

Introduction by two
different literary
authors, both works



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Introduction

In this analysis, the paper explores literary comparison of two pieces of literature that share thematic similarities yet differentiated in some literary facets. The discussion introduces “Country Lovers”, a story written by Nadine Gordimer and “The Welcome Table” by Alice Walker. In spite being written by two different literary authors, both works have devoted their contribution towards depicting racism as the main thematic outfit.

In a nutshell, Nadine’s story is set in South Africa during the post-colonial apartheid rule that woefully drew racial lines while defining the privileged white class and the underprivileged majority blacks. On a separate literary entity, Walker’s “The Welcome Table” is set in an American modern society experiencing social revolution under civil rights movements. She represents the plight of an old and rural African- American woman who fails to use the advantages of the freedom gained to struggle for her share of social rights.

The analysis further offers literary elements used in representing racism and ethnicity through a critical synopsis. The discussion will entail language, style and form as used in both pieces and how they have been instrumental in qualifying the similarities and differences in connection with their literary content. Such elements will include tone, symbolic representations, dramatic irony, and allegory narrative.

In its entirety, the paper will seek to bring forth the main theme of racism and ethnicity as depicted by both works while taking advantage of the contemporary elements that serve to unite both texts through a comparative analytic approach.

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Discussion of the similarities between the two literary works

The first element that depicts a similarity between these two texts is the use of contrast as a literary style. Taking the work of Alice Walker, she employs descriptive language as she narrates the condition of the black woman, “beaten by king cotton and the extreme weather”; the condition of her clothing items (Walker, 1984).

The other forms include, “ a long rusty dress adorned with an old corsage, long withered, and the remnants of an elegant silk scarf as head rag stained with grease from many oily pigtails underneath” (Walker, 1984). Looking at these descriptions, the author puts through the reader through a voyage to understand and actualize the suffering of the old black woman.

To illustrate the similarity, Nadine’s description of the condition at school between the whites and the blacks exemplifies this. She points out the scenario where they begin calling their mates who are a little older “ missus and baasie – little master”. This situation is later reinforced in the entire text. This attributes exhibited by use of similar language technique has been sustained throughout the both texts.

In the same length, the language used has also depicted the way in which the authors bring out the differences that define these two sets of people within a similar setting. This contrast brought out is one of styles that both writers have capitalized on to vividly highlight the racial divide that exists within their areas of interest.

The second feature that unites the two writings is the use of Narration as a literary element. Narration Alice walker fully employs a narrative in form of <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-by-two-different-literary-authors-both-works/>

parables which she uses to display the abstract message that points to some literary meaning. In doing this, she depicts the church's reaction to the woman as a moral teaching to the readers through her parabolic representations.

An instance that point to this is when a question is posed, " could their husbands have expected them to sit in church with that?" (Walker, 1984). The husbands' move to eject her from the church was a moral teaching embedded in form of a parable. Similarly, Nadine uses a narrative to show the trendy movement of Thebedi's life as she falls in love with Paulus up to the last moment varying (Gordimer, 2002).

Putting together their bits of the story through an organized tale or narration forms proses that give a similar image to both works.

The other strict similarity is the choice and use of a major a character who is a female protagonist. In both cases, the texts have devoted their concerns to the plight of a black female who is deposed off her meaning within the realms of the society. As a result, the protagonists all play a role of fighting the existing injustices and who represents their thematic concerns of racial inequities.

In all the texts, the female character struggles with discrimination due to the color of their skin. According to both stories, . this suffering can equally be experienced by any average human but more dramatic representations are created from the continued suppression within this appalling state.

Thirdly, they both detest the situation on a rather protesting tone throughout their entire narrations for instance, in Walker's story, the woman says " I'm going to sit at the welcome table, shout my troubles over, walk and talk with Jesus, tell God how you treat me, one of these days!" (Walker, 1984).

