

Poetry appreciation fire the sun

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Basically the poem is divided into three parts. Each part identifies a specific task assigned to a woman. It is a very simple and straightforward poem, which does not beat around the bush. It is very easy to understand and candidly outlines the average woman's life, carrying out her daily duties. However in doing this, we get the impression that she seems to be giving up a part of herself - her senses become somewhat distorted. We are told of three certain tasks carried out by these women - doing the dishes, cleaning the floor and minding the children.

The first stanza is dedicated to a woman doing the dishes. Every line is repeated as it says, " the woman doing the dishes has trouble hearing". This could be due to the noise and clamour created by the dishes.

The second stanza is dedicated to a woman cleaning the floor. This woman however cannot hear at all. A phrase is used:

" Let us have a moment of silence

For the woman who cleans the floor"

which is usually used at funeral or memorial services when mourning the deceased. It is also ironic because this woman never has a moment of silence for herself in her busy life. This, together with the image of the woman always being on the floor, therefore low down gives us the impression that this woman is regarded as dead because like a dead person, she cannot hear at all.

The third stanza is dedicated to a woman at home with the children. We are told that this woman is not seen at night as she is looking after the children.

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She also cannot speak up for herself or listen to what others think she might have said if she was there.

In this poem, the women have been very stereotyped underlining their daily, tedious chores. An overwhelming impression of the lack of power of the woman is felt reading through the poem- she has the responsibility of a wife, a worker and mother and it is not in her strength to alter anything in the life that has been set for her.

However there appears to be a deeper underlying meaning to the rather simple outlook of the poem. We get the impression that the woman always seems to be taken advantage of and has to put other things before her. She is like a puppet controlled and almost programmed to carry out menial tasks day in and day out. The first stanza emphasises this through the repetition stressing the monotony and routineness of the chores. It is also repetitive because we are told the woman has trouble hearing and things have to be repeated, as she doesn't understand the first time. The second woman cannot hear at all as she is continuously cleaning the floor and then the third woman is unable to speak for herself, as she never gets to go out at night and meet people. Great emphasis is put upon their sense of hearing - again the women are stereotyped in the way that the poet is saying, being a woman there is such intense concentration on a task that they become oblivious to other things around them. It also ties in with the fact that they cannot also hear the voices of the husband which may be complaining; subsequently if women can't hear then they can't speak their minds.

Open to interpretation could be whether the poem is about three different women each doing a specific chore, or about one woman who does all these jobs.

FORM:

There is no distinct form to this poem - there are three separate stanzas; in the first, every line is repeated twice. However the last two stanzas are written with no distinguishable rhyming scheme or any definite pattern. This poem is in the free verse form using simple language. This relates to the women in the poem who are also very simple.

TONE:

Keeping in mind that this poem, which differentiates chores for women and insinuates about their fixed way of life, is actually written by a woman. It could be looked at as the poet taking a general impression of most women or maybe even including her experiences in it, yet, if she was any of these women, she wouldn't have been able to write the poem. It might even be written in the persona of a man therefore bringing in the male factor; the opinion of a man on women. Nevertheless the tone, no matter how depressing, seems to be quite realistic, calm and assured. It is in a way pitying and sympathetic yet also submissive in that the poet seems to accept it as a fact of life that cannot be changed. The tone is aggressive in a gentle way, rather than attacking, for it states the facts as they stand using uncomplicated language, which is extremely effective as it hits one straight in the heart.

IMAGERY:

Although the language is very simple, certain images are evoked in our minds as we read the poem. The first image is created by the repetition in the first stanza. The image is of a woman at a sink, almost like a robot, washing one dish after another and drying them one by one. The monotony strikes us as being almost inhumane as it seems never-ending.

Another image is created by the woman on 'the floor' who 'cannot hear at all' and is given a moment of silence. There is a strong image of death in this stanza as it seems that the woman is closer to her grave on the floor than to the people around her. It is as though she is dead to the world and therefore has to be mourned. As she is so out of reach, it could explain why she cannot hear at all. It also creates the image if not of being close to her grave then being low in society i. e. her body position reflecting her status in society.

The third image is created by the 'empty space' mentioned in the last stanza that one has to stare into to imagine the woman who is in fact at home with the children. She has to be given an empty space, which creates a visual picture in which one cannot distinguish the separation between her and her kids as they are so much a part of her - the empty space is just as empty as she is. As 'you never see her at night' we get the impression that she has no time for herself - the housework and children take up all her time. Although she may actually be able to hear, she is compelled not to because the image is created that the racket of the children overpowers her. Also, as she doesn't get to go out much, she cannot speak to defend herself or listen to other conversations. She might not be able to speak because she is

uneducated and does not have the courage to defend herself. This night setting is realistic because at night men tend to go out more than women, especially at that time.

As there are many aural images of hearing etc., aural devices have been used which play as sound effects i. e. assonance in the second stanza:

'Another poem for a woman'

This soft 'o' sound can be tied to the image of death and graves which is noticeable in this stanza. Alliteration is also used in the third stanza:

'One more poem for the woman at home'

Again this is a fairly calm 'm' sound which ties in with the whole tone of the poem.

Deliberate use of these devices by the poet can be doubted for it is not a very elaborate poem and there are no other devices such as similes or metaphors- it is very basic.

INTENTION

I think the author's intention was to make people notice these jobs that women do, for although they are so obvious, no one acknowledges their importance. The women are taken too much for granted for carrying out these chores and are not appreciated for what they do. It seems to contain greatly the male view and reflects the stereotypical male attitude of a woman, emphasising where he sees her the most. She is always busy somewhere-

washing, cleaning, looking after the kids etc, and she never really has time for him. Even at night when it is the time for the husband and wife to be together, she has more important things to tend to.

This is a simple, heartrending poem which, due to its simplicity, allows deep thought.