

# EXHIBITING TRANSITION THROUGH POETRY

**DR. VIJAYLAKSHMI**

**Kripa Drishti Publications, Pune.**

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## **PREFACE**

Blake's songs of Innocence and Experience make it clear that the innocent in the world of youth are prone to man in a world of corruption and oppression; while poems such as "The Lamb" create a gentle beauty, poems like "The Tiger" show off their opposing, dark forces. In the end the perfect combination looks for money and the barriers to good ideas on the field. Some poems fall in pairs, so that the same situation or difficulty is seen with a pure eye first after what has happened. Blake doesn't get it completely with each idea; the sheer number of poems is astonishing - this, in the voice of a speaker other than the poet himself. Blake stands without purity and enjoys, in a remote place where he hopes a better way to catch and correct each other's mistakes. In particular, it is embroiled in a contest of dictatorship, morality, sexual oppression, and organized religion; his amazing understanding is in the process of these different ways of holding paintings together for the most sacred plaque to the people.

**Dr. Vijaylakshmi**

## **Acknowledgment**

I am are over helmed in all humbleness and gratefulness to acknowledge my depth to all those who have helped me to put these ideas, well above the level of simplicity and into something concrete.

I would like to express my special thanks of gratitude to my teachers, colleagues and friends who supported me in completing the book" Exhibiting Transition through Poetry", which also helped me in doing a lot of research and I came to know about so many new things. I am really thankful to them.

Any attempt at any level can't be satisfactorily completed without the support and guidance of MY family members, my equal half and my son.

I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love, prayers, caring and sacrifices for educating and preparing me for my future.

In the end I'd like to thank William Blake himself for writing such wonderful and strong poems that researchers like me were compelled to read and analyze his works more and more.

**Dedication**

*My Equal Half and My Only Son*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Blake's poetry certainly reflects his genius in that it is immediately striking in homely or metaphysical subjects and because of simplicity of style that lingers in the mind. His verses have an elusive nature but subtle poetic merits that guarantee strong fascination and perennial discussion. It is common knowledge that he was a visionary. This intensity of his vision informs everything he wrote, painted, or engraved. Although he was ignored, misunderstood, and misinterpreted for over a hundred years and was declared 'undisciplined' and 'erratic' in his verse and painting alike, he could still draw the attention of men of letters of his time. Blake lived his life in obscurity as he inherited a working-class radicalism and dissent both political and religious. However, he developed both these aspects into a mystical and fervent philosophical system and a few other persons than his friends like John Flaxman, Henry Fuseli, Thomas Butts, William Hayley, and John Linnell etc. could know of him and the existence of his great works. In April 1827 he wrote to Cumberland,

"I have been very near the Gates of Death and have returned very weak and as an Old Man feeble and tottering, but in spirit and life, not in the Real Man the imagination which Liveth for Ever. In that I am stronger and stronger as this Foolish Body decays"<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 David Wagenknecht Rightly Says:

"His Poetical Sketches had to suffer the uncertain editorial practices and faint praises of his backers, but when he had come to see that the way forward was going to have to depend for its realization entirely on his own efforts, he got down to his proper, canonical beginnings in poems written, etched, colored, bound and published by his own hands"<sup>2</sup>.

As a child Blake saw visions, from which he drew inspiration all his life. He supplemented his engraving training by wide reading, especially in Bible and works of Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. He was influenced by religious writings of Jacob Boehme and Emanuel Swedenberg, radical and religious dissertation. He responded to the assertion of the central importance of spiritual world and presence of divine in man. From an early age two of arts, of poetry and engraving come together triumphantly in 1789, with the publication of Songs of Innocence, an evocation of the paradise which Milton had declared lost. Blake was the first poet, to locate innocence not in the race's childhood but in the individual childhood.

Songs of Innocence is a collection of short poems influenced in style by children's songs, ballads and hymns, the joys of childhood in a natural and perfected world. The world of Songs of Innocence is a pastoral world, a Christian pastoral animated with illustrations of scenes showing children playing as well as decorative trees, and foliage framing the poems. These poems conjure up clear, intense pictures. Blake as a child could see angles, so his child hero can see them. Some five years later, in 1794, Blake produced Songs of Experience, the images of child and young adult impeded by social and religious oppressions. The illustrations show death, weeping, menace and desolation.

Blake believed “evil in the world is inherent in generation” is being born into the natural world. The result of generation is to confine man in his five senses, woefully limiting his capacity for perceptions. Man can be freed by the operation of the Poetic Genius, or Imagination, the capacity to apprehend beyond of prison of senses. He rejected the commerce as he felt it is a sustained social thread to primary and to the valid life of individual.

From his earliest Sketches, Blake has his own tone and method. He rejected “imitation” of both kinds-formal and perceptual, and this way established his originality. Imitation is the shadow of a shadow; art for Blake is creation. What the eye sees as real is real, whether it is a simple raincloud or the weeping child within the cloud. Blake’s poetry is a seeing and seeing into visual and verbal with conventional eyes. He does not describe but projects Man’s divine part is his ability to create, a faculty Blake exercised for over half a century. He sees what is and what is implicit.

His rejection of prescribed form is part and parcel of his rejection of social institutions. In *The Book of Thel* he makes it clear that wisdom cannot be contained in a silver rod nor love in “a golden bowl”. The process of Blake’s imagination is clearly evident when he annotates Wordsworth. Physical objects, he says, are at variance with imagination: objects do not exist apart from perception. When we adopt this statement to Blake’s own imagery, we resolve a problem. Many of his images are deflected from definitive particularity into abstractions. In the opening of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, his imaginative process is vividly revealed:

Once meek, and in a perilous path,  
The first man kept his course along  
The value of death.  
Roses are planted where thorns grow,  
And on the barren heath  
Sing the honey bees.

The first three lines are figurative, moral language, the three that follow are images, a mix of verbal and visual elements. The figurative and the particular correspond rhythmically; rhyme connects “vale of death” with barren heath and parallelism connects the rose and the meek man, the honey bees and the just man. The images are equivalents for the figurative language, body it forth. Blake does not deflect the image into abstraction: he segregates two distinct modes, as it were two registers of language, bodiless and embodying.

## **1.2. C.M. Bowra Rightly Says:**

“In the passion and tenderness of the SONGS, there is something beyond analysis, that living power of imagination which was the beginning and the end of Blake’s activity ... Because Blake pierced beyond the visible world of these eternal powers and made them his daily company, he was able to give his poetry the clarity and the brightness of vision”<sup>3</sup>. In his best works Blake avoids simile unless its point of reference is contained in the poem, e.g., in “*The Echoing Green*” he writes in line 26, “like birds in their nests”, thus recalling “skylark and the thrush” earlier in the poem.