This statement is a clear show of the harsh tone that clearly exhibits itself through her choice of words and the character's manner of showing protest and dissatisfaction with the kind of treatment she receives from the other set of " people". During the court case, Nadine uses her character Thebedi to show her a furry and anger about the outright racial injustice of the day as the case is dropped against Paulus as she cries out before the court varying (Gordimer, 2002).

These stories continue to depict the appalling state in which an African black woman thrives from childhood to maturity through trauma of discrimination and racial prejudice. In both the literary works, it is clear that they point at the devastating effects of the trendy racial representation in a post-colonial era (Gordimer, 2002). In Nadine Gordimer's story, the text is attuned to the injurious consequences of planned differentiation and division within an Afrikaner dominated society is the understanding of Nadine Gordimer's story.

To justify this situation the Immorality Act of 1950 is an asset in understanding of her protesting voice against the condition. The Act illegalized all sexual relationships between people of varying (Gordimer, 2002).

Further analysis shows how irony has heavily been amplified in both stories with all writers trying to show how opposite the situations are contrary to <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-by-two-different-literary-authors-both-works/>

how they should be. Taking for instance the irony that is eminent in the title, it showcases an African-American woman wondering in some sort of absent-mindedness entering a white church. As the woman tries to approach the church, the reverend refers to her as “ Auntie you know this is not your church” as he tries to discourage her entry into the church.

It is rather dramatic irony as the reader does not expect the reverend that is in fact related to the woman to turn her away. To her surprise, she finds no welcome which becomes even much shocking (Porter, Hayes, Michael, & Tombs, 1989). It is an irony of the highest scale that even in the house of God there was no welcome for this woman. This ironical representation exemplifies the intense nature of discrimination that existed during this moment.

It's thus ironical both from a spiritual perspective as well as from the sense that he probably shares family ties with this woman since he addresses her as “ Auntie” (Porter, Hayes, Michael, & Tombs, 1989). In Gordimer's “ Country Lovers”, it is a great irony that Paulus plots to kill a son who they got out of love with Thebedi. In an ordinary circumstance, no one would expect one to kill his own child who he got out of pure love as was the case of Paulus with Thebedi.

To the contrary, he pretends to love the child something that turns out completely different as it is revealed. In a ruling, the court does not carry out its jurisdiction properly hence ironical that all the evidences presented do not serve to convict the guilty Paulus of murder. In conclusion, irony has successfully been used to amplify the outrage against the system both from

Christian and legal standpoints in “ The Welcome table” and “ Country Lovers” respectively.

In both cases, the stories employ huge sense of symbolism in their quest for meaning and justification for the ongoing injustices of division. In “ Welcome Table” the woman seeks to find peace at a table symbolizing the Last supper in the context of Christianity. Here, she hopes that she will eat and dine after her death. On the contrary, she does not find this expectation but instead she is thrown outside. This line thus brings us to the racism with hypocrisy within “ The Welcome Table” (Wheeler, 2011).

In “ Country Lovers”, hypocrisy is seen from an individual perspective as opposed to the case of “ The Welcome Table”. Nadine Gordimer expresses hypocrisy as vindictive and personal despite support from the discriminatory laws (Wheeler, 2011). From the story, we clearly see the law of nature taking place as Paulus, a young boy growing up tries to follow his feelings and emotions to fall in love with Thebedi, a black, young and beautiful girl. As time goes by, her age continues to catch up with her as she becomes more socialized and conventional.

In spite of the love that exists, it becomes more ironical that Paulus derives happiness to betray her in order to escape the harsh charges that would be levelled against him via the Immorality Act of 1950 (Gordimer, 2002).

In his struggle to delineate himself from the African race, Paulus finally manages to kill the child they have produced with an aim to clear himself from the consequences of the law. In both cases therefore, we can clearly see the harsh realities of structured discrimination that prevails within these <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-by-two-different-literary-authors-both-works/>

two different settings where the woman suffers the plight of racial prejudice more than her male counterpart.

There is racial and ethnic divide within the wider segment of economic wellbeing. In both stories, race is highlighted and earmarked where the concept preoccupies the entire decisions of “ who owns what”.

