Name of Student

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Day Month Year

Comparing and Contrasting Main Characters in The Old Men Used to Dance and Da-Duh in Memoriam

“The Old Men Used to Dance” is a short story that is written by John Stewart in 1998, where a retired Trinidadian teacher whose name is Simon returns to his homeland as a tourist and visits all four corners of his homeland, Trinidad. While narrating the story John Stewart quotes "time changes, things change, people also change and all in time becomes the jettison of a drama taking place somewhere else". This quotation in the short story of John Stewart is a representation of internal struggle between both his and Paul Marshal short story “Da-Duh in Memoriam”. Both of the characters from these short stories are somehow trapped in their pasts where the life was simple, easy and beautiful. At first, it is shown in the short stories that both the main characters are ashamed of their place of birth. Like Simon is shown being humiliated by looking at the condition of the roads of his homeland and he compares those with the roads of the city he came from. Simon says that “the contrast between roads here at home and the roads on which I have toured abroad strikes me humiliating”. These themes of shames are quite apparent and clear in both the short stories because both of these short stories comprises of two main characters where they are coming back to their homes after spending almost a decade in Western America. Both of the main characters can be seen comparing their homelands with the culture, development and modernism of Western America and also they can be seen finding comfort in their past. Where the culture was lively, there was no technology and where the modern life didn’t overcome their originality.

In the short story “Old Men Used to Dance” Simon is visiting his homeland after many years. As he has been touring the western world for many years, when he finally comes back to his country he is disgusted to see that his country is lacking behind than most of the Western countries. By looking at the conditions of the roads, he is confused that how the western countries have maintained everything so well and why the condition in his homeland is bad? He can be seen expressing his views by saying that “why things cannot be orderly and well managed here”. The character feels anxiety when he sees all the flaws in his dear country. Simon also realises that he was oblivious to the condition of his country when all this was right in front of his eyes. In the story, the character can be seen stuck in a negative state of mind. He thinks that all his plans to visit his country will be failed due to the poor condition of the roads. But then he is relieved when he finally finds streets in good condition and also labelled. By seeing that he says to himself “this is how it should be”. It is evident from these remarks that Simon thinks that his country is underdeveloped as compared to the Western world.

Like Simon, the main character of "To Da-Duh in Memoriam" feels proud of his home in America. As she was born and raised in New York, she was quite irritated when she visits her grandmother house in Barbados for the very first time. Her grandmother when first time met her she described her as naïve and fierce. She was quite argumentative and opinionated while defending her home in New York and her grandmother’s home in Barbados. Both were deeply involved in an argument where they were trying to prove that their world is superior. Da-Duh was using the beauty of nature to defend her world, and the granddaughter was using technology and infrastructure to beautify her world. When Da-Duh heard her granddaughter saying this, she felt empathetic towards her granddaughter by saying “I felt her fear”. When they finally got back home, Da-Duh was comfortable, but her granddaughter wanted to go to her home in Brooklyn just like Simon who was longed to his smooth and well-established roads of America.

Although in both the stories the main characters can be seen comparing the Caribbean island with Western America, at the same time they also can be seen by catching comfort in the memories. Simon constantly reflects on the memories of his birthplace being a soothing and relaxing place. He observes that mobiles had completely taken over the lives of the people “These streets were made for walking, bicycles and for a time when my country was a more peaceful place". He refused to recognise his place by saying that time has completely changed his place. Just like Simon, Paul is also reminiscing her visit to Barbados, and even she was regretting not appreciating her Da-Duh’s love for nature and her homeland.

In summary, both the main characters of the short stories ‘Old Men Used to Dance" and "Da-Duh in Memoriam” are struggling with the concept of time that how it changes places and people and how it quickly takes over everything. Both characters are continuously comparing their homelands and Western America and feeling shame about that. While Simon was feeling ashamed by comparing the poor conditions of roads in Trinidad, and continuously recalls for a friendly place, Paule, on the other hand, feels the same emotion for not appreciating her grandmother's love for nature and herself.

Works Cited

*To Da-Duh, In Memoriam Summary* by Paul Marshall

*The Old Men Used to Dance* by John Stewart