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Subject: William Blake as A Pre-romantic Poet

Asst. Prof Rudaina Abdulrazzaq M. Saeed Ph.D

Rudaina63@tu.edu.iq

William Blake as A Pre-romantic Poet

From his childhood, Blake saw the world in a visionary way. He used to see angles around him, while walking in the street, or sitting in the darkness. He used to speak and laugh with them as if they were his friends people saw Blake as a mad, whereas he saw the world mad with war and cruelty.

William Blake for him there was no concern of people, except running after materialistic things, ignoring the beauty of nature: He was a man of a very sharp vision He cannot be considered as a prophet his message was to call for love and the end of tyranny and oppression. He called for the liberation of human minds from old restraints, with his powerful imagination. He escaped from the limiting and limited reality to a world of vision, where people are free and happy.

Blake's most important lyrics are probably the “Songs of Innocence and Song of Experience.” He at first wrote Songs of Innocence in 1798 and then he reissued it with Songs of Experience in 1794. We have two poems with the same title, but they represent opportunities ideas because of the shift from innocence to experience, from naivety to reason. These two poems are set in London in the late of 1700, which is coincided with the rise of industrial Revolution 1770_1850.

William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794) juxtapose the innocent, pastoral world of childhood against an adult world of corruption and repression; while such poems as “The Lamb” represent a meek virtue, poems like

“The Tyger” exhibit opposing, darker forces. Thus the collection as a whole explores the value and limitations of two different perspectives on the world.

Many of the poems fall into pairs, so that the same situation or problem is seen through the lens of innocence first and then experience. Blake does not identify himself wholly with either view; most of the poems are dramatic—that is, in the voice of a speaker other than the poet himself. Blake stands outside innocence and experience, in a distanced position from which he hopes to be able to recognize and correct the fallacies of both. In particular, he pits himself against despotic authority, restrictive morality, sexual repression, and institutionalized religion; his great insight is into the way these separate modes of control work together to squelch what is most holy in human beings.

The Songs of Innocence dramatize the naïve hopes and fears that inform the lives of children and trace their transformation as the child grows into adulthood. Some of the poems are written from the perspective of children, while others are about children as seen from an adult perspective. Many of the poems draw attention to the positive aspects of natural human understanding prior to the corruption and distortion of experience. Others take a more critical stance toward innocent purity: for example, while Blake draws touching portraits of the emotional power of rudimentary Christian values, he also exposes—over the heads, as it were, of the innocent—Christianity’s capacity for promoting injustice and cruelty.

The Songs of Experience work through parallels and contrasts to lament the ways in which the harsh experiences of adult life destroy what is good in innocence,

while also articulating the weaknesses of the innocent perspective “The Tyger,” for example, attempts to account for real, negative forces in the universe, which innocence fails to confront. These latter poems treat sexual morality in terms of the repressive effects of jealousy, shame, and secrecy, all of which corrupt the ingenuousness of innocent love. With regard to religion, they are less concerned with the character of individual faith than with the Institution of the Church, its role in politics, and its effects on society and the individual mind. Experience thus adds a layer to innocence that darkens its hopeful vision while compensating for some of its blindness.

The style of the Songs of Innocence and Experience is simple and direct, but the language and the rhythms are painstakingly crafted, and the ideas they explore are often deceptively complex. Many of the poems are narrative in style; others, like “The Sick Rose” and “The Divine Image,” make their arguments through symbolism or by means of abstract concepts. Some of Blake’s favorite rhetorical techniques are personification and the reworking of Biblical symbolism and language. Blake frequently employs the familiar meters of ballads, nursery rhymes, and hymns, applying them to his own, often unorthodox conceptions. This combination of the traditional with the unfamiliar is consonant with Blake’s perpetual interest in reconsidering and reframing the assumptions of human thought and social behavior.

Songs of Innocence

Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

“Pipe a song about a Lamb!”
So I piped with merry cheer.
“Piper, pipe that song again;”
So I piped: he wept to hear

“Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer:!”
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

“Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.”

So he vanish'd from my sight;

And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,

And I stain'd the water clear,

And I wrote my happy songs

Every child may joy to hear.