Oppression of the blacks is heightened in both literary works as it is examined in South Africa’s apartheid as it diminishes the economic meaning of the blacks. On the other hand, race as a constituent and precept of the mind is highly fostered in “ The Welcome Table” by Walker. In this text, the white congregation no longer view and see a black woman on the basis of vulnerabilities preoccupying her (Walker, 1984).

Both writers’ opinion has been majorly driven by the side look that depicts them as cooks, mistresses, maids and chauffeurs (Walker, 1994). This job stereotyping and negative representation were all channelled towards the blacks. Poverty becomes their eminent state as shown by missing buttons on her dress (Walker, 2011).

On a separate but similar case, “ Country Lovers” too demonstrates the racial and economic divide which apparently defines the division between Paulus and Thebedi. Clearly, the story indicates that Thebedi’s father works on Paulu’s family farm. Thebedi is subjected to lifetime suffering of menial jobs just like all other black women in the apartheid era. In this story, the varying degree of affluence depicted is instrumental in expressing the economic oppression that the blacks have endured at this moment (Petry, 1989).

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The affluence and luxury of Paulus family through evidences of Mercedes Benz is a clear indicator to evoke the feeling of the great divide that compels Thebedi and the rest of the family to material injustice even before the eyes of the law. This difference continues to spur their increasing division. This economic good that Paulu's family enjoy is clearly seen to have a bearing on his case. It compels the entire congregation to believe his innocence as Thebedi tears herself down before the court.

Segregation is also the representation of love and its betrayal. In Walker's story for instance, the love of God that should be arguably be exclusive in the church is a missing link in the American society as the woman gets ejected out of the church. Here, the love that existed can no longer be felt again as anyone would expect.

In her story, Walker continues to express her discontent with the structural divide that preoccupies the entire scene as she places the woman on the road to meet Jesus where she gets love at least for the first time.

In this story, the love being depicted is the spiritual and Christian love that is ironically disconnected from the American Christians who defy the biblical teachings to exalt their racial perceptions and stereotypes (Wheeler, 2011). On the other hand, the natural love through sexual relationship muted by the segregation of the moment finds no mercy to save the innocence of the "weaker" race.

Looking at both stories, we can also deduce that both have depicted the racial theme entwined within the tearing impact of fear. Fear has dominated both stories through characterization. In "Country Lovers", race has fuelled <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-by-two-different-literary-authors-both-works/>

the fear between different people and as such, they explore various dubious means to sustain the situation. In the case between Thebedi and Paulus, racial pronouncements compel Paulus to fear the outcome of the case if found to have been in an outlawed relationship.

The second fear that confronts Paulus is not only the fear of murder but also of having sexual relationship with Thebedi (Barnouw, 1994). To the family of Paulus, it seems to them as a source of embarrassment in the society. His affirmed division and effort to disconnect with the blacks is evident in his statement at the end as he says, “: I will try and carry on as best as I can to hold my head in the district” (Gordimer, 2002).

This is a typical racial fear that continues to mount in the society as it expresses itself in innumerable ways. On the other hand, “ The Welcome Table” portrays the white congregation as a group raging with fear of association with a black woman who has mistakenly entered their church. In both cases, the whites are depicted as people suffering from the fear of the unknown and as those who cannot show compassion at least to an average human being.

Discussion of the differences between the two literary works

Although both stories strongly outline the concept of racial discrimination in the modern society, they differ in setting and style in which they are written. Firstly, In Nadine Gordimer’s “ Country Lovers”, the story is set in South Africa as at the time when it is experiencing the harsh realities of racial discrimination perpetuated under the iniquities of apartheid rule (Petry, 1989).

We are informed that the process used the state machinery and unjust laws to impose the unyielding conditions on the non-whites within South Africa. In “The welcome Table”, the scenario of race is depicted as the manifestation of the historical influence that depicts itself in the modern society.

Additionally, we get an insight as to how the Church is used as the ultimate tool that completes the cycle of divide within the society as occasioned by the woman’s death after her rejection by the church.

