



eduresourceza.com

GLOSSARY

Acres — remnant
 Smoulder — burn slowly w/o flames
 Hoe — remnant
 Prowl — remnant
 Languor's — tenderness
 Imbibes — absorb/soak up
 Unquenched — unsatisfied
 Unsmotherable — inextinguishable/cant put out
 Ferocity — fierceness
 Looms — rises before

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

Form:

Regulated form
 5 stanzas with 4 lines with same rhyme pattern = 5 quatrains
 Stanzas relate because of pattern

Rhyme scheme: ABAB / CDCD / EFFE / GHGH / IJJI

Tone: (Author's attitude or feelings about the subject)
 Serious

Mood: (Readers emotions from reading the text)
 Foreboding

The Zulu Girl

Roy Campbell (1901–1957)
 Modern/South African Poet

Setting: Description of a hot landscape where labourers work. Simply an observation of a Zulu woman feeding her child. Closer it becomes clear it's about oppression of women.

Sympathy/admiration

Epithet—adjectives of similar meaning

Not a wife—lost tradition to modern world

Gang = people instead of individuals/no identity/forced to work/no individuality/identity.

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. → Malnourished

Girl flings her hoe to feed her child = rebellious act
 Mass production vs. reproduction responsibilities.

5 She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled

Metaphor: coolness of a shadow = pool

6 By the thorn-tree: purpled with the blood of ticks,

The care that the mother shows for her child: looking for ticks + lice = emphasizes the poor conditions in which they're forced to live.

7 While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled

8 (Prowl) through his hair with sharp electric clicks.

Metaphor: fierce animal—shows protective nature of mother

Onomatopoeia: hard + sharp sound

Onomatopoeia

9 His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple,

Weary/unenthusiastic/hopeless

10 Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feels;

11 Through his frail nerves her own deep languor's ripple

Simile:
 L10—innocent/harmless + natural activity
 L12—more than nutritional sustenance
 Pain + sadness of history—great river

12 Like a broad river sighing through the reeds.

13 Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes

Personification—sighing—groaning/tired after hard work.

14 And old unquenched, unsmotherable heat

15 The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes,

Alliteration: forceful pattern L15-16

Metaphor: unstoppable African spirit. Underlying message = child is symbol of Zulu nation L14—refers to fierce warriors of Zulu tribe. Strength of Zulu people still exist despite oppression.

16 The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Life has value: important life process

17 Her body looms above him like a hill

Gloomy silence

Not alone/abandoned
 Tradition of human struggle + survival

Looking up at her from child eyes
 Impressive statuesque—shielding + protecting

18 Within whose shade a village lies at rest,

19 Or the first cloud so terrible and still

Simile: protects all oppressed children. Mother metaphorically becomes a hill that overshadows a whole village. No longer just the mother of the child she represents all the mothers of all the children of the oppressed.

20 That bears the coming harvest in its breast.

Not final—Day of reckoning is inevitable

Cloud that brings the rain that'll lead to a harvest. Metaphor: children of the oppressed will one day reap the harvest of their suffering they'll overcome their oppression with the help from their mothers like the 'Zulu Girl' in the poem.

Personification: revolution/freedom

Words relating to heat:

- ☐ Sun
- ☐ Hot
- ☐ Red
- ☐ Smoulder
- ☐ Sweating
- ☐ Unquenched

Land is almost too hot to bear + could burst into flames.