The poem introduction gathers momentum gradually and naturally and each stanza plays an important role in the songs of Innocence in this process with its individual contribution. The first stanza describes how the poet comes across the spiritual infant: the second stanza goes on to say that the child requests the poet to "pipe a song about a Lamb". The poet who pipes comes across the spiritual infant: the second stanza goes on to say that the child requests the poet to "pipe a song about a Lamb". The poet who pipes the tune is again requested to play the music on his pipe. In the third stanza the poet is implored to sing the Lamb's song vocally and on both occasions-when the poet pipes and sings, the child weeps with joy After these two stages, the child bids him to write it down so as to enable all to read and enjoy it. The poet does so and brings 'Introduction' to an end.

Songs of Experience

Introduction

Hear the voice of the Bard,
Who present, past, and future, sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walked among the ancient tree;
Calling the lapsed soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control
The starry pole,
And fallen, fallen light renew!
“O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewy grass!
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumbrous mass.
“Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor,

The watery shore,
Are given thee till the break of day.’’
Are given thee till the break of day.’’

In Blake's 'Introduction' to the Songs of Experience we identify the speaker as a bard. The Bard like an ancient prophet (such as John the Baptist) catches the message of God. The message is that in case mankind listens to the call of the 'Holy Word' a fresh dawn of felicity will spurt up. Man has 'lapsed' or fallen from his erstwhile original happy state into the slough of despondency and misery just as Adam and Eve happened to fall down on being expelled from the Garden of Eden. Now it is only the children who enjoy the preparation or pre-fall atmosphere of happiness and innocence. It is noteworthy that the Bard's words are not in the spontaneous tone of the Piper's in Songs of Innocence.

Innocence Wedded to Experience:

The poem 'Introduction' to Songs of Experience is the first in the series. How exactly does it differ from 'Introduction' to Songs of Innocence? The fact is that there is a gradual, step-by-step development of the poet's thought from the smoother stuff to the harder. Though 'Introduction' is the precursor of the following songs of experience it is not exclusively void of 'innocence'. It is most agreeable and convincing to say that here in this poem's. 'Introduction' both innocence and experience exist together. Innocence is incomplete unless it is coupled with wisdom and therefore 'innocence' is not just that of the Songs of Innocence, but

something which has gained knowledge from the ugly lessons of experience and found an expanding strength in the unfettered life of the creative soul.

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:

I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

In the form of a dialogue between the child and the lamb, 'The Lamb' is an amalgam of the Christian script and pastoral tradition. The lamb is a universal symbol of selfless innocence, Jesus the Lamb is the gentle Imagination, the Divine Humanity. The Lamb identifies with Christ to form a Trinity of child, Lamb, and Redeemer.

The poem presents the ideal of charity substantiating Christian compassion and Caritas or caring, the ideals of the Lamb of God. However, the Christian connotations also contain the implications of sacrifice, death, and tragedy; Christ the human sacrifice who look upon himself the sings of the world.

'The Lamb' by William Blake is a warm and curious poem that uses the lamb as a symbol for Christ, innocence, and the nature of God's creation.

Throughout the two stanzas of this poem, the poet speaks to the lamb, asking it if it knows who was responsible for creating It. He goes into vague detail about Christ, his nature, while using repetition to emphasize these features,

Themes

In 'The Lamb' Blake explores themes of religion, innocence, and morality. Throughout the lines, he, or his speaker, expresses his appreciation for God and what he represents. The "lamb," or Christ, should be a source of celebration for all

who see or hear him. Its innocence is one of the most important features. All people should strive for the Image of the lamb.

Literary Devices

In 'The Lamb' Blake makes use of several literary devices. These include but are not limited to alliteration, enjambment, and repetition. The latter, repetition, can be seen through the use and reuse of lines. For example, "Little Lamb I'll tell thee" in the second stanza. This increases the nursery rhyme-like sound of the verse. Enjambment is another technique that helps with the flow of this particular poem. For example, the transitions between lines one and two of the first stanza.

The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat.
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp.
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

The poem is part of Blake's Songs of Experience, a collection of poems. It is Blake's most popular as well as frequently printed poem. The poem's rhyme pattern is repetitive and primarily written in catalectic trochaic tetrameter, with a few lines in iambic tetrameter. The narrator of the poem approaches an imaginary tiger directly. He asks the Tiger some questions, but the animal never answers. The Christian God is a mighty being whose dominion includes all creation, including heaven, just like the Tiger is a powerful animal and the jungle is his territory. Blake's poetry and art are filled with religious references and symbolism. The poem often uses words like "bright," "fire," and "furnace" to express lighting. The Tiger's splendor is contrasted with the nighttime forest's gloomy surroundings. In this situation, the Tiger throws light on the dark surroundings. Therefore, the Tiger might represent a revolutionary, creative, or important concept that sheds light on the darkest parts of the mind. The Tiger may also be a metaphor for nature's simultaneous beauty and fury. It is consistent with the meaning of the Tiger as a symbol of God's creation. Blake's theory holds that both nature and God are uncontrollable forces. The Tiger transforms into a spiritual being in everyone's hearts and brains.

Every lyric poem has a speaker, and in Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, Blake mostly uses the bardic prophet's voice. The speaker's voice is evident in this poem. Awe- and spirit-inspiring, The Tyger is the subject of the speaker's apostrophe-detailed conversation. It is also implied that a heavenly architect created the terrifying Tiger specifically for interaction with people.

Along with this metaphysical author, the poem appears to be connected to aspects of the industrial revolution, which completely changed the rural, agricultural existence Blake depicted in his earlier poem "The Lamb." Readers familiar with

Blake's poetry could deduce from the poem that works of creation like *The Tiger* had to have been made in a familiar divine. The fire and metal that filled this divine production created a threat. The work in these industrial environments hurts workers and production, again compared to lambs. In the companion poem *After* considering God capable of making *Lamb* and *Tyger*, Blake suggests a certain accusation of the creation plan. At least one can see the paradox of creation, which is based on two forces, innocence and experience or violence, created from the outset and designed to oppose each other in such uneven situations.

Themes

1. The Existence of Evil
2. The power of creation.
3. Religion.

A Comparison between “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”

Why is the Lamb not like the Tyger?

The Lamb

- Sycophantic tone
- Almost patronising

- Biblical references; The Beatitudes – ‘He is meek and he is mild’, from ‘Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth’, and ‘Blessed are mild men’ - this could perhaps be Blake’s way of showing how the Lamb is blessed, it is special, to be revered.
- Innocence is heavily referred to – obviously with regards to the Title of the Selection of poems. ‘Little Lamb who made thee?’
- Repetition of the ‘L’ sounds representing the bleating of the Lamb.

The Tyger

- Such a powerful creature.
- Religion, though it seems out of place with the main subject of a Tiger. – Referencing the use of the almost archaic term ‘Thy’, a term most commonly found in religious text, therefore can be deemed quasi-religious. Intertextuality.
- The aesthetics of the creature are astonishing, awe-inspiring. The power of the creature is shown through its physicality.
- Choice of a Tiger instead of a Lion. ‘And the lion shall lie down with the lamb’. Decision to be a contrast from the Bible, perhaps accentuating Blake’s lost deference towards the religious text
- Devilish imagery.

A Comparison

The Tyger is the experience – the loss of innocence that the Lamb seems to personify. The choice of the ‘Little Lamb’ can, of course, be in reference to Jesus who was referred to as ‘The Lamb of God’. Again, accentuating the quasi-religious element in the poetry.

The Tyger seems to show that evil is unavoidable – inscrutable – complex. The evil is embodied in the very making of such a ferocious creature, the physicality of it. Whereas, it is the complete opposite with the Lamb.

There is certain propinquity with both animals due to them both – by Blake’s own omission – having the same creator. Yet, he questions how a God thought to be benevolent could deem to create such a creature as the tiger.

The two poems from different Anthologies – Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience – could perhaps be construed as to represent both sides of the Bible, The New Testament and The Old Testament. As, quite clearly the Lamb may be a reference to Jesus – therefore this poem is representative of the New Testament – which coincidentally portrays the Christian God to be truly benevolent . The Tyger, therefore would be representative of the Old Testament – the book in which the God is greedy, vain and perhaps merciless

