print ISSN: 2517-276X
Online ISSN: 2517-2778
Website: https://bjmas.org/index.php/bjmas/index
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

defines tutus as "a darling, a pet." But in the yoking of "blackie" and "tootus" it is not the sense of "darling" that prevails; the term is decidedly pejorative.

Rita Marley journeys through Rastafari to a continental African consciousness that redeems the "blackie" in "blackie tootus." She recalls the widespread alarm her uncharacteristic behaviour elicits when she first sights Rastafari: "Then I started to wear my nurse's uniform, and tied a rope of red, gold, and green (the Rasta colours) around my waist, and people began to whisper, 'You know she's crazy, she's getting crazy, what a shame after all the money her aunty spend on her' (40). But, for Rita, the appeal of Rastafari is the sanity of its revisionist reading of colonialist narratives of alienation: "The whole thing seemed intelligent to me; it wasn't just about smoking herb, it was more a philosophy that carried a history with it. That's what pulled my interest, the powerful history that hadn't been taught to me in school" (40).

It is the pull of this history that requires the recovery of ancestral homelands: "Africa has come like a new life to me, with an ancient background, because it's so black; and because of this I feel at home – that fight you face against blackness in other places does not exist here. I want the freedom to be what I am, and what I'm supposed to be, without having to fight anybody to be that" (194). Of course, there are other battles to be fought on the African continent but, for the moment, what Rita Marley celebrates here is the recuperation of the meaning of blackness, conceived in explicitly aesthetic terms: not 'black and ugly,' but 'black and beautiful.'

But the politics of racialised identity are complicated by sexual sub-texts. Bob Marley first encourages Rita to accept black-conscious, Rastafari aesthetics: "'You're a queen, a black queen,' he said. You're pretty just as you are, you don't need to do anything else. You don't have to straighten your hair, you can wear it natural" (38). But when Bob Marley later returns to Jamaica from his brief stay in Delaware, he surprisingly asks Rita, on his way home from the airport, "'why you no fix up yourself, what happened to your hair?'
(I was wearing it natural). He seemed puzzled more than critical, and I guess, after American women, I looked different" (46).

Bob Marley and Gender- Friendly Lyrics: The Feminist Voice (s) in the Rastafari Movement

Despite the emancipatory lyrics of Reggae and the profound appeal of Bob Marley, one of the fundamental contradictions of the movement was the sexist and macho elements of this movement. Many Rastafari women found ways to express themselves and slowly Rasta women made their opposition to patriarchy known inside and outside the movement. Educated Rasta women, like the educated Rasta men, could not escape the positivism and mechanistic assumptions of the Babylonian epistemology.

British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies
Vol.3, No.1, pp.8-13, 2022
Print ISSN: 2517-276X
Online ISSN: 2517-2778
Website: https://bjmas.org/index.php/bjmas/index
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

Rastafari women have forced this issue of patriarchy into the open. Thus, scholars make a distinction between the old Rastafari movement of the pre-independence period and the Rastafari movement of the twenty-first century. Bob Marley, the reggae artist, acknowledged this contradiction in the movement and has composed lyric song; "**No Woman, No Cry",** opposing the deep patriarchy in some parts of the movement, writing: a return to the feminine principle is very important in the unraveling of our ancient spirituality. What we have professed has helped us so far,but it's up to us to now move it further. We can no longer be like Christian fundamentalists—or Islamic fundamentalists for that matter—who are stuck in a history that does not provide them with an understanding of new thoughts and new life styles. We are living in a new era of information— a time when one can travel from London to New York in three hours, when one can click a switch and illuminate a stadium filled with thousands of people, a time when a person committing a crime in one part of the world can be viewed instantaneously in another through modern technology.

This is the age of information, but inspiration without information sometimes leads to superstition. The important point to note is that this discussion of patriarchy is coming from within the Rastafari movement. The spread of the AIDS pandemic in the Caribbean made it impossible forany movement to go forward without confronting issues of **gender oppression, patriarchy, gender violence,** and the insecurities of homophobia.