He distrusts similes because they tend to abstract qualities - moral or otherwise - from the subject and the thing to which it is compared. Simile disembodies qualities and is therefore at variance with Blake's vision. Thus "The Sunflower" and "The Rose" are not referred to human experience, though they include it. The "Lamb" and the "Tiger" are not equated with Christ though they partly include or embody him.

Blake's allegiance to the plain language, his elected innocence of eighteenth - century diction and convention, and his social vision made it possible for him to write balladic lyrics ("The Little Black Boy", "The Chimney Sweeper") in a language more direct than Wordsworth's in his ballads. The miraculous effortlessness of the Songs of Innocence and Experience proceeds from a sensibility untroubled by decorum, and from a verbal tact that takes his poems, with unparaphrasable directness, onto the pulse, affecting the reader's imagination without stumbling at the threshold of his intelligence. In both sequences the subject matter is similar, tone, emphasis and conclusions differ. Innocence does not comprehend beyond its innocence (though what is beyond innocence hovers disturbingly near the poems, as in "A Blossom", "The Echoing Green", "The Chimney Sweeper"); Experience is the more melancholy because it remembers but no longer possesses innocence. Yet in the experience poems we sense occasionally positive powers at work in the gloom, as in "Holy Thursday" and "The Lily".

Blake was a mystic and a visionary, when apocalyptic effusions were inspired by the desire to restore the golden age. In his Poetical Sketches, Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience his love of the country, of simple life, of childhood and home, mark him out as a leader in that naturalistic kind of poetry - the poetry of ordinary things which Wordsworth was a little later to bring to perfection. S.T. Coleridge in his personal letter to H.F. Cary, dated February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1818 says:

"I have this morning been reading a strange publication - viz. Poems with very wild and interesting pictures, as the swathing, etched (I suppose) but it is said - printed by the author W. Blake. He is a man of Genius, certainly a mystic emphatically"<sup>4</sup>.

As a visionary Blake touched both Art and Letters; he is ever looking behind the visible frame of things. The visionary in him may and often will overpower the artist, and a wild confusion of imagery often blurs his work: but if at times it drowns his clarity and simplicity, it gives a phantom touch of extraordinary subtlety, and an exquisite beauty, that lifts his lyric faculty into an atmosphere like that of no other poet.

The liberty that Burns emphasized as an integral part of life, Blake cherished as the source of his spiritual intuition. He drew, as the peasant poet did, plenary inspiration from Nature. Burns lingered on the concrete show of life whereas Blake cares for the splendor of human love, or the rapture of the sun and sky. In fact, mysticism is usually blended with a wistful melancholy in his poetry. "The desire of the moth for the star; the night for the morrow" animates the poet's soul and in his hungering after eternity, he feels more and more dissatisfied with the show of life but Blake is an exception. He is a joyful mystic, for him the morning stars sing together, and the splendor of light outweighs its shadows. There are no mournful regrets in his verse, no sighing for a day that is dead. Evil rouses his anger, not his tears.

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He accepts sorrow cheerfully as a necessary twin to joy:

Joy and Woe are woven fine;  
A clothing for the soul divine;  
Under every grief and pine  
Runs a joy with silken twine.

Unlike some mystics he did not seek after the spirit world because he despised the world of sense, but because he loved it so well he felt there was more in it than man could fathom here. His mysticism was not an aspiration for the future: it was a realization of the present. "The kingdom of Heaven is within you": we have only to free ourselves from what is base and paltry, and we live in this realm of spiritual beauty. The only unreality for Blake was the external world; the great reality the world of his visions.

Blake loved the Elizabethans for their naturalness and rhythmic music, but save at the very outset, he never imitated them, for his own lyric faculty was peculiarly original; less intense than theirs, but no less ecstatic and lovely, in its more ethereal way.

It is like the singing of a happy child, expressed with the art of a man. He shook off the heavy preoccupations of a world in the first throes of the Industrial Revolution; he ignored the material cares that clog and chafe the spirit. He viewed a Paradise Regained in the simple joys and raptures of ordinary life. In the Songs of Innocence, he entered an Eden to which man had long been alien.

No poet, not even Wordsworth, drew from simpler sources than he; and none reveled with such gay and exquisite abandonment of spirit in their life. If he had the naturalness and spontaneity of a child, he had also his wild luxurious fancy; and a quaint, delicious fantasy binds the threads of shimmering gossamer all living things; uniting them in a spirit of joyous, abandon and under sympathy.

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,  
Where flocks have took delight,  
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves  
The feet of angels bright;  
Unseen, they pour blessings,  
And joy without ceasing.  
On each bud and blossom,  
And each sleeping bosom.

And the woods and streams add their bension also:  
The green wood's laugh with the voice of joy,  
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;  
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,  
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

While he loves his Eden, he is not deaf to the ugly glamour of the world outside. If he wrote the Songs of Innocence to celebrate the ecstasy of life, he wrote also the Songs of Experience to express his agony.

The singer that gave us  
'I have no name  
I am but two days old  
What shall I call thee?  
'I happy am  
Joy is my name!  
Sweet joy befall thee!  
Gave us also:

My mother groaned, my father wept  
Into the dangerous world I leapt; Helpless, naked, piping loud,  
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Both the naturalism and mysticism of the Romantic revival found expression in Blake; and on this point he differs from pioneers like Burns, who is simply naturalistic, or Cowper who is only slightly touched by mysticism. On the naturalistic side he deals with the simplest phases of life; with the instinctive life of the child, with the love of flowers, hills and streams, the blue sky, the brooding clouds and yet the mystical vision of the poet is always transforming these familiar things into celestial beauty touching obscure aspects, and spiritualizing the varies commonplace into something strange and wonderful.

To Blake every spot is holy ground; angels shelter the birds from harm, the good shepherd looks after his sheep, the divine spark burns even in the breasts of savage animals. Cruelty to animals incensed Blake, he would give them the same freedom he wishes for humankind:

A Robin Redbreast in a Cage  
Puts all heaven in a Rage!  
A Dog starved at his Master's Gate  
Predicts the ruins of the State  
The Horse misused upon the Road  
Calls to Heaven for Human Blood.

His views of love resembles Shelley's. We do what is right not from some categorical imperative, But because love bids us act so. Blake thought that love was so often confused with self-love. Another bond of union with Shelley is his passion for liberty. He thunders at kings and priests and oppressive rules in their prophetic writings, nor will he spare his own country when he thinks she has been false to freedom. From the opposite extremes of Christianity and Materialism, they both seem, at length, to have converged towards Pantheism, or natural spiritualism; and it is probable, that a somewhat similar self-intelligence, or Ego theism, possessed them both. They agreed in mistaking the forms of Truth, for the Truth itself; and consequently, drew the materials of their works from ages of type and shadow which preceded the Christian Revelation.