Men = culture
 Women = Nature

THE ZULU GIRL - Roy Campbell

W.B. 1

- On the **surface**, this poem is simply an **observation** of a Zulu woman feeding her child. Upon closer consideration, however, it becomes clear that the poem is about **oppression, specifically of women**.
- The poem has a **four line stanza**. The speaker provides us a detail of the **plight of the Zulu girl**. The observation made by the speaker is minute and influential.
- The **first stanza** gives a description of a **hot landscape where the labourers work**.
- It is during the daytime that the sun sheds its hot rays on the ground - "the hot red acres". The farm seems to be under the **powerful heat of the sun**. It is so parching that the hot red acres - African landscape - seem to be ready to burst into flames.
- In the field is the **"gang"**. The word "gang" as of course frequently used in this connection, suggests that its **members have no individuality and identity**, are treated rather like prisoners, or are being made to **undertake forced labour**: certainly they have **no personal pride or pleasure in the work they are doing**, and are actually under some kind of the compulsion -
- Now the observation is focused on the girl who **flings down her hoe** which can be seen as an **act of defiance of authority**, which exacts her subjection, a **turning from mass production to the responsibilities of reproduction**. Then she **unslings her child** from her shoulder. The child besides being "tormented by flies" is also in need of nourishment, for the girl takes him to a patch of **thin shade** nearby to feed him at her breast. While the child feeds, the girl passes her hand caressingly through his hair. It is significant perhaps that the mother is referred to as a 'girl': this may suggest that **she is not a wife and belongs to the vast number of black South Africans who have lost their traditional ways of life and have been caught up in the chaos of the modern world**.
- The **second stanza** illustrates the care that the mother shows for her child: she is looking for ticks and lice on him, which emphasises the **poor conditions** in which they are forced to live.
- In **stanza three, four and five** the poet goes on to give his impression of the **relationship and feeling between mother and the child** in more than a merely physical sense. The child is 'grunting' as he feeds; that is he is feeding **greedily** and expressing his **simple but deep satisfaction**. Not only does he take in **physical nourishment**, however, for during this process of feeding, her own deep feelings 'ripple' and are conveyed little by little into his **frail, infantile nerves**.
- The poem admirably suggests the **strong intimate mother-and-child relationship** developed by **breast-feeding** (often, of course, lost or destroyed in more 'advanced' cultures). The word 'languours' is important. It tells us that the girl appears rather weary, **unenthusiastic, and hopeless, as though expressing a deep despair and resentment against the whole situation in which she finds herself**.
- Nevertheless, even in her mood of hopelessness, her motherhood and the **latent satisfaction** she has in **feeding her child**, seem to arouse in her a kind of **pride**, 'the old unquenched, unsmotherable heat': a feeling perhaps that **her life has some value**, that she is **taking part in an important life process**; that she is **not alone and abandoned**; she **belongs to an old enduring tradition of human struggle and survival**; her 'tribes' though 'curbed' and 'beaten' for the time being, 'have a dignity' in their 'defeat'; and still retain their **self-respect**, and are **ready to 'rise again'**.

- As the poem develops, we seem to move gradually closer to the mother, until in the final stanza we are looking up at her, almost as though through the eyes of the child himself; and she appears as an impressive, statuesque figure, shielding and protecting her helpless infant. In the two last lines of all, after being compared to a 'hill', she is likened to a great storm cloud which "bears the coming harvest in its breast".
- In the third stanza, the woman breastfeeds her child. He is hungry and tugs at her nipple like a 'puppy' (line 10). This image again points out the way in which the people in the poem are viewed: if a child is viewed as a puppy, his mother is viewed as a dog. The mother, however, does not see her child in this way, and feels an overwhelming tenderness for her child.
- In the fourth stanza, the underlying message becomes clear. The young child is a symbol of the might of the Zulu nation: in him, there is an 'old unquenched, unsmotherable heat' (line 14) that refers back to the fierce warriors of the Zulu tribe. The strength of the Zulu still exists in the Zulu people in spite of the oppression that they experience.
- In the final stanza of the poem, the mother metaphorically becomes a hill that overshadows a whole village. She is no longer just the mother of one child; she represents all the mother of all the children of oppressed people.
- She is also compared to the first cloud that brings the rain that will lead to a harvest. This is a metaphor that suggests the children of the oppressed people will one day reap the harvest of their suffering; in other words, they will overcome their oppression with help from mothers like the 'Zulu Girl' in the poem.
- Without appealing to our emotions directly or blatantly (as a propagandist might have done) the writer arouses our sympathy for the Zulu Girl in the hardships of the existence; this leads on to an admiration for the endurance and for the strength of life that is seen in her.
- This in its turn, through the concluding simile, leads to a kind of prophetic hint that the scene we have witnessed is not final, and that a different and better state of affairs is bound to come in the future.
- We notice that this hope is not conveyed by plain, prose statement, as a matter of fact: it is glimpsed imaginatively by the poet's intuition and conveyed in the form of this indirect suggestion.

Form and structure

- ✓ Campbell makes use of a regulated form to structure his message. The five stanzas of four lines each follow the same rhyme pattern. The first stanza uses a-b-a-b, the second c-d-c-d, and so on. The different stanzas are thus related to each other because of this noticeable pattern.

