



## THEMATIC CONCERNS IN FLEUR ADCOCK'S *TADPOLE* AND *FOR HEIDI WITH BLUE HAIR*

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the theme of *Tadpoles* and *For Heidi with Blue Hair* through the images that are employed by Fleur Adcock. The main aim of the researcher is to analyse the different types of images used by the poet and how it helps the reader to understand the theme of the poems. There are seven distinct types of imagery which are categorised as visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, kinesthetic and organic. Visual images appeal to the sense of sight. Auditory images appeal to specific sound whereas olfactory image is used to describe particular scent. Gustatory image pertains to the sense of taste whereas tactile is used to describe the sense of touch. Kinesthetic images deal with movement or action. Organic deals with creating a specific feeling or emotion within the reader. Adcock's poems *Tadpoles* and *For Heidi with Blue Hair* are taken for analysis to analyse theme through images. In these poems Fleur Adcock has used different images in order to achieve the poetic effect.

Key Words: Visual, Auditory, Olfactory, Gustatory, Tactile and Organic.

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### INTRODUCTION

"I no longer feel inclined to make comments on my own work, which I feel should speak for itself." - Fleur Adcock

Adcock's poetry is known for the images which are drawn from her personal experience or from the experience of friends and relatives. Though many poems deal with her personal subjects she is not confessional poet like Sylvia Plath. "The content of my poems derives largely from those parts of my life which are directly experienced," According to Adcock, "relationships with people or places; images and insights which have presented themselves sharply from whatever source, conscious or subconscious; ideas triggered off by language itself" (Contemporary Authors, 29). Adcock is often referred to as emigrant poet because her life has been split between New Zealand and England, both

countries claiming her as their own. "The awareness of the split in her life makes Adcock concentrate on the present, leading to rich description and clear imagery. She often focuses on particular places, immediate and concrete, to suggest that which is missing, using the present landscape as a backdrop for the 'receding pictures' it emotionally evokes" (Feminist Writers 87). Her first book of poetry contains reflections of her life in New Zealand, with a few poems written in England.

Most of her poems deal with personal elements. In the poem *Tadpoles* Adcock relates Tadpoles with her grandson Oliver. She compares her grandchild with tadpoles. The title of poem *Tadpoles* gives a clear insight about Adcock's emotional connection with the small creatures like Tadpoles. The poem is dedicated to her grandson Oliver. In this she examines the connection between

the growth of a tadpole and prenatal development of a fetus in the womb. This is conveyed with the help of following images 'piquant angularity', 'flow of curves', 'roundnesses in water', 'clumps-of-eyelashes', 'polka dots of blackness', 'animated match-head with tails', 'ribbon tailed black currant', and 'soaked brown raisins'.

The image Tadpole is visual and it symbolizes fertility. Europeans believe that the three stages of development of Frog that is egg, tadpole and amphibian symbolize resurrection and spiritual evolution. It is also a common Christian symbol for the holy trinity and resurrection. This poem is about the poets' admiration for flora and fauna and her sense of belief in reincarnation.

The first stanza of the poem describes the development of tadpole into a frog. The phrases 'little black thread legs', 'thread of arms', and 'mini-miniature shoulders' show the development of tadpoles. The image 'piquant angularity' refers to the shape of the Tadpole. It is visual imagery. When frogs are in larva stage it is called as tadpole. A tadpole has fin-like appendages and a small tail. This helps them to swim in the water. At this stage it looks like a V shaped angle with a tail. This is referred to as 'piquant angularity'. The 'flow of curves' and 'roundness in water' are kinesthetic imagery where the poet refers to the movement of tadpoles in water.

The imagery 'clumps-of-eyelashes' is a visual imagery which specifies clumps of eggs of frog. Here the poet compares the clumps of eggs to eyelashes of a human being. The clumps of eggs are covered with jelly which keeps the eggs of the frogs safe. This floating clump of eggs is called frog spawn. Large clumps contain thousands of eggs. Tadpole grows inside this jelly like clump. Tadpoles with tails inside the clump look like eye and eyelashes of a human being.

In the next stanza the poet compares the tadpoles with her grandson Oliver. The third stanza deals with the development of fetus. The imagery 'polka dots of blackness' refers to ovulation. Polka dot symbolizes energy.

The imagery 'animated match-head with tails' is visual imagery. This imagery refers to sperm. The image refers to the development of sperm into

a fetus. At this stage only certain features of a human body can be identified. The usage of 'match head' also means that Fleur Adcock thinks that at this stage human fetus are fragile like match heads. 'pink tadpole' refers to Oliver her grandson. Fleur Adcock uses tadpole as an image which alludes to her future grandchild. The Tadpole imagery helps the reader to understand what Fleur Adcock thinks about newborn babies. This imagery also implies how fragile a baby is, just like a tadpole.

The images 'ribbon tailed black currant', and 'soaked brown raisins' are visual which refers to the development of fetus. The fifth and sixth stanzas describe the development of fetus into a baby. In the whole poem Fleur Adcock compares the development of Tadpole to frog and the development of fetus into a baby. This poem makes it very clear that Fleur Adcock deeply misses her grandson and wishes him by her side to witness the growth of these little tadpoles. It is also clear that she wants her grandson by her side so that she can also witness the growth of the little boy.

Through the poem *For Heidi with Blue Hair* Adcock brings out the concept of individual freedom. The poem *For Heidi with Blue Hair* accentuates the freedom of an individual. The poem deals with the story of a school girl who is sent out of the school because of dying her hair with blue colour. Fleur Adcock uses different images in the poem to deal with different issues like friendship, independence and the social restrictions that is imposed on the individuals. The images like 'ultramarine for the clipped sides', 'crest of jet-black spikes', 'tears in the kitchen' and 'shimmered behind the arguments' are used to propagate her idea.

The first stanza opens with the images 'ultramarine for the clipped sides' and 'crest of black spikes'. These are visual images. Heidi has dyed her hair in ultramarine blue and also has black coloured spikes on the top of her head. Her new hair style has established her individuality. Even though hair colour is allowed in the school, 'ultramarine blue' is considered as outlandish and rebellious, and breaking the societal norms. The headmistress has sent her from the school because of her rebellious activity.

The image 'tears in the kitchen' is organic. It creates sympathy among the readers. This image describes the situation at home. Since Heidi's mother is no more, her father is taking care of all the household responsibilities. With tears in the eyes Heidi is explaining the situation to her father. Since her father is freedom loving, he supports her. In one way her father has influenced her. Through the character of Heidi, the poet turns aphoristic to the level of insisting upon strong determination and courage as indispensable traits in human life. Through this poem she also insists freedom of every individual especially women.

The image 'shimmered behind the arguments' refers her mother's death. Once it is revealed in the school, it stops all the arguments and evokes pity among the teachers and she is permitted to attend the school. Through the poem the poet criticizes the societal norms and mocks at the codes of educational system. She also stresses the importance of individual freedom.

Adcock's poems deals with nature, love, freedom, women's identity and her personal experiences. She is regarded as one of greatest poet of late twentieth century. These poems are excellent examples of iconology and also reveal the excellence of Adcock's use of images. It also proves her brilliance of using different images in order to bring out her theme.

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