The beauty, chasteness, and clear polish of Shelley's mind, as well as his metaphysical irreligion, took him to the Philosophy and Theology of the Greeks; where he could at once enjoy the loose dogma of an Impersonal Creator, and have liberty to distribute Personality at will to the "Prometheus Unbound" his consummating work, in proof of this assertion.

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The visionary tendencies, as they did, under the shelter of a religious parentage and education, carried him, on the contrary, to the mythic fountains of an elder time, and his genius which was too expensive to dwell in classic formalisms, entered into, and inhabited the Egyptian and Asiatic perversions of an ancient and true Religion. In consequence of these allied deformities, the works of both are sadly deficient in vital heat, and in substantial or practical Truth, and fail to satisfy the common wants, or to appeal to the universal instincts, of Humanity. Self-will in each, was the center of the Individual, and self-intelligence, the "Anima Mundi" of the Philosopher, and they both imagined, that they could chop and change the universe, even to the confounding of Life with Death, to suit their own creative fancies.

Blake's literary sources and inspirations range from the Bible and the Bible-derived epic structures of Dante and Milton to the moralizing children's poetry of Isaac Watts, the hymns of Charles Wesley.

Blake's work is in many ways both eclectic and syncretic. It is pervaded with the symbolism, imagery, and prophetic utterance of Bible, as the poem "Milton" (1804) suggests. Blake also identifies himself both with the author of "Paradise Lost" and with the angels, both fallen and unfallen, who figure in Milton's narrative. It is Blake who declares in "The Marriage Heaven and Hell" (1790-3) that Milton was "a true poet and of the devil's party without knowing it".

Blake approached more closely to the obscure mysticism of the 17th Century German theosophist Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) who had argued that God, the father, was the indefinable matter of the universe, neither good or evil, but containing the germs of both. This Godhead, according to Boehme, had two wills: one good, one evil; one loving, one wrathful. Though evil, as integral to the nature of God, was necessary, humankind could conquer on Earth, and ultimately assume the empty place of the fallen angels in Heaven, by faith in Christ. In his own prophetic books, Blake sees Heaven as forming part of a framework which must merge with the creative energy of Hell rather than stand in opposition to it. The doors of perception are cleansed by an apocalyptic transformation of categories so that contraries meet in newly energetic formations. Thus the tigers and horses, the lions and lambs, the children and adults, the innocent and the experienced of Blake's symbolism ought to be perceived as integral elements in the dynamic of synthesis which he saw as implicit in creation.

The songs of both the books, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794), are integrated, not simply as reflecting oppositions, but as a series of shifting perceptions. The "two contrary states of the human soul" of the work's subtitle form a kind of dialectic which suggests not only a falling away from Endemic innocence to experience, but also the possibility to progress towards a Christ inspired "higher" innocence and a future regain of paradise. Despite their hymn-like simplicity and their nursery-rhyme rhythms, the poems in both books assume ramifications from their context and their interrelationships - the interest of this study.

The *Songs of Innocence* frequently suggest challenges to and corruptions of the innocent state; children are afraid of the dark, brute beasts threaten lambs, slavery imprisons the Negro and a vile trade the little chimneysweeps.

In "Holy Thursday" a multitude of charity-children march in under "the high dome of Paul's" in order to sing praises of God, but what on one level is a poem rejoicing in infant joy is, on another, a condemnation of regimentation, exploitation, and the smugness of "the aged men, wise guardians, and the poor". The "wisdom" of the old is generally equated with oppression in the Songs of Experience, poem with a far greater satirical, even sarcastic edge. Parents, nurses, priests, and the calculating force of human reason serve to limit and confine what once was innocent. In "London" the very shape of the city, with its "chartered" streets and river, marks its inhabitants with signs of weakness and woe and the "mindforg'd manacles" tyrannize and terrorize its poor.

Mental, spiritual and intellectual distortion is suggested by the moral pillaging of the "invisible worm" which destroys the sensual beauty of the rose in "The Sick Rose" and by the destructive force of repression in "The Poison Tree". At the end of the Songs of Experience, the piper who had introduced the first sequence is superseded by an "Ancient Bard" who sees the "Present, Past and Future" the Tiresias of T.S. Eliot and who seems to have moved beyond a past state of innocence into a present awareness of the fall. But this same bard, as a poet, has heard the word of God. In his response to this divine voice he is aware that the fallen\* condition of humankind, exemplified by doubt, reason, disputes, and folly, need not be permanent.

The daybreak with which the volume opens is darkened by the poems that follow, but in the final poem "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" another morning opens after a night of stumbling "over the bones of the dead". A new age of spiritual liberty and regeneration is perceived in verbal and visual terms, the kingdom of God received by those who have become again as little children. It was not only the poems in Poetical Sketches which Blake set to music, as J.T. Smith reported that Blake wrote many other songs, to which he also composed tunes and he could occasionally sing these songs to his friends, and though, according to his confession, he was entirely unacquainted with the science of music, his ear was so good, that his tunes were sometimes most singularly beautiful and were noted down by musical professors. Probably the first work he published in his new method of Illuminated Printing was his Songs of

Innocence (1789), which were later complemented by his Songs of Experience (1794). These were largely ignored and those of Blake's contemporaries who noticed them were often most struck by the designs rather than by the poetry. His vision was of wholeness of creation, something which appears vividly in Songs of Innocence and Experience; "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" as "the cistern contains the fountain overflow" recommends a fierce understanding.

"Everything possible to be believed in an image of truth" demonstrates the generous comprehensiveness of his approach, while he distrusts time serving, cautious prudence which is a mask of cowardice: "the eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of crow", "except poison from the standing water". The visual element in his song is inseparable from the verbal in his songs, "without contraries is no progression", and several of his lyrics explicitly answer or oppose each other; the "Chimney Sweeper" of innocence has a redeeming vision cleansed and saved by an angel. The poem in Experience of same title shows the black sweep crying, abandoned by his parents.

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Stressing Blake's affinities with the early romantic movement, Gilchrist associated Poetical Sketches and the Songs of Innocence with Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poesy"; he saw in them the "homely subjects" and "familiar manners" of Wordsworth's experiments in the "Lyrical Ballads" - the "virtues of simplicity and directness", the new poets began [to bring] once more into the foreground and that's why it is hard to believe that these poems were written in the author's teen, harder still to realize how some of them, in their unforced simplicity, their bold and careless freedom of sentiment and expression, came to be written at all in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

Shepherd accepted Blake as a Wordsworthian poet and in 1866 introduced the Songs of Innocence and Experience, remarking the "resemblance in tone and style, the similarities of subject and meter. [with] such pieces as the Idiot boy, Goody Blake and Harry Gill, Poor Susan, The Two Thieves, and all that class".

