Novels

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Comparison between July's People and Cry the Beloved Country

The novel *July's People*, written by Nadine Gordimer, was set during a fictional civil war in South Africa with the black natives overturning the apartheid system. The story is based on the Smales, a liberal white South African family forced to free to Johannesburg to a native home of July, their black servant. *Cry, the beloved country* authored by Alan Paton, aimed at protesting against the structures of the society that later led to the rise of apartheid in South Africa. Both novels have similar aspects discussing the life of South Africans with racism, Christian faith, injustice and violence, power, and black liberation being the common themes.

July's People is a novel describing racial issues. The book portrays the South African black cops as the leading racism practitioners by favoring fellow blacks and failing to arrest them. July is the main character in this book and acts as the center of interest. *Cry, the beloved country* by Alan Paton is a novel discussing ideas of prejudice among the South Africans in the apartheid period through the eyes of James Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo (40). Both novels have great similarities as they show the struggle of South Africans in the colonial period.

Both novels portray a vicious cycle of injustice and violence. In *Cry, the beloved country*, the city of Johannesburg is portrayed as a place where people are murdered, put into prison, and descend into crime due to high poverty levels. Kumalo accidentally kills a man in a robbery that

went wrong (120). In *July's People*, we can see the blacks turning into violence during the black revolt where they are involved in murder incidences by killing whites mercilessly. They are using crude weapons to attack whites, especially in major cities (100). Police support black revolt since they are involved in the arrest of rebellious whites instead of the blacks.

Christian faith and hope are seen to be dominant in both novels. For example, in *cry, the beloved country*, faith is the bedrock among most protagonists, where most of them are men like Stephen Kumalo and Father Vincent (212). Gertrude Kumalo chooses to turn to nunhood as the author ends his book. In *July's People*, salvation is seen as the most defining aspect, especially in Smale's family. The author describes the dramatic act of being saved using a flashback when the family was transported six hundred miles from the city to the countryside in the bakkie (67). Also, July's family is seen to have an extended experience of salvation.

Questions of power come up in both books considering that they are books about racial injustice. *Cry, the beloved country* is portrayed as power used in different ways. John Kumalo is a corrupt black character who uses his money to influence and bully other characters (186). The exploitation in the book is described to cause a racial divide among the South Africans. However, in *July's People*, the nature of power is observed through the intimate dynamic between the Smales family and July. In this book, power is portrayed as a positive force as Smales' family treats July well even though his entire life depends on them (42). This led to July deciding to save them from the violence experienced in the city.

Black liberation is another essential theme portrayed in both books. *July's People* is a book that projects the overthrow of a regime of official segregation during Gordimer's lifetime. Violence engulfed the nation, with the native South Africans deciding to kill the white people in

the country, portraying a fantasy of violent revolution. On the other hand, *the beloved country* shows white men, for example, Mr. Harrison and Jarvis, trapped in hidebound. They are fearful and think about how likely the black South Africans are to attack them (289). The author describes their immense fear despite having legal freedom that the black people lacked.

Works cited

Gordimer, Nadine. *July's people*. A&C Black, 2005.

Paton, Alan. *Cry, the beloved country*. Simon and Schuster, 2003.

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