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Compare and Contrast Essay

Poems carry different meanings and through the use of poetic devices, various symbolic elements are added into the verses. This essay revolves around the comparison and contrast of two poems, *Temptation* by Nina Cassian and *The Journey* by Mary Oliver. The subject matter of both poems is human. There are multiple similarities and differences between these two poems.

In *Temptation*, Cassian speaks highly of her desire to dream big and achieve the unachievable, however, she is restricted by the societal norms. She evokes an emotive response from the reader by questioning them about their dreams and if they are pursuing them or not. Likewise, the central idea of this poem revolves around the idea of working to the fullest if one wants to change his circumstances. She uses the symbol of “pores” to symbolize the conscience and cognitive abilities of man, “that for the first time you'll feel your pores opening” (Cassian line 2). She further proclaims that if a man listens to the society, he is far from listening to his inner voice and get inspired by it. Since the inner voice is fearless and is build around the full potential of every human being. She uses the simile of “fish mouth” to extend her idea of listening to the inner voice and proclaims that just like a fish uses her mouth to absorb food, a person should also trust his self. Similarly, in her poem, *The Journey*, Oliver states that one has to move forward from the bad experiences to the future possibilities in life. Likewise, she emphasizes the need for understanding the self-journeying of every individual to find the meaning of life. For instance, these verses point to the message of her poem “One day you finally knew/ what you had to do, and began, / though the voices around you” (Oliver lines 1-3). Besides, according to her, one has to be content with his present circumstances and not cry over the unattainable things. Quite similarly, both the poems urge individualistic efforts over following the societal norms.

Likewise, both the poems negate the idea of succumbing oneself to the societal norms since no one has ever found true bliss and a sense of achievement while listening to the group. In this scenario, one suffers through the loss of his individual voice and he cannot bring revolution in society. Besides, people who follow rules and collective ideas can never stand out from the crowd because of their innate fears. In *The Journey*, Oliver describes this practice as “Mend my life!”/ each voice cried” (Oliver lines 10-11) and Cassian puts the same thoughts in her poem as “For the first time/ you'll be aware of gravity” (Cassian lines 6-7).

Both the poems do not follow any rhyme scene and are written in free verse, this further amplifies the central idea of the poem. In the same manner, the recurrent use of the first pronoun "I” and the second pronoun "you" clearly indicate that these poems are directly addressing the reader and there is no third person influence involved. The message is reaching directly to the masses and inspiring them at an individual level. For example, these verses from *The Journey* signify the above observation “You knew what you had to do” (Oliver line 13). Similarly, in Temptation, the poet says “Call yourself alive? Look, I promise you” (Cassian line 1).

Both the poems are focused around similar central ideas and thoughts, however, there is a dissimilarity as well. *The Journey* discusses past events and set them as a motivation for individuals to work harder in their present and future times “But you didn’t stop / You knew what you had to do” (Oliver lines 12-13). On the other hand, *Temptation* motivates the readers o take their one first step, which will lead them towards liberation “like a thorn in your heel / and your shoulder blades will ache for want of wings” (Cassian lines 8-9).

Last but not least, poems carry a distinct tone that can enhance the prose ideas and turn them into poetic verses to inspire the reads from all over the world. Poetry is the impulsive runoff, of strong emotive powers that motivate both the writer and the reader at the same levels. Both of them reflect upon life through these shared experiences and musings about life.

Work Cited

Cassian, Nina, and William Jay Smith. *Life sentence: selected poems*. Anvil Press Poetry, 1998.

Oliver, Mary. “The journey” *Dream work*, 1986, pg. 38.