Gilchrist's criteria of "simplicity and directness" inclined him toward Blake's early poems. The amount and type of attention given in Songs of innocence (considered as 'early') and the youthful Poetical Sketches points to their preeminence in the care for Blake as a poet. Still, Gilchrist repeatedly patronizes "technical blemishes" in Poetical Sketches, contrasting "poetic power" and "imperfect form" - "occasional hackneyed rhyme, awkward construction, and verbal repetition".

The powers of both mind and body having been freely exercised, the result is a genius, who stands forth as a representative of his race; and this way Blake in his single person united all the grand combination of art and mind, poetry, music, and painting; so Blake poured forth his effusions in his own grand style, copying no one but breathing spirit and life into his works; and though shaping forms from the world of his creative and sportive imagination, yet he still remembered he was a moral as well as intellectual citizen of England, bound both to love and instruct her. And there was a Promethean fire which glowed in his productions, purifying the soul from the gross imperfections of the natural mind. This grand combination of art succeeded in every particular, painting being the flesh, poetry the bones, and music the nerves of Blake's work. Hence Robinson says:

"Of all the conditions which arouse the interest of  
The psychologist, none assuredly is more attractive  
Than the union of genius and madness in  
Single remarkable minds, which, while on the one hand  
They compel our admiration by their great mental  
Powers, yet on the other move our pity by their  
Claims to supernatural gifts. Of such is the whole  
Race of ecstatic's, mystics, seers of visions and  
Dreams of dreams, and to their list we have now  
To add another name, that of William Blake"<sup>5</sup>.

The figures surrounding and enclosing the poems, produce fresh delight. They are equally tinged by a poetical idea, and though sometimes it is difficult to understand his wandering flights, yet the extraordinary power developed in the handling of both arts astonish (es) as well as delight(s).



Here and there figures are introduced which, like the spirits of Macbeth, pass quickly from the sight; yet they have been well digested in the brain of a genius; and we should endeavor rather to unlock the prison-door in which we are placed, and gain an insight into his powerful mind than rail and scoff at him as a dream and madman.

### **1.3 References:**

1. Shivshankar Mishra, *Rise of William Blake*, (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1990) p. 9.
2. *Ibid.* p. 11.
3. C.M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination*, p. 50.
4. E.L. Criggs (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. N. 1815-1819, pp. 833-34.
5. Mona Wilson, *op. cit.* pp. 286-87 (Translations by Mrs. K.N.
6. Esdaile, in *The Library*, Vol. V, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1914, pp. 229-56).

## Chapter 2

### Comparison of Songs Based on Discourse

Blake's lyrics that appear in almost every anthology are marked by simple and artless diction but are not without density of meaning and such literary oeuvre, regarded a common discourse, be subjected to the clarity and accuracy of empirical sciences. Obviously in discursive prose only two entities have a meaning: the written word and the reader; in creative writing there are three-the writer, the text and the reader. At one level words are important for they have a plurality of meaning, at another the creative process, for it tells how they are being used.

The words are most likely to be related to certain mental processes. At yet another level, the coming alive of the meaning is important for this relates to the reader. So a literary text like Blake's is like a frog prince waiting to be kissed by the princess in order to come alive. But first the frog has to be the prince who had been transformed. The maiden then has to be pretty, further she has to feel charitable enough to kiss the prince and also to be there in order to do so.

A study of the manner in which Blake uses language in a particular poem is important to the understanding of a poetic text; it implies an evaluative process on part of such writer as Blake himself, it relates to a world outside literature as discourse. The moment we use the word discourse for Blake's poetic text, expression ceases to be a matter of words. It implies a subject matter, a thought form, and a relationship. Literature works in polarities and Blake's poetry is an attempt to fix the meaning of something which is worth recording through a medium which in itself is dynamic. Paul Ricour, in his essay "Human Sciences and Hermeneutical Method: Meaningful Action considered as Text" aptly defines discourse in the following terms:

'Discourse is the counterpart of what linguists call Language system or linguistic codes. Discourse is Language event or linguistic usage. This pair of Correlative terms-system/event, code/message- has Played a basic role in linguists since it was Introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis-Hjetmslev. The first spoke of language-speech (Langue-parole), the second of schema-usage. We can also add competence-performance in Chomsky's language'.<sup>1</sup>

His poetry is not a simple reflections on the events, hopes, tension and fears it generates but we see the poet taking hold of the visionary experiences, exploring and negotiating with it, using the full resources of language to make something new out of it, constituting the materials that the poet brings to each of his poem. So making of his poetry takes two major forms-lyric and narrative-but it is lyric form that dominates in the songs.

The critical idea of how a text should be arrived at constitute the most important subject to be considered in the case of Blake's texts and their instability and unique experience offered by each hand-colored and hand-assembled copy of his poems have greatly complicated the reading of his oeuvre. It is now generally realized that it should be experienced differently in complete imagery with designs and verbal analysis with some stylistic techniques for the study of word-imagery remains to be done, investigations of sources and influences, and most of others readings of these determined by innocent of radical ideological and study of mythical words and structure would make Blake's amazing cohort of major poems an interesting study and fill the whole void.

The ultimate aim of this study is to investigate the strictly literary effects of language and to examine the expressive and suggestive devices that have been invented to enhance the impact of Blake's poetic speech. There will be an attempt to reach writer's personality through his language or the aesthetic evaluation of his poetic texts and obsessive images rooted in some personal experience-images as symptoms of poet's likes and dislikes, aspirations, fixations and obsessions.

A poet like Blake has his favorite words that frequently recur in his style and inadvertently betray some secret wish. To discover the mind of a poet, or the orientation of his poetic inspiration, or at least his main preoccupation, one can find out in his works which words or images occur frequently. Such words will express his habitual bent of mind, the resonance and therefore a positively creative power for stronger than ordinary usage. Such evaluations can certainly play a significant part in the study.

The discovery of key words and other deviations from the norms will be a delicate linguistic operation. For example, the high frequency of terms like "love", "heart", "soul" or "God" denote a person, a feeling, an idea which are alive so far as society recognizes them its ideals. These small number of key words epitomize his ideals and aspirations.

The range and nature of a poet's imagery will be conditioned by various personal factors: his experience, his reading, his environment, his circle of friends and acquaintance. Blake's encyclopedic culture and aesthetic sensibility could never have thought of the famous analogies from painting, sculptures and poetry. Blake's aim was to reassert the character of painting and sculpture as a source of aesthetic delight free from the restrictions of narrative. If one seeks to explore the ground for analogy in Blake's works between the arts has been a common drive towards the reproduction of observed reality; the creation of presence the other has been the stimulus of aesthetic emotion by such means as form or pattern.

