**--------------------\O'l Higue -**Literature Notes

**P/lease note that the information given on this poem is not meant to replace any material given in the classroom setting. It is a very BASIC giude to enable a literal understanding of the poem. Metaphorical interpretations should be sought in the classroom.**

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| **The physical structure of this poem has been altered from the original layout in the text.**  You think I like this 5.stupidness! - 6.gallivanting all night without skin, 1.burning myself out like cane-fire  2.to frighten the foolish? 2.And for what? A few drops of baby blood? 2.You think I wouldn't rather take my blood seasoned in fat black-pudding, like everyone else? And don't even talk 'bout the pain of salt and having to bend these old bones down to count a thousand grains of rice!  If only babies didn't smell so nice! And if I could only stop  hearing 3.the soft, soft call of that 7.pure blood running in new veins, 4.singing the sweet song of life tempting an old, dry-up woman who been 8.holding her final note for years and years, afraid of the dying hum ...  Then again, if I didn't fly and come to that 9.fresh pulse in the middle of the night,2.how would you, mother, name your ancient dread? 2.And who to blame for the murder inside your head ...? Believe me - As long as it have women giving birth a poor ol' higue like me can never dead.  McWatt, M. 'Ol' Higue' in A World of Prose. Edited by Mark McWatt and Hazel Simmonds McDonald. Pearson Education Ltd, 2005. | **This is the OPINION of one individual, which might not coincide with the views of others.**  LITERAL MEANING In this poem, the [Ol' Higue / soucouyant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soucouyant) tells of her frustration with her lifestyle. She does not like the fact that she sometimes has to parade around, in the form of a fireball, without her skin at night. She explains that she has to do this in order to scare people, as well as to acquire baby blood. She explains that she would rather acquire this blood via cooked food, like every-one else. Her worst complaint is the pain of salt, as well as having to count rice grains. She exhibits some regret for her lifestyle but implies that she cannot resist a baby's smell, as well as it's pure blood. The 'newness' of the baby tempts the Ol' Higue, and she cannot resist because she is an old woman who fears death, which can only be avoided by consuming the baby's blood. She affirms her usefulness in the scheme of things, however, by claiming that she provides mothers with a name for their fears (this being the death of a child), as well as some-one to blame when the evil that they wish for their child, in moments of tired frustration, comes true. She implies that she will never die, so long as women keep having babies.  Picture |

LITERARY DEVICES  
1. SIMILE  
Cane-fire has a very distinct quality. It burns very quickly and its presence is felt through it's pungent smell. Therefore, when the Ol' Higue compares herself to cane fire in her fireball state, it implies that she uses a lot of energy quickly, and is very visible.    
  
2. RHETORICAL QUESTION

* Stanza 1,line 4: This rhetorical question highlights the scant regard that the Higue has for the average person. She is thoroughly annoyed that she has to literally waste her energy on them.
* Stanza 1, line 5: This highlights the fact that, again, she is annoyed that she has to expend so much energy to obtain a few drops of baby blood.
* Stanza 1, lines 6-8: The Ol' Higue is emphasizing the fat that regular people ingest blood too, just in a more palatable manner. She would not mind if she could ingest it in the same manner as well.
* Stanza 3, lines 22-23: At this point, the Ol' Higue is making excuses for her presence, claiming that she serves an actual purpose in the scheme of life. If a child dies of unknown causes, she can be scapegoated for it.
* Stanza 3, lines 24-25: 'The murder inside your head' refers to the moments, when out of pure frustration and tiredness, a mother might wish ill on her child. The Ol' Higue is implying that, again, she can be used as a scapegoat if something unfortunate happens to the child. The mother is relieved of bearing the burden of guilt.

3. REPETITION  
The repetition of the word 'soft' emphasizes the fact that the call of the child's blood has captured and beguiled the Ol' Higue'. She implies that she cannot resist that call.  
  
4. ALLITERATION  
This device emphasizes the Ol' Higue's dependence, even addiction, to the sweet blood of the baby.  
  
IMPORTANT WORDS/ PHRASES  
5. 'stupidness!'  
This is a distinctly Caribbean phrase that highlights frustration or scorn. Therefore, it highlights the Ol' Higue's frustration with her lack of self control.  
6. 'gallivanting'  
This term refers to some one 'playing around', having fun. The Ol' Higue is being sarcastic at this point. She is expressing displeasure at having to fly around to seek prey.   
7. 'pure blood running in new veins'  
Babies are often associated with purity, this is what is emphasized here. The Ol' Higue simply cannot resist the lure of new and pure blood.  
8. 'holding her final note for years and years, afraid of the dying hum ...'  
This tells us that the Ol'Higue has been living this desperate existence for a long time. It also implies that she will keep hanging on, despite her frustration. The final line confirms this point: 'As long as it have women giving birth a poor Ol' Higue like me can never dead'  
  
MOOD/ ATMOSPHERE  
The [mood](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is reflective.  
  
TONE  
The [tone](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is slightly bitter and resigned. She accepts that the cycle of her life cannot change.   
  
THEMATIC CATEGORIZATION  
Supernatural