

A comparison of 'telephone conversation' and 'not my best side'

[Literature](#)



For this essay I am to be comparing the two poems 'telephone conversation' and 'Not my best side'. First I shall begin by writing about the content of each poem separately, the first being 'Wole Soyinka's' 'Telephone conversation'. Telephone conversation is about two people from very different background orientations . One of the pair is a Black person whereas the other is a white landlady. The black person is a character attempting to find residence in a home that would accept him despite his inherent colour.

The white landlady is a seemingly shameless woman who in regard of her attitude feels the need to speak to the man under false pretence of aristocracy. She quit obviously is no the aristocrat that she portrays with her accent. The black person is a well-educated gallant who makes his opinion and the facts of the issues concerning racism, which this poem makes reference to as soon as the conversation begins. 'Madam I hate a wasted journey I am African' this reveals that he has face great deal of rejection whilst in pursuit of a home which has been denied due to his colour.

The man wishes for sanctuary in a place of residence away from the horrors that society's persecution have inflicted on him and those like him. He wants it all at a reasonable as well price as this extract will demonstrate 'the price seemed reasonable, location indifferent. The landlady swore she lived off premises' . The man confesses he is African, almost as if he feels ashamed about his origin and needs to make her immediately aware of that fact or even to end the conversation quickly expecting similar results as previous attempts at achieving his goal.

The snobbish landlady however paused 'silenced transmission of pressurised good breeding' Then a shocking turn point between these two characters begins to stimulate hope of captivating the woman and finding a place amongst society this occurred in wake of her response 'How Dark? ' which following his surprised reaction 'Are you dark? Or very light? ' He is shocked by her statement and questions the scenarios opportunistic reality that has come forth with her curiosity. 'It was real, shamed by ill mannered silence ' . The man then subtly and humorously describes himself using the following words 'Plain milk chocolate'.

He means this in relation to the tone of his skin. Then seeking to enthrall her into his articulated trap he pressurises her minds educational boundaries by describing himself as 'West African sepia'. Incurring her wrath and interest by confusing her with verbal complexities, which at first shuns her into silence 'Silence spectroscopic flight of fancy'. Her true nature is then revealed by her reaction to his statement 'What's that' 'don't know what that is' she quite clearly doesn't understand and so this grants him even more power to enslave her attention.

He then subtly once more manipulates her ignorance to colour by describing himself as a brunette as to not confuse her further. However his patronising assent into her home ceases when she breaks the chains of awe that encompass her within the conversation and states 'That's dark isn't it'. His deceiving nature has hit a dead end and in his desperation he uses insulting gestures of humour to captivate her once more but in his haste to regain her

he risks her audience. 'Not all together. Facially I am brunette but you should see the rest of me'.

He goes on 'Palm of my hand, soles of my feet, is peroxide blonde' . He has made another colour reference which she most likely doesn't understand 'Friction caused, foolishly, madam by sitting down has turned my bottom Raven black'. In this moment he fought her prejudice with humour and almost lost her. Had he done so he would have been condemned to continue dwelling in the ambiance of a self-described 'stench of rancid breath of publics hide and speak. Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double tiered omnibus squelching tar'.

He quite obviously is by a roadside and is passed by vulgar traffic emitting toxic fumes, which as is described to be an exasperating and intoxicating experience. This poem is structured through a colourful and humorous game of cat and mouse in which the pursuer is captivating the maid to gain accommodation. On an even more basic level it encapsulates the ways in which people get to know each other and adopt the information learned about each other to reach some specific goal. However 'Not My Best Side' is a poem, which addresses the same issue, of people interacting with others, but in a more abstract way.

Being comprised of four stanzas it addresses three individual characters from the painting of St George slaying the dragon and rescuing the damsel in distress. Whereas 'Telephone conversation' is a 35 line long sonnet which features both characters in retrospect. The primary difference

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being that this poem features three characters with different interpretations of one another as apposed to rooting new information.

Then entire basis of their opinions is founded upon physical descriptions of absurd characters. 'Telephone Conversation' is about the characters verbally seducing information out of each other. He first stanza of 'Not My Best Side' revolves around the dragon character and his point of view. It is this point of view that stems the theme of his stanza, his complaints. All he does is complain about his image, as shown in the painting this poem-derived . He describes how the painting does not capture his best visage.

He makes reference to the use of triangle imagery by the artist in his creation. 'Poor cap, he had this obsession with Triangles'. He continues his complaints with his incessant and consistent dissatisfaction. ' What, after all, are two feet to a monster? ' his meticulous self obsession follows this regret of the formation of the image when he states that ' afterwards I was sorry for the bad publicity. ' His meticulous behaviour is further made known when he becomes argumentative about who he eats and the quality of his victim for example when he demands a girl of a higher eminence. why should my victim be so unattractive as to be inedible' Another example of this is when he once again complains about the quality of his conqueror 'should my conqueror be so ostentatiously beardless' in other words young and inexperienced.

It is obvious that this dragon is defying the evil malevolent winged beats stereotype through his strangely high standards. The dragon feel that know one respects him in their perception, this is made evident through the last

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two lines of this stanza 'but I should have liked a little more blood to show they were taking me seriously. This demonstrates his own self perceived inferiority and his need to compensate with scrupulous an argument approach . In contrast to 'telephone conversation' this character has revealed a semblance of himself, but a misinterpreted image that he feels he needs to make known. This echoes the black mans character but even more is conveyed similarly in this poem.

