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The Zulu Girl

Form

5 Stanzas with 4 lines with the same rhyme pattern = 5 quatrains. Stanzas relate because of rhyme scheme which is ABAB/CDCD/EFEF/GHGH/IJJI

Themes

Triumph over exploitation/pathetic recreation of hardship of endurance of SA people

Tone

Serious

Mood

Foreboding

Vocabulary

Smoulder - burn slowly without flames

Languor's - tenderness

Imbibes - Absorb or soak up

Unsmotherable - Inextinguishable

Looms - Rises before

Stanza 1

1. When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder
2. Down where the sweating gang its labour plies
3. A girl flings down her hoe and from her shoulder
4. Unslings her child tormented by flies

"Hot red" is an epithet - usually applied to heated iron. This together with the metaphor of "smoulder" gives the impression that the land is almost too hot to bear and could almost burst into flames "Gang" - negative connotations - group of people or farmworkers in harsh conditions doing forced labour. "Flings" suggests impatience and no care for the work. She focuses on reproduction responsibilities instead of mass production.

"Tormented" afflicted with pain or suffering/malnourished.

"Girl" this suggests that she is not a wife have lost their tradition to the modern world.

Stanza 2

- 5 She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled
- 6 By the thorn-tree: purpled with the blood of ticks
- 7 While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled
- 8 Prowl through his hair with sharp electric clicks.

"Shadow pooled" is a metaphor - coolness of a shadow is compared to a pool
"thorn-trees" native plant - suggests danger. "Blood of ticks" emphasises the poor conditions in which they are forced to live. "Sharp nails" and "slow caresses" shows contrast between her ability to protect and maternal instinct to be caring. "Prowl through his hair" is a metaphor - her fingers are like an animal hunting for its prey - suggests she is a danger to anything that threatens her child. "electric clicks" is a metaphor - the cracking of ticks produces a sound like which is similar to an electric spark "clicks" is also an onomatopoeia

Stanza 3

- 9 His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple
- 10 Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feels;
- 11 Through his frail nerves her own deep langour's ripple
- 12 Like a broad river sighting through the reeds

"plugged", "tugs" and "grunting" are a sequence of ugly vowel sounds which suggest greediness of the baby as he feeds, and this is intensified in the animal simile "like a puppy", in which the same vowel sound appears. Not only does he take physical nourishment he receives her own deep feelings and thoughts little by little into his frail nerves - "langour's ripple" - This is a simile - flow of milk compared to a river

"Sighing" is an example of personification - river given the ability to sigh - sign of satisfaction or exhaustion. "The The Similie" "Like a puppy" can be also interpreted as how these people were treated or viewed which are animals.

Stanza 4

- 13 Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes
- 14 And old unquenched, unsmotherable heat -
- 15 The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes
- 16 The sullen dignity of their defeat

"Yet" suggests a change in focus. Changed river to stream. In his slumbered state his body takes more than milk. The feeding of the child arouses a sense of pride and that her life has some value and she is taking part in an important life process. "Unquenched, unsmotherable heat" is a metaphor - makes reference back to the fierce warriors of the Zulu tribe. "Beaten tribes" - they were beaten by colonisation. "Sullen dignity" is a paradox - sad but respectable. Even though they lost the war, they are proud and strong of their culture. The young child could also be a symbol of the Zulu nation and their spirit.

Stanza 5

- 17 Her body looms above him like a hill
- 18 Within whose shade a village lies at rest,
- 19 Or the first cloud so terrible and still
- 20 That bears the coming harvest in its breast

Line 17 is a simile - the mother's body is compared to a hill - it provides shelter and protection for her child. Also an a metaphor - the sleeping child represents all the Zulu people - as they rest and regain their strength. She is also being compared to the first cloud that brings the rain that will lead to a harvest.

This is a metaphor - suggests that the children of the oppressed people will one day reap the harvest of their suffering - they will overcome their oppression with the help from the mothers like the "Zulu Girl"

Men = Culture

Women = Nature