Poetic / language devices

- ❖ As mentioned in 'Content' the poet uses imagery, symbol, metaphor and diction to add meaning to the poem throughout.
- ❖ The simile in stanza three, which compares the child to a 'puppy' (line 10), implies an innocent, harmless and natural activity. However, the 'broad river' (line 12) contains more than nutritional substance. The reader is informed that this child is absorbing much more and the dash used at the end of line 14 tells us what this is.

Epithets → adjective/phrase expressing a quality or attribute regarded as characteristic of the person or thing mentioned.

- The poem begins with a fairly simple observed situation, and as the poet develops and reflects upon it, its references broaden out until it is of world-wide significance. The first strong impression we are given in the poem is of the heat which scorches the landscape where the girl is working: the acres, we are told, are red, which we know is the predominant colour of the African earth, but 'hot red', and obvious pair of adjectives suggest in our mind something similar- 'red hot' the 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.
- We are given other details that emphasize the unpleasant nature of the 'gang's' work: they are 'sweating'; the child is 'tormented by the flies'. At last she flings down her hoe. She does not just 'drop it' or throw it down: the word 'flings' suggests impatience and exasperation. An interesting point to notice in the first stanza is the way in which the rhythmic and rhyming pattern emphasizes the physical effort made by the girl when she takes the child from her back: "When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder / A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder / Unslings her child, (tormented by the flies)."
- In stanza two, we read how the mother, in the meagre shade of the thorn trees, is searching the hair of her child for ticks – again a detail which suggests the poverty and unsanitary conditions under which these labourers live.
- We notice that her sharp nails are 'purpled with the blood' of the parasites. In fact, the phrase 'purpled with the blood of ticks' is grammatically out of place; it is intended presumably to relate to its head - word 'nails', but the nails are introduced by the conjunction 'while' and cannot strictly be governed by a loose phrase which lies outside the clause together. Our attention is held by the metaphor 'prowled', which suggests that her fingers are like a fierce animal searching through the forest for its prey. The sharp electric clicks are produced when she finds a tick and cracks it between her fingernails: this produces a sound like that given by an electric spark. Not only does the metaphor give this impression but the sounds of the word sequence 'ticks', electric, clicks intensify it.
- In stanza three, we turn on different matters, but the choice of words is apt again. We see, and hear that the baby's mouth is 'plugged'; he tugs at the nipple: grunting as he feeds. The sequence of ugly vowel sounds suggest the greediness (and hunger) of the baby as he feeds, and this is intensified in the animal simile 'like a puppy', in which the same vowel sound appears.
- Then the poet goes on to describe the deep strong feelings which pass in a steady, inevitable flow from the mother to the child and here the simile of the broad river is very suitable.
- Stanza four arouses out increased attention with an unexpected switch of thought, almost a paradox. In the physical sense it is obviously the child which is drinking from its mother; in another sense we are now told that her flesh is, in a deeper sense, imbibing something from the drowsy stream.
- To make the sudden change of thought from the reflective to the aggressive, there is a sudden change in the rhythmic and sound qualities of this stanza, and we come to a vigorous climax on the energetic multi-syllabic word 'unsmotherable'. "Yet in that drowsy steam her flesh imbibes/ An old unquenched unsmotherable heat..."

- The word 'unsmotherable' takes on special force in its context with 'unquenched', which seem to prepare the way, and the monosyllable 'heat' which gives the line its **decisive conclusion**. The line as a whole is an **emphatic statement** of the unquenchable vigour and spirit of the African people: nothing can blot out or obliterate their primal energy (heat – one of the basic essentials of life).
- The feeling of conviction is repeated in a slightly different rhythmic pattern in two following and closely parallel lines: "The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes/ The sullen dignity of tier defeat" when an element of **alliteration 'b' and 'd' also adds to the forceful pattern of speech**.
- The poem now moves to its **prophetic climax** and the Zulu Girl, as we have seen, takes on the significance of a symbol. She is no longer just a single, stray, exploited, hardworking individual in some remote part of the veldt: **she represents to us the potentiality of her race for suffering, survival, and triumph**. Her body is grand and imposing: it 'looms' over her child, and its protective power is beautifully shown in the **picturesque simile** of "... a hill/ Within whose shade a village leis at rest."
- We notice that the shade, unlike that of the thorn trees (a mere 'pool') is unbroken and extensive, and in it the village lies in peace and tranquillity, 'at rest. The 'looming hill' leads our thoughts to the second simile of the great thunder cloud, 'so terrible and still', which suggest violent storms to come in the near future, but with the prospect of a welcome harvest in the fullness of time.