The romantic use of the sublime to produce awe can be seen as a wave in the direction of the second. But in Blake it can be clearly seen in his preoccupation with the creative process itself. Further the scope of literature and Bible, the study will include the referential strength of the underlying biblical myth and its sense of polysemous meaning as creative as ever. Blake understands the Bible in his own characteristic way, and so he has in his literary output reflected that understanding according to his particular needs and problems in the perennial quest to discover the world. Anyone studying Blake will soon discover that words and figures which occur in his work usually belong to marriage of hell or heaven or marriage. His way of grouping that is unfamiliar needs some key.

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He believes any restraints on energy originating from outside a man are bad. So Blake's villains are associated with law and repression. They include Jehovahs, Moses, Newton, Locke, Priest, law-givers and notably fathers. For him some of these villains guard the prison house of empirical reason. They lock man in the dungeon of five senses. The others that serve commandments keep men perpetually childish and unfulfilled.

One of the interesting aspect of the discourse study is to reveal Blake's best known pictures or visuals depicting these villains like Newton as mance with a pair of compass drawing a small circle in which men will be perpetually confined. Priests creating restrictive rules are given strong pejorative word images who restrain the body from its proper delight intellectual systems of dogma enslave the mind. "Chapel on the Green" serves the best example of a powerful discourse against priest craft.

In contrast Blake's heroes are associated with the forces as Israel, Ezekiel, Christ or even Satan whose virtue is energy. Poetic genius, for example, is represented through Isaiah and Ezekiel who dive with Blake. Some of these positive images of his poetic discourse reach a faculty beyond five senses that directly perceive divinity and super sensuous truth.

The fascinating aspect of his poetic vision is how he attempts to bridge the gulf between body and soul and establishes man's integrity of being in his proposed Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The giants of energy must be released from the fetters of law. Thus it needs psycho-linguistic study. Psycho analytic criticism has its origin in Sigmund Freud's psychology. Freud's significant contribution to literature and literary criticism is his concept of the 'unconsciousness.

He explained that man's psycho has two parts the conscious and the unconscious, the unconscious for ego and super ego. Libido is the primary source of energy and is sexual; id is the unconscious and ego is the conscious personality that mediated between the unconscious and the Super ego, conscience, which is the total sum of the social norms. Any libidinous behaviour or desire that goes against the standard social norms arouses a sense of guilt in the doer and she/he becomes neurotic. It is also that the tabooed desire is censored and repressed by the super ego. This repressed desire or the sense of guilt produced by the tabooed act finds place in the id or the unconscious. The unconscious is active when ego and super ego are asleep. Dreams and reveries are the manifestations of the activities of the unconscious or id; they are the "displacement" of reality and a kind of wish- fulfilment.

The romantic poet, Blake, is susceptible to love and death, in "Sick Rose", to Freudian Psychology or specifically psycho-linguistics as a man to unconscious impulses opposed to classicism with its emphasis on restrain and order. It is oriented towards the conscious, to the ego and super ego. A discovery of the key images, the recurring words will give us a clue to the appreciation of the poem. From psycho-linguistic perspective the sensual implications of Blake's imagery are readily discernible. Rose (The topic of the poem) is a classical symbol of feminine mystique but this mystique is being despoiled by some agents of masculine sensuality and specially Eros. So worm becomes the symbol of decay, death. It is also the symbol of Phallus (worm = serpent = sensual instinct).

The image of night, darkness and howling sounds suggest the attributes of id.

The second stanza sets forth, in explicit images, the idea of sensual destruction. In short Blake's poem, a vaguely disturbing parable of death instinct which psycho-analysis affirms, is closely conjoined with this carnal passion. This sharp juxtaposition of crimson joy and destroying coupled with bed and his dark secret love suggests the consuming power of Eros unmitigated by higher spiritual level. It becomes the agent of evil and mortality.

Yet another linguistic mode through the medium of which Blake's poems should be appreciated is structuralism. Structuralism has its origin in Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* published posthumously in 1915. De Saussure made distinction between *langue* and *parole* and defined language as a structured system. He pointed out that the relationship between sound pattern (signifier) and conception (signified) is arbitrary and therefore, the linguistic sign, combination of signifier and signified is arbitrary. It is this arbitrariness of the linguistic signs that necessitates a scientific study of language.

Blake's "Ah! Sunflower" is characterized by delicate and lingering rhythm specially the use of iambic and secondary accent along with anapaest. For example in first, second and seventh line, he substitutes the secondary accent or the first syllable of the anapaest.

Seeking |after that swéet |golden clime

The first and third feet are obviously different in fact from the second foot which is a normal anapaest. So "sweet", "golden" are important terms and sunflower gives a glimpse of natural beauty that sends the poet into an ecstatic mood.

In another poem "Echoing Green" he presents a bright spring morning as the setting for the sports of the young on the echoing green. The second stanza presents the healthy and contended old benevolently watching the young girls and boys recalling their childhood when they played on the same spot. In the third stanza evening comes. It is time for the sports to end, the children are sleepy and gather round their mothers.

'Like birds in their nests'.

The unpretending is aptly couched in nature and time of life and a self-fulfilling natural process with a sense of community and warmth in it. The title of the poem, refrain first two stanzas echoing repeated in the last line. The nature poet has an urge for such sports where children enjoy the ecstatic moment. Similarly his *Lamb* too describes the mind of the child and it is important to study this poem because it is comparable to a poem in the second section entitled "The Tyger". In the present poem, the child speaks to lamb as if it is another human perhaps especially younger brother or sister. This device supports the presentation of meaning as the most significant thing is not the relation of the lamb and the child to God "as incarnation of Christ, the second person of the Trinity". In fact, lamb stands for an attitude. So this poem is concerned with creation and lamb and tiger symbolize opposite poles in creation. Thus these two poems symbolize contrast and illuminate each other.

The principle behind these two poems appears to be an artistic creation as well as to God's creation of the world. The most notable features of this poem are the use of abrupt phrase and unfinished sentences especially in stanzas third, fourth and fifth.

This relative deviance or disorder can reflect the speaker's agitation. Blake often celebrates certain qualities that his imagination conjures up as a vital part of human self. An instance of the socio-linguistics is the poem from Blake's *Songs of Experience* called "The chimney Sweeper". It is a poem that ends powerfully as the child will describe his parents that are gone to praise God and his priest and the king- who make up a heaven of our misery.

Their lives are powerfully subversive as they suggest the combined authority of the deity, priesthood and monarchy used to sanction the exploitation of children. Blake's use of the key phrases and words brings this remarkable semantic overruling in the closing stanza. The poem is characteristic of the alliterative emphasis of *Gone/God*, *praise/priest*, and *make up/misery* also because of the brutal paradox of often praised to the originator of misery. Surprisingly the ironical undertone is strangely felt in these closing lines as the parents have smugly departed to their praising and left the child to his own unhappy devices.