The AIDS pandemic demanded an informed society beyond the ideas communicated in Leviticus and demanded that proper sex education become part of the new political culture. Increasingly, there are scholars who are breaking the silences relating to sexism and homophobia in the Rastafari movement and among sections of the Rastafari. It is on the question of sexism where one can have a full appreciation of Bob Marley as a human who had profound weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses are reproduced for history in the book by Rita Marley (2004), *No Woman No Cry.* Yet, it is this same Rita Marley who has been at the forefront of celebrating the positive contributions of Bob Marley.

Within the Caribbean and in the African Diaspora, their women were part of the New Rasta of the twenty twenty-first century. One academic argued that that this new Rastafari movement has taken principles that are essential to the Rasta faith (such as protection of and respect for the environment as well as demand for equal rights) and extended them to encompass a broader range of global issues.

The new Rastafari is a global cultural practice, an expression in particular of black people and especially black women, but one which is also inclusive of revolutionary white men and women. In this sense, the new Rastafari has made global demands for greater equality for black and other majority world women as well as a greater respect for the ecological system as a whole. Furthermore, the effects of this process have been reciprocal in that the wider movement of black feminism has helped to foster changes in moving toward a more egalitarian Rastafari culture as well.

Vol.3, No.1, pp.8-13, 2022

Print ISSN: 2517-276X

Online ISSN: 2517-2778

Website: https://bjmas.org/index.php/bjmas/index

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK

CONCLUSION

At the dawn of the twentieth century the Rastafari confronted a number of revolutionary traditions. These were the traditions of the liberal democratic revolution against feudalism. Likemost black people, the Rastafari knew that this liberal democratic revolution did not include black and brown peoples. Rastafari understood the racist logic of manifest destiny and the vindicationists of the first period were opposed to this liberal democratic creed that accepted imperial wars as pacification. The Marxist Revolution in Ethiopia, the Cuban Revolution in the Caribbean, and the new revolutionary process in Latin America have extended the conceptual base for an understanding of revolutionary politics. This study sought to explore the gender-friendly depictions on Marley's lyric song ***"No Woman, No Cry"***, thereby syndicating Marley as a popular Male-Feminist of the black (Caribbean) and African-American society Marley uses his hypnotizing lyrics to break the jinx of gender inequality and mental slavery of various existing kinds.

Rastafari brought a simple message of peace. After seventy-five years of repression, intellectual distortions and attempts to co-opt the movement, Rastafari survived and became part of the network of movements calling for another world. After resisting Babylon, the challenge was to be part of a new formation, one that is based on the social transformation of society in order to save humanity from the destruction of Babylon. The Rastafari movement had emerged in the colonial period as part of the vindicationist project of Africans who wanted to establish their place in history along the same lines as the kings and leaders of Western civilization. However, the realities of the traditions of African resistance along with the material oppression of the sufferers produced a philosophy that slowly transcended vindications. Hers is, without hesitation, a work of gender-friendly reception and feminist insight.

REFERENCES

Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the Holocaust.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Campbell, H. (1987). *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney.* Trenton, N.J.; Africa World Press, Inc.

Hansing, K. (2006). *Rasta, Race and Revolution: The Emergence and Development of the Rastafari*

Marley, R. (2004). *No Woman, No Cry.* London: Sidgwick & Jackson.

Turner, T. (1993). Rastafari and the New Society: Caribbean and East African Feminist Roots of a Popular Movement to Reclaim the Earthly Commons, in T. E. Turner (Ed.) *Arise Ye Mighty People! Gender, Class and Race in Popular Struggles* (pp. 9–56). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Wamba-dia-wamba, E. (1996). Pan Africanism, Democracy, Social Movements and Mass Struggles. *African Journal of Political Science 1*(1), 9-20.