"Zulu Girl" is thus an effective and meaningful short poem, in which many resources of the poet's art have been combined to treat one of the urgent problems of the modern world.

Sound devices

- The rhyme of the stanzas provides the poem with regular rhythm.
- Sound is also employed to add riches to the image of the 'grunting' (line 10) child, the sound of the mother's nails rustling through the child's hair with onomatopoeic 'clicks' (line 8), and the personified 'sighing' (line 12) of the river as the mother's milk passes to her child.

Vocabulary:

smoulder	- burn slowly without a flame
languors	- tenderness
imbibes	- absorbs or soaks up
unquenched	- unsatisfied
unsmotherable	- inextinguishable; cannot be put out
ferocity	- fierceness
sullen	- gloomy silence
looms	- rises before

Ignatius Royston Dunnachie (Roy) Campbell (Durban 2 October 1901 – 23 April 1957) was considered one of South Africa's most esteemed English poets. Campbell was an accomplished horse rider and fisherman and was fluent in isiZulu. His international fame to his undertaking a series of lecture tours in Spain, the USA and Canada and translations of literary works from Spanish, Portuguese and French broadened the English literature. He founded the magazine, *Voorslag* ("Whiplash"), with William Plomer. It was a critique of South African colonial society, which he considered backwards and inbred. In 2009, Roger Scruton wrote that Campbell was "a swashbuckling adventurer and a dreamer of dreams. And his life and writings contain so many lessons about the British experience in the 20th century that it is worth revisiting them". He was killed in a car accident in 1957 while on holiday in Portugal.



led
his

About this poem

- This poem uses an ordinary situation of a young mother breastfeeding her child to meditate on the suppressed energy of the African people, which the poet believes will inevitably bring about a revolution.

The Zulu Girl

Roy Campbell

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

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

5

His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple,
Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feels;
Through his frail nerves her own deep languor's ripple
Like a broad river sighing through the reeds.

10

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

15

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

20

J.L. GEORGE

Questions

- What is the girl doing before she stops to rest? (1)
- What kind of mother is the speaker describing in stanza 2? Quote from the poem to support your answer. (3)
- 1 Quote two examples of simile. (2)
- 2 Choose one of the quotes from your answer to 4.1 and explain its effectiveness. (2)
- How does the poet set the scene of unbearably hot environment in stanza 1? Quote to support your answer. (3)
- 1 In stanza 3, the child is feeding from his mother's breast, but taking in more than just milk. What else being transmitted to the child? Quote to support your answer. (2)
- 2 What else is the child receiving from his mother, as detailed in stanza 4? Quote to support your answer. (3)
- 3 To whom do lines 15 – 16 refer? (1)
- 4 Identify the metaphor in stanza 5 and explain its effectiveness. (4)

Jeremy Cronin (Simon's Town, 12 September 1949) studied at the University of Cape Town where he became a member of the Radical Student Society and later recruited into the banned South African Communist Party (SACP). He gained his MA in philosophy from Sorbonne (France) before returning to lecture at UCT. In 1976 he was arrested for distributing pamphlets for the banned African National Congress. His seven years in jail as a political prisoner gave rise to a volume of poetry which won the Ingrid Jonker Prize in 1984. He spent three years in exile in London and Lusaka before returning home in 1990. President Jacob Zuma appointed him Deputy Minister of Transport on 10 May 2009. On 12 June 2012 he assumed office as Deputy Minister of Public Works, where he serves to this day.



J.L. GEORGE

20. THE ZULU GIRL : Campbell

Outline: A gang of labourers is busy on the fields. It is a very hot day. A girl detaches herself from the group, and seeks the shade of some thorn trees to feed her child. As the child drinks, the mother's hands caress his hair. In the flow of milk the dignity and the ferocity of the Zulu tribes passes to the child. In the peaceful scene of the baby clinging to its mother's breast, is the ominous hint that the child will grow up to revenge the defeat of his people.