One can easily discover the ironic play on the words *make-up* that mean both-construct and tell lies about. *Chimney sweeper* is thus an example of Blake's manipulation of the lexical features, structural combination, alliteration, assonance and other such poetic devices.

A wonderful use of Blake's lexical and syntactic compactness and economy can be seen in the most striking of Blake's poem "The Clod and The Pebble" describing the feminist linguists. The striking features of the word used and their symmetrical pattern in the first stanza is the point of analysis here. Line 12 and 04 are identical apart from the reversal of "heaven and hell" and shifts from "despair for despise" as if Blake was determined to weight the scales equally, allowing exactly the same number of words, some twenty-five words and more or less the same term to both "clod and pebble" so that the balance is poised.

The sense of opposite extremes tense against each other by way of heaping up of flatly contradictory term is discernible in the pattern of his verse and the lexical choice represent a series of pleasant variation: love, leisure, care, ease, heaven and joys and there are lexical items with negative associations such as despair, clod, trodden, blind, loss, hell and other illustrative items representing idyllically and pervasively unaware of the argument. It's a poem shaped into perfect harmony but the terms such as sheep and battle bending down to drink at the brook and other such trivial details will not directly contribute to the meaning of the poem.

There is an increasingly focused perception on the key terms "clod and pebble" while the pebble's domineering motive of love based on bending another to his wishes is a common feature of brute masculinity. Clod represents the easy and sweet nature of the feminine itself-trampled on and inverted. Thus this poem typifies the gender relation in the contrasting opposite series of lexical items and Blake has very carefully reconciled the opposites in the form of this poem. Blake's "Nurses Song" an illustration of socio-linguistic study that tries especially to come with the modern world and its meili as it merges through series of his songs sometimes dreamy, sometimes remained familiar-dispassionately idealized, wistful, mean dry. The collection where most reader will inevitably begin the reading of his poetry *Songs of Experience* and *Songs of Innocence*,

The Nurse's Song is selected for the modal stylistic analysis.

Lyric poetry, which in modern times is associated with pop's culture, is Blake's favorite. Lyric as a form is designed to reach the impact of moment that has inspired the poet to conceive it. It's the moment of poetic intensity, selection of thought and feeling. It describes in the guise of the slight incidence, a profound visionary experience, an attempt to capture the mood and the insight in it. It is an effort to reach the profundity that stimulated the poet. There is no unfolding of the complex plot because the focus is on the private mood and that's why Blake preferred the lyric form, an easy way to explore the emotion and ideas that some incident might have provoked. In its structure it is a song form to be recited. So the poet enjoys the freedom to deal with his/her feelings about it. In fact, Blake alludes the original meaning of the lyric. He shifts to lyric to register a directional change in the culture and the poem he deals with the working of the inner self with all the quirky, startling, disturbing, inter flicker that blinks for a moment inside the mind and heart of the poet.

So a method of study of Blake's song must include some instances of lexical recurrence i.e. recognition of some recurring words, e.g. joy, weep in the present poem. It is more than accidental that he was using such key words in his best known lyrics. This implies that Blake is purposely using certain repeated themes associated with these words. So the key words and their recognition can give Blake's reader a vital clue to the understanding of the poem. For e.g. the present case, if one tries to isolate hope, fear-the hope it expresses or the fear it gives vent to or the tension between "hope and fear", "joy and sorrow", "pain and pleasure", "ideal and reality", that we might find in it.

When one has identified the key words and the hindered emotion, one can turn to the choice and combination of these words at the syntactical level. It means all the resources of language have been used with optimal freedom in Blake's poetry. He exploits pun, symbol, imagery and innovative linguistic devices for the purpose of a perfect linguistic construct. Each word used is like a precious stone chiseled till it is rounded out and prominent in the context. Thus D.H. Harding remarks:

"Commentators on Blake, whether willingly or not,  
Have adopted very much the psycho-analytic  
Method in interpreting further the possible  
Implications of phrases, associations, and symbols.  
They may use the traditional symbolic meaning  
Attached to an idea or they may concentrate on  
Blake's private symbolism, and they illuminate  
One passage by reference to similar words or  
Images in another part of his work. In the attempt  
To understand the long symbolic writings this  
Recondite interpretative analysis is carried to extreme lengths".

Blake has carefully used his words for their lyric effect in every feature of it, in manner and sentiment which is traceable to the romantic attitude. The state of spiritual ecstasy is revealed in the romantic vein in order to get hold of the method. It would obviously be helpful to see how Blake creates the Nurses Song. It is about the young conveyed through the laughter and delight of the children. The whole series of simple, colloquial words with their pleasant associations create an atmosphere of celebration, a group of youngster dancing, playing and it conveys the notion of innocence.

In the key words the poet celebrates the rights of children to enjoy the childhood fancies. Out of the selection, the word that strikes the key note, the play, as it is repeated a number of times. The topic highlights the issue and the edifice of the poem is built around it. After introducing the children playing on green turf they are told to leave off play but the second stanza contradicts this in

‘No, no, let us play, for it is yet day’,  
At the start of the third given prominence  
‘Well, well, go and play till the light-fades away’

In fact the group of children have joined their hands with the nurses sitting in the middle. The poem is a unique romantic outcry. It also shows the victory clarity or obscurity and mystification of verbal restraint. The poem builds up indirectly the atmosphere where the children were being headed to textile mills at a tender age and they have no time to play. So their cry is set again. The harsh sounds of discipline and repression issued from those who were interested in making profit at any cost. So the poem stresses through its key words the basic idea and the main idea is understood by rhyming and word play, for e.g. in the lines-

Play and day (line 9) Play and away (line 7)

The impact of this device can be seen in the form of rhyme that gives each line a punch.

The simple monosyllabic lines and clear syntax creates the world of children, their shared pleasure of the movement which is threatened by adult prohibition. So the muse catches the political overtones and implication of exploitation that here the idyllic simplicity conveys. Blake’s sense of pleasure in a sense shadowed by the way children should be singing. The whole structure of the poem reverberates with the joys of the song. The children are not silenced by the jealous insistence, it is the time for play with the nurse conceits “Well”. The action endorsed by the adult implies triumph of children, the winning of their rights. The poet has built up a childlike diction with the help of few polysyllabic items. Merely half of the lines, seven out of sixteen begin with simple monosyllabic items and links it to the children’s chatter. Youngster to whom Blake addressed this poem would find it easy to follow and the slightly fanciful tongue of the children in the middle of the line becomes more explicit when the poet replaces polysyllabic “meadow” for a monosyllabic “hill” that resounded the glea of the children. And thus, C.M. Bowra significantly points out that:

“The Songs deserve special attention because they constitute one of the most remarkable collections of lyrical poems written in English”.

## **2.1 References:**

1. R.S. Singh (ed.), *Stylistic Approaches to Literature* (New Delhi: Arnold Publishers (India) Ltd., 1993) p. 105.
2. D.H. Harding, *Experience into Works*, pp. 35-36.
3. C.M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination*, p. 25.



## Chapter 3

### Detailed study of Songs of Innocence

Blake's lyrics are the chiseled expression of humanity's wobbling steps to democracy. They echo the time in ancient Green that remained sharply in the age when the poet protested: man is born free but chained everywhere and the individual stood up against priest and king. These poems go together as a group.

A close scrutiny of the choices and combination of words and theme shows an extraordinary labour of simplification; it would be difficult to find another phrase which would summarize Blake's work with such insight. And one can simply quote Dr. Malkin who says that Blake,

“Has made several irregular and unfinished attempts at poetry. He has dared to venture on the ancient simplicity and feeling it in his own character and manner, has succeeded better than those, who have only seen it through a glass. His genius in this line assimilates more with the bold and careless freedom, peculiar to our writers at the latter end of the sixteenth and former part of the seventeenth century, than with the polished phraseology, and just but the subdued thought of the eighteenth...”<sup>1</sup>.

The quality of Innocence becomes apparent in “The Echoing Green” which is concerned with relationships. In this poem a day's cycle moves from spontaneous sounds of happiness in the first stanza to the nostalgic laughter of the old folk in the second, to the total absence of any sound in the conclusion:

Till the little ones, weary, No more can be merry;  
The sun does descent,  
And our sports have an end Round the...  
And sport no more seen  
On the darkening Green.

The refrains of the first two stanza were of sport seen, in present and then in past time, on an echoing green. Now, with no sport to be seen upon it, the Green has lost its echoes also, Innocence as a state. In The Songs of Innocence, when the word ‘I’ appears, it rarely means Blake; and when it does mean the writer it is not over-weaning, but only a point in a range of vision. In “The Echoing Green”-though this it leads the poem no special virtue-the word ‘I’ does not appear. What is potent in the poem is the dramatic unity. The poem begins:

The Sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies.

It is not a question of seeming or of simile; it is inadequate to attempt a paraphrase, beginning “The sun comes up in the morning, and seems to make the sky happy just as ...” The word “seeming” destroys what the poem IS-an identity. The identity of human joy with the sun and the skies is dissipated.

Once we attempt to fetch a comparison, because a comparison does not exist; the Innocence of the poem is universal. Likewise, when the bells ring their welcome the birds sing louder; WHY is irrelevant. That is the question Experience will ask. And, as the birds sing, the pre-suggestion of the second line of the poem is confirmed, and then the bells, in the epithet “cheerful”, are related to skies and sun and the epithet “happy”.

The introduction of “Old John, with white hair” does not lead to anything extraneous to the poetic meaning. The aged are directly related to the joy which is the unity of the poem, and they recollect their own childhood with complete unregretted, laughing with the children,

Till the little ones, weary, No more can be merry;  
The sun does descend,  
And our sports have an end.

The joy and sun are inseparable; the children grow weary and the sun goes down. There is no question of ‘when’, or ‘if’, or ‘because’. The synthesis between the children, and nature, and the eternal sun is complex and simply stated.

The unity of the joy of child and nature dissolves in sleep as the night comes; the separation implicit in a simile marks the end of unity as the birds and children go their different ways, and at last a comparison is possible and apposite. And the dramatic unity of the poem is complete; we have moved from sunrise to sunset through a circle of significant action, in no way scenic.

The same simultaneity of joy and delight is made explicit in the answer of the children to their guardian in “Nurse’s Song”. The nurse states that peace is supreme when the air from green to hill is full of the sound of children at play; all else is silence, around the heart at rest. We have the familiar Black an orange, from the green, away to the hill, and back to the heart in the human breast. Out of this peace the nurse speaks with the conscience of responsibility:

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down  
And the dews of night arise;  
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away  
Till the morning appears in the skies.

The children’s reaction to this argument is not only recognizably natural, but is also directly based on Blake’s imagistic philosophy; they cannot (not will not, but cannot) go to sleep, because it is still day, because the birds still fly, and the sheep are still on the hills. Their joy belongs to daylight, their sleep tonight.

This is a measure of their Innocence, that their joy is simultaneous with the joy of all nature. And, it is significant, the symbol of the birds used as expressive of the complete joy in the union of two lovers. The nurse inevitably yields; and

The little ones leaped & shouted & laughed  
And all the hill echoed.

The inviolability of Innocence lies in its universality, and in the complete identity of mankind and living nature —an identity implicit in “The Blossom”. The genuine ambiguities of Innocence began to reveal themselves in “The Blossom”:

Merry, Merry Sparrow! Under leaves so green  
A happy Blossom.

The repeated phrase “A happy Blossom” in the third line of each stanza is a clear mark of the inadvertence of the natural world to suffering even when the green ought to be its own. The Blossom is equally happy to grow on the same tree that cradles the sparrow’s merriness, or that merely shades the robin’s sobbing. It is enough that the joy or the sorrow takes place near its bosom. The birds, sparrow and robin, are identified with a child who seeks his parent. The parent himself (herself) is linked with the “leaves so green”; and the adjective “happy” makes the blossom part of the universal entity of life in Innocence.

The sparrow flies in merriment “swift as arrow”, with its own impulsive movement into the “cradle narrow” close the parent bosom; the flight of the bird takes it the infant cradle, and two apparently irreconcilable ideas are fused. Yet the bird is all the time “under leaves so green” and these leaves of spring time green envelope bird and bosom, cradle and blossom in a foliage of Innocence. While the sparrow seeks the cradle in delight, the robin comes to the breast “under leaves so green” for solace.

In joy and sorrow the unity of nature - mankind, leaves, blossom, child, and bird-is unbroken but experience will break it. With “The Blossom” we may contrast the comparative looseness of “Holy Thursday”, a poem which engages matter extraneous to Blake’s directly symbolic thinking, and ends in an admonition. On Ascension Day “the charity children are led into St. Paul’s to celebrate the charity of God”.

The voice of this song is not a child’s but rather of a self-deceived onlooker, impressed by a palpable vision of Innocence, moved by these flowers of London town. The flowing meter is gently idyllic; and the singer gives us two stanzas of Innocent sight, followed by the triumphant sound of Innocence raising its voice of Heaven.