In her quest to demonstrate this impending condition, she symbolizes the continued submission of an African-American woman as the inevitable impacts of slavery continue to rage the modern society even after its demise (Barnouw, 1994). In this context, the situation is more generalized and based on the oppression of African-Americans for many centuries whose final traces are the fear and submission of segregated rural woman.

The second difference that is eminent between the two pieces is the use of different forms of narrative. According to Wheeler (2011), “The welcome Table” is seemingly more slightly successful in its quest to depict the racial prejudices that preoccupy the modern American society.

This is based on its brevity and the use of parables in qualifying its position in the context of creating a meaningful picture. On the contrary, while buying into a similar idea of protest against the impending racial conditions, Gordimer’s “Country Lovers” creates a different impact since it is a tale of love denied by social circumstances, love gone wrong and heavily influenced by law (Wheeler, 2011).

Throughout her tale, she uses more or less direct narration to display her meaning to the readers as opposed to Walker who indulges the inner mind of the reader through use of parables which besides demonstrating the racial divide, provides moral lessons for the reader as well.

The other observable difference between the two literary works in their representation of race is the use of church and modern Christianity and the human law on the other hand. Walker's "The Welcome Table" is a more authoritative story in its approach to racial expression as compared to Nadine whose voice is rather passive (Petry, 1989) and (Barnouw, 1994).

However, Walker's use parable-like approach leaves us slightly unaware of the extent of authority embedded in her story. She uses Christianity as a tool to exemplify the intensity of the matter when it rejects unity of humanity at the altar of hypocrisy (Wheeler, 2011) and (Walker, 1984).

She continues to ironically represent the church as Jesus is depicted as having blue eyes which reminds the old woman of the pictures she plugged from a stolen bible some few years ago. The struggle to delink Jesus from the white racial inclination fails at this moment as the woman meets Jesus.

Perhaps we can say that the "Jesus" who she met was as racial since the woman dies by the road and fails to be discovered (Petry, 1989). On the other hand, the law is used as tool to justify racial discrimination in the society as shown by Nadine Gordimer.

Conclusion

In this comparative analysis, the story of Nadine Gordimer, “Country Lovers” and Walker’s “The Welcome Table” have greatly depicted the appalling conditions that racial discrimination has had to the society and the vulnerability of the black woman. Nadine Gordimer’s story is set in an apartheid era of South Africa where racial divide and ethnic animosity has been made and sustained by the state and its apparatus.

On the other hand, “The Welcome Table” is set primarily American society in which an old and rural African-American woman is showcased as one who is unable to take up the challenges of the freedom gained by the ongoing civil rights movements. Her case is a representation of the long suffering as a result of the long period of slavery that penetrates into the modern society.

Both works have succeeded in doing this through a myriad of similar ways. In looking at some of the similarities in these literary pieces, the paper explores the use of descriptive language as a form of bringing the reader to terms with the differences that exist between the two apparent races in all manner of ways; economically, spiritually and socially. The other similarity notable in both works is use of fictional narrative form to weave together the trend of the women in reaching their final destination through persistent troubles and sufferings.

Also, the tone used in both literary writings is similar. In both works, connotations of harsh and detesting sense of the writers are eminently pointed out through the choice words to give some particular for of sentences.

Although placed in different settings, both stories try to denounce the spirit of racism through symbolic representations and characterization. They both depict the plight of the black woman who is denied her social rights by the underlying social conditions. The choice and use of a female protagonist brings the two texts closer than before since this aspect qualifies the thematic relationship that they all share.

However, despite both stories protesting against the dehumanizing nature of racial discrimination, there exist slight differences in their representations. One of the differences is the use of passive voice in Walkers story through a successful employment of parables as opposed to Gordimer's piece.

The female protagonist in Nadine Gordimer's "Country Lovers" is heavily faced with discrimination pioneered by the law which finally sends her into lasting agony and suffering. The contrary is seen in Walker's story in which the black woman has been used to depict the church and its congregation as the final and most injurious of all apparatus that has been used to perpetrate ethnicity and racial divide.

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