

Charlotte o'neil's song and nothings changed



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Fiona Farrell and Tatamkhulu Afrika, the writers of the two poems convey similar feelings about oppression and injustice through many different techniques, such as layout, line length and choice of language. Charlotte O'Neil's Song is about a general servant working for an upper class family who finally decides she has had enough and moves on.

She knows when she is treated badly and decides to do something about it.

Nothings Changed is about a black man who lived in a poor town known as "district six" in South Africa that was run by white people. The whole society was extremely racist and only allowed whites to do as they wanted whereas black people, although they were free were only allowed in certain shops and to do certain things. This poem shows us that the man in the poem knows where he is not wanted and that the whites were racist towards them. "No sign says it is: but we know where we belong". Charlotte O'Neil's Song has a lot of repetition in the poem which emphasises certain things.

In the third stanza the word "and" is used several times to emphasise that she had to do a number of things. This shows that Charlotte feels that she is unfairly treated and has far too many jobs to do, while her master enjoys parties and an expensive lifestyle. "You dined at eight and slept till late". This shows the lifestyle her master led while she cleaned and scrubbed. She realises this is unfair and does something about it. In Charlotte O'Neil's Song in the first stanza Charlottes feelings are made clear immediately.

"I polished your parquet floor". This alliteration suggests her angry tone of voice. "I scraped your grate", This also suggests the roughness of her work as the scr and gr sounds are hard. The rhythm of the poem is also quite jaunty.

Charlotte is angry and it is as if she is rushing her words and this in turn hurries along the poem, speeding up the tempo.

The simple monosyllable words also create a jaunty rhythm. " Hands were raw". These small words are small and again create a faster tempo. They are also appropriate to an uneducated general servant who would not be familiar with longer words. Every word in the poem has either one or two syllables, which again creates a jaunty rhythm. The comparison between the way she slept and the way her master slept shows the great difference between their classes and it also shows that she is treated badly in modern standards.

" You lay on a silken pillow I lay on an attic cot". She also shows us that she is always working, for example if her master rang the bell she would have to go to him no matter what time it was. " You rang your bell and I answered". She also shows us the jobs she has to do, such as emptying the chamber pot that contained her masters' waste. The contrast between ' Charlotte O'Neil's Song' and ' Nothings Changed' is that Charlotte lives in a house and although she is a servant she is also needed.

Whereas the man in ' Nothings Changed' has been driven from his hometown because he is not welcome there. The irony of ' Charlotte O'Neil's Song' is that we don't really know what happened to Charlotte and also that her master could easily hire another general servant. Charlotte would not be missed. The ending of ' Charlotte O'Neil's Song' compared to nothings changed is far more positive as she has left and is no longer a servant, she can start again whereas the man in nothings changed is still very unhappy and angry. The poet conveyed her feelings about oppression and injustice

through all of the methods mentioned above. The structure of the poems make the reader read more slowly or faster.

This structure and control over the readers reading shows us how the writer felt and also conveys and emphasises feelings about oppression and injustice. The first stanza in ' Nothings Changed' contains single syllable words. " Small round hard stones click". These shorter words create an awkward but jaunty rhythm. This awkwardness is like the poem itself; he believes he is not wanted there feels awkward throughout his stay at his old hometown. The repetition in the second stanza in ' Nothings Changes' shows us that the mans anger and rage is building, also the line length increases as his anger increases.

" And my hands and the skin about my bones and the soft labouring of my lungs". This stanza is emphasising his anger and that his body remembers what it was like then. All of this shows us that the poet dislikes oppression and injustice. The speaker in ' Nothings Changed' also feels very upset and angry that although things have changed physically in the town he still knows in his mind that he is not welcome. The third stanza shows most of the mans anger, the word " brash" is a strong word, conveying the feelings of the man.

The alliteration of the letter g which is hard suggests aggression. " Guard at the gatepost". The last line in the third stanza also says " whites only inn". The inn has a double meaning, whites only inn, a place to stay or it could mean whites only allowed into the town. The fifth stanza talks about the

window and behind it are many luxuries, which the whites own and the blacks do not.

This comparison shows that the black people are far poorer than the whites. "Crushed ice white glass, linen falls, the single rose". These are the luxuries owned by the white people. The gap between the third stanza and the short fourth stanza is there to show that after time away everything is still the same.

The sixth stanza shows the contrast between the restaurant owned by the white people with linen cloth and cafe where the black people go to eat which sells cheap takeaway where you eat at a "plastic table top". This shows us that the blacks are treated totally differently compared to the whites and for no apparent reason. It also conveys the oppression and injustice that they suffer. In conclusion 'Nothings Changed' made the most impression on me because it was about a poor black man who was forced out of his own hometown just because he was disliked for no reason.

'Nothings Changed' finishes with an angry and negative ending and it appeals to the readers to sympathise with the man in the poem, this is another reason why I thought this poem made more of an impression on me.

Although 'Charlotte O'Neil's Song' was sad because she was treated badly it ended positively and Charlotte now has a new life to look forward to.

Whereas the man in 'Nothings Changed' is living in the past and does not forget the poor treatment he went through and still feels anger towards the white people and therefore it is sad because he cannot continue his life like Charlotte.