

# On late 19th century american literature

Literature



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Essay on Late 19th Century American Literature Sarah Orne Jewett A White Heron A White Heron is amongst Jewett's popular anthologized short stories presenting a nine year old girl's, Silvia, reaction to the intrusion of a young man into her feminine and natural world. She has utilized numerous techniques, symbols and imagery and other ordinary aspects of life where moods or atmosphere preceded plot in significance (Jewett 118-121). The young girl's choice of keeping mum serves as the vital element in the text, which is more than a simple sentimental piece of regionalism. The introverted nature loving girl's story is represented as her declaration of independence from a patriarchal society that might have seen her raped, killed and displayed on a man's house.

White Heron tends to stress on the narrative presence and disposition as it evidences in the themes of nature or female consciousness although the narrative flux produces an instability that challenges thematic issues thus inhibiting the story's rhetoric of communion. There are also disruptions in narrative distance that establishes and maintains the illusion of narrative distance in the first part of the story (Jewett 120-125). The establishment of narrative distance shows that whoever is speaking is inconsequential and the impression is sustained as events linked in apathetic manner. Part one of the text has subjective and emotionally engaged narrator with multiple perspectives that create superficially the impression of objectivity. This shows sense of impartiality because it relates with unbiased and apparently fictional entity.

Jewett further used an intimate connection between the narrator and the protagonist by using third person, omniscient narrative that adopts the attitude and the idiomatic phrases and syntax of the characters. The narrator

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merges with all the three characters and the technique goes beyond telling the reader of Sylvia's intimate thoughts. There is no boundary between Sylvia's feelings and those of the narrator and this sense of intimacy is evident by lack of direct quotations by Sylvia. There are two voices surrounding simultaneously specifically, where Sylvia's thoughts and feelings are expressed because the narrator constantly slips into the mind of Sylvia (Jewett 122-128).

Kate Chopin ("Desiree's Baby")

Kate Chopin's *Desiree's Baby* takes place in Louisiana before the American Civil War. The author tends to attack the Southern racism and male dominance in Louisiana and the text involves deeper analysis of the human mind more so the complicated rapport between boundaries and identity. She focusses on the Creole speech patterns and word usage common to Louisianans such as the use of both French and English during the dialogue when Desiree calls one of the slaves as "La Blanche" that means the white and refers to her baby as "little cochon de lait."

Some of the subjects discussed in the story such as slavery, social status and family names are significant as far as the timing and place of the narrative is concerned and stressed on the importance of regional elements. Chopin also achieves the use of trick and surprise conclusion that evokes a strong and poignant reaction from the reader (Web). Although the text is admirable, it is not easily comprehensible especially because the nature of the significant forces of the Southern elements is not clear.

Chopin manages the issue of race idiosyncratically and treats miscegenation directly in the narrative although it probes the implications of various hues of skin that were regarded to compromise the "negro" populace (Web). She

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largely concentrates reader's attention upon the element and does not include dialect conversation. Chopin uses dilemma of color using irony and unspecified fact that human situations cannot be clearer than "black and white" (Web). From the beginning, the reader becomes aware of the mystery evolving the child's parentage and other characters such as LaBlanche's quadroon son that raise concerns about racial identity.

Chopin utilizes and builds mystery in provoking the character's and the reader's anxiety regarding race (Web). Moreover, the suspense of *Desiree's Baby* is created around the revelation of the mystery surrounding the origins of the baby's strange color thus keeping readers guessing most of the time. This technique was very effective in ensuring that the readers' interests and development of higher stakes for the outcome although a twist occurs at the end of the story.

In addition, the external narrative seems subordinate to the importance on the internal emotions and actions of the characters. For instance, instead of accurately portraying the landscape, Chopin's explanations of the setting describes her theme and mental state of her characters such as the use of "dark" and "cold" imagery in describing the scenery (Web). Chopin also uses the imagery of shadows and solemnity to parallel the characters and thematic issues such as describing Armand's real identity that is alluded to in the very descriptions of the landscape surrounding him.

#### Works Cited

Chopin, Kate. *Desiree's Baby*. *Vogue*, 14 Jan. 1893. Web. 1 March 2014. .  
Jewett, Sarah. *A White Heron*. *The Oxford Book of American Short* . Ed. Joyce Carol Oates. Oxford: New York: 1992. 118-128.