Also the imagery of having some one on a string, which could be interpreted as a similarity between poems . The string in this poem could show a link in the man captivating the woman in 'Telephone conversation'. And why should she have me literally on a string'. Also this stanza reveals that the dragons own inadequacies are similar to the woman's need to hide her not so good breeding with deceptions of class. The second stanza features the ineffectual fascinated damsel in distress who breaks her stereotype with ignorant self devotion to a dragon, whom she has 'literally bonded ' herself with in loving praise of him and disgust to her adolescent teenage hero. Her love for the dragon is shown when she describes her beast 'I quite took to the dragon.

It's nice to be liked, if you know what I mean. He was so nicely physical, with his claws and lovely green skin'. Her physical attraction to the dragon is similar to the colourful imagery that was describe in 'Telephone conversation' which concerned intrigue birthed from both colour and sex appeal from a corporeal angle. A new interpretation is made of the dragon as a sexual object of desire thus breaking another stereotype, but in the

previous stanza the dragon's self-infatuation spared any description of his female counterpart.

This female is very similar to the woman in telephone conversation as she seeks to be perused, this woman wants to be sought by a creature of power as did the woman on the other end of the phone 'he made me feel he was all ready to eat me. And any girl enjoys that'. However she differs when she refuses the concept of being rescued, defying the unwritten law of the paintings typecast. The damsel encapsulates the hero's primary defining issue when she describes him as a boy. She even describes him as a technologically advanced child 'wearing machinery'.

On a really dangerous horse' this interpretation is different than that of the dragons impression. This woman quite clearly likes being liked and is only interested in the power behind the dragons visage but she is doubtful in her regard to the boy as she cant see him past his armour, much like the woman on the phone in telephone conversation. 'He might have acne, blackheads or even bad breathe for all I could tell but the dragon - well you could see all his equipment at a glance'. However she is more than content to go with the flow when the dragon does finally live up to one of the traditional requirements 'still, what could I do?

The dragon got himself beaten by the boy and a girls got to think of her future'. Moving on from the damsel the final stanza addresses the as described fledgling knight whose virtues in the eyes of his peers are far from attractive or appealing. This stanza comes from a business angle with reference to academic prowess, much like the exhibitionist in 'Telephone
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Conversation' who used his intelligence to subdue the ignorant woman.

However in this incident the boy is describes himself as having 'diplomas in dragon management and virgin reclamation.

My horse is the latest model, with automatic transmission and built in obsolescence. ' He has the task of 'reclaiming' the damsel in distress . His simple goal to save the woman could be another similarity between 'Telephone Conversation' and Fanthorpes creation . The knight is attempting to capture the damsel for his own purposes, much like the black man in 'Wole Soyinkas' poem using their assets. The knight is attempting to impress her with his technology but he doesn't peruse the act that he dubs as the typical expectations of sociology or myth. He follows it through as the requirements of a job.

He also feels that the other two characters should respond in a manner appropriate to their status and tackles their attitudes with great contempt. 'Don't you want to be killed/rescued'? 'Don't you want you want to carry out the roles that sociology and myth have designed for you? ' His contempt is founded by the fear of his knight hood/job being at risk. 'Don't you realise, that by being choosy, you are endangering job-prospects' This knight is not a man but a machine bent on the one goal allocated to him, rescue the damsel and save the girl despite circumstance.

He doesn't care what the other two characters feel or want he only cares about the fulfilment of his goal. 'Does it matter what you want? You're in my way. ' All three of these characters break the mythical stereotypes forced upon them by sociology offering direct contrasts to what the readers expect

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from the painting. Each dramatic monologue offers many different unexpected perspectives that entwine with the goals of their heritage and status much like the black man and white woman in 'Telephone Conversation'. Who also like these characters, are not quite what they seem.

Each of the characters in both of these poems carries unexpected and strange attributes considering their origins. However 'Telephone Conversation' offers a more conceivable and realistic conception of what was expected the black members of society at the time and broke them. It destroyed the stereotypical ideals of what everyone expects. 'Not My Best Side' does this as well through its characters and the misconceptions they feel the world makes. Both poems revolve around the common challenge in life of getting to know people.

However 'Soyinka's' poem concerns two characters reactions to each other through conversation whereas 'Fanthorpes' is channel through physical appearances and the misconceptions they create as apposed to simple words exchanged over a phone. It is obvious that the first is about learning more about each other whereas the latter is about trying to avoid discovering more about each other and just getting on with things in their own way. Despite this however both poems concern the ordinary goal of making the best of a bad situation. The black man seek a home, the damsel a great powerful lover .

The woman an erotic pursuer to make her subject to flattery and a dragon ho wishes to be seen as beautiful as well as knowing he is. Also the Knight who

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seeks career advancement and the order of mythology to dictate the way things should be done. The poems are about individual learning more about each other through their appearance and descriptions so that they can better meet their agendas, however each of these characters are slaves to their deceiving or truthful appearances, however they all use there traits to create the common them of these poems, first impressions of someone else and responses.