The ambiguity of tone of Blake’s song is evident here. One can point to several disturbing details. The children’s face have been scrubbed clean, and are innocent, in a debased sense—because they ought to appear brutalized, which they are, and yet do not. The children are regimented: they walk two and two, and the beadles’ wands are both badges of office and undoubtedly instruments of discipline in a savage British scholastic tradition.

The children are dressed in the colors of life; the beadles are grey-headed and carry white as a death emblem. It is the fortieth day after Easter Sunday, forty days after Christ’s ascension into Heaven, yet the children, his lambs, still linger unwillingly in the wilderness of an exploiting society. Though they flow like Thames’ waters, this is not a mark of their freedom but of the binding of the Thames, which is already the “chartered” river of the poem “London”. The hum of multitudes is in St. Paul’s, but these are multitudes of lambs, and their radiance is “all their own”; it has nothing to do with the Church. Their voice rises like a wind of judgement, and thunders harmoniously among the seats of heaven.

Beneath the children, spiritually as well as actually, are the seats of Heaven upon which sit the beadles. If these guardians of the poor are wise, it is not with the wisdom of Innocence, and their wisdom is epitomized in the last line, at once of the bitterest in Blake by its context, and one of the most seemingly Innocent in its content. In this context, Gleckner points out:

“The general ironic tone of Blake’s account of charity children in Holy Thursday has been frequently noted. Blake’s irony, however, is even more profound and pervasive than has been noticed; it takes into account not only the schools themselves but the entire concept of professional charity symbolized in the poem by the beadles who rule over the procession, by the regimentation of the children and the colorful uniforms they wear, and by the ‘wise guardians of the poor’”<sup>2</sup>.

We notice that “Holy Thursday” is heavy with similes. Blake uses a simile for the children following the “grey headed beadles” into St. Paul’s:

Grey-headed beadles walked before,  
With wands as white as snow,  
Till into the high dome of Paul’s  
They like Thames waters flow.

This is essentially descriptive, and Blake’s symbolism breeds into a simile when his theme is dissociate from his poetic thought. Here, he is seeing the children in subjection to authority, a subjection from which they only escape temporarily in stanza two. In the second stanza the effect is quite different. Blake’s eye is then on the children alone, and they are not like flowers, or like lambs.

Now Blake’s mind is totally absorbed with the Innocence of the children, and he is concerned with implicit poetic relationships, rather than extraneous social relationships, a simile is no longer adequate. The identity of the children with “flowers of London town” leads to the symbol of the lamb. The beadles are forgotten, and the children “sit with radiance all their own”:

The hum of multitudes was there,  
But multitudes of Lambs,  
Thousands of little boys & girls  
Raising their innocent hands.

The poem began in its opening lines with the appearance of Innocence-“innocent faces clean”-supported by the colors of the children’s clothes-“red and blue and green”. But the symbol of the lamb directs the imagination to the action of Innocence, and to the limbs - “hands”.

In the third stanza Blake again becomes conscious of an ulterior purpose; his eye is no longer wholly on the children, and on Innocence, and moves from the specific act of worship to a formal accompaniment of worship. Back come to similes, we are aware of the syntax, and the technique shows through in the second line. The poet is engaged with the exigencies of form, rather than with meaning.

And even here, in the Songs of Innocence, when the children are seen in relation to formal worship, Blake uses the image of “thunder” for his simile - thunder which is later a constant symbol for repressive religion.

So the poetic tension in “Holy Thursday” heightens perceptibly when Blake’s eye is engaged solely with Innocence, and truth; and the tension slackens when Blake turns from what IS to what SEEMS.

The coincidence of complete poetic synthesis with his “philosophy” of Innocence, and of the break in this synthesis with his introduction of didactic matter, points to the poetic nature of the “philosophy”. Further suggestions in this direction arise from the poem “Night”. Here the stanzas are not interchangeable, and the whole poem has unity.

The more elaborate patterning of “Night” is a clearer testimony to the ambiguities of Innocence. The best definition of Innocence may be that it is that state of the human soul in which we ascertain truth as immediate knowledge, for the knower and the known share an unsought natural harmony. In “Night” that harmony is apprehended with a loving wonder, edged by the conscious of how precarious such harmony must be. The guardian angels of the childhood would may not avert all natural calamity, but what they cannot prevent, they translate into new worlds:

When wolves & tigers howl for prey,  
They pitying stand and weep;  
Seeking to drive their thirst away,  
And keep them from the sheep;  
But if they rust dreadful,  
To angels, most heedful,  
Receive each mild spirit,  
New worlds to inherit.

The confiding simplicity of tone reminds us of the paradox how the spiritual must be sundered from the natural, for the spiritual “new worlds” cannot exist unless the condition of nature surrenders itself, to be absorbed in the higher angelic condition. In “Night”, the stanzas are not interchangeable, and the whole poem has unity.

Here, as in “Holy Thursday”, religion is involved with Innocence; but, unlike in “Holy Thursday”, religion is not imposed upon Innocence from without, by authority, and the aged. The religion here is self-expression, and instead of appearance and comparison, we have, in the poem “Night”, reality and symbol. The “philosophy” is indivisible from the symbol, and the result is a synthesis which becomes closer as the poem develops. At the end we can sense Blake thinking in symbols. He starts with night, and a simile; after the going down of the sun,

The moon like a flower,  
In heaven’s high bower,  
With silent delight  
Sits and smiles on the night.

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The flower image is caught up in the next stanza in a familiar association; the angels walk where the lambs have been, and:

Pour blessing  
And joy without ceasing  
On each bud and blossom  
And each sleeping bosom.

“When wolves and tigers howl for prey”, the angels weep in pity-in pity not only for the children, but for the feral beasts as well; for they seek to turn the “wolves and tigers” away by removing their lust for the blood of Innocence. It is certain that the Angels do not answer aggression against them with aggression; Innocence has not the material frailty to resort to a material defence.

Yet the triumph of Angels and Innocence is complete, and involves the transformation of the beast of prey into a creature of Innocence-just as if, in fact, the Angels’ pity did extend that far. When the “wolves and tigers” attack,

The angels, most heedful  
Receive each mild spirit,  
New worlds to inherit.

But this after-life is no allegorical paradise. It is another life of Innocence that is developed from the Innocence that was destroyed by violence on earth; it is an extension of Innocence to include the beasts of prey, who will accept meekness in these new worlds, where

The lion’s ruddy eyes  
Shall flow with tears of gold.  
And the lion, even the Lion of pride, will keep guard over the fold,  
Saying ‘Wrath’, by his meekness  
And by his health, sickness  
Is driven away  
From our immortal day.

The poem, which began in night, ends in the immortal day of Innocence. There is no night of death. And as, in the final stanza, eternity and Innocence meet, and all creation is “washed in life’