Discussion: The metaphorical use of the word 'smoulder' suggests the burning heat of the day. The ground is burning hot just as a smouldering fire is hot. The comparison is further helped by 'red acres', the colour of the earth which resembles the red of glowing embers. The action of the girl in the word flings conveys her feeling of resentment and contempt. The word pooled describes the circular shape of shadow cast by the trees, as well as the coolness suggested by a pool of water. It is the thorn trees that are 'purpled by the blood of ticks' as animals rub off the insect pests against the trees, but the possibility of ticks (and lice) in the child's woolly hair need not be excluded -- the phrase 'prowls through his hair' implies that the mother's fingers moving through the child's hair is like an animal on the hunt (and allows for the possibility of the mother's fingers being 'purpled' with blood).

In 'tugs like a puppy' the poet tells us that the child drinks instinctively and blindly, all the while giving little grunts of satisfaction, exactly as a puppy would. 'Her own deep langours' refers to the girl's own deep yearnings being transferred to the child as he drinks. And the simile, 'like a broad river sighing through its reeds', aptly describes something calm and innocent on the surface, but containing a hidden menace deep down -- in the case of the river strong undercurrents; in the case of the girl a concealed desire for revenge. The next two lines offer evidence of this:

The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes,
The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Curbed means held in check but not completely subdued; sullen means resentful and ill-tempered. Just as a village is protected against the heat by a hill's shadow, so is the child cradled in his mother's lap protected by her body. The cloud brings rain, and the rain in turn produces a bountiful harvest; but 'terrible and still' tells us that the first cloud promises a storm whose harvest will be terrible -- ruin and destruction. In the same way the 'harvest' of the child's 'rain' (the milk it drinks) will be a terrible revenge.

Contextual questions:

- (a) Show how each of the following phrases conveys the girl's feelings: 'flings down her hoe'; 'in slow caresses ruled'; 'Her own deep langours ripple'. (6)
- (b) The imagery of stanzas 1 and 2 is based on contrasts. Comment on the effect of the contrasts by an analysis of the images. (3)
- (c) Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes
An old unquenched unsmotherable heat.
Discuss the underlined portions. Comment on the poet's choice of words and their relevance to the theme. (3)
- (d) Discuss the meaning of the last stanza by a close analysis of the language. (3)

21. SWANS/...

The Zulu Girl - Roy Campbell

Rhyme Scheme = a bab ; cdcd ; etc.

hot, sun, red, smoulder, sweating → hot, rural setting.

red = earth ; red soil.

Smoulder - metaphor

- the land is compared to fire.

sweating → hot, physical labour
→ stirs up sympathy.

gang → no individuality, they are being lumped together.

girl → impersonal, lack of prominence.
→ racism → Apartheid.

flings → defiance, powerful.

unslings her child → shows that she must care for him; even though she works.

tormented by flies - even the youth suffer

Stanza one: anger, anguish.

32

pooled → ~~contrast~~ contrast to hot.

ring → small.

purple with the blood → emphasising the poverty.

sharp nails contrasts caresses.

ruled → systematic; methodical; used to it.

Prowl → metaphor.

→ the fingers compared to an animal.

clicks → onomatopoeia / metaphor

→ sound of tick being killed compared to electric.

Tone: mourning.

noture sharp nails & thorns.

S3

sleepy mouth: exhaustion.

plugged → small baby.

like a puppy → simile; the manner in which he feeds.

Baby $\Rightarrow$ puppy $\therefore$ mother $\Rightarrow$ dog
dehumanise, an animal.

frail $\rightarrow$ due to environment
 $\rightarrow$ outward expression of the mother's internal state.

sighing $\rightarrow$ the baby's satisfaction.

S4: l 13-14 speaks to the child's heritage.

repression, deep rooted oppression/resentment.
the Zulu girl is becoming a village. $\rightarrow$ takes a village to raise a child.

like a hill $\rightarrow$ large, natural, powerful.
'village lies @ rest' $\rightarrow$ she is preparing a generation for freedom.

first cloud $\rightarrow$ new season; rain for change.

harvest $\rightarrow$ freedom, reclamation of dignity.

Heat $\rightarrow$ lazy atmosphere

Feeding $\rightarrow$ satisfaction

Boom $\rightarrow$ ominous / frightening.
 $\rightarrow$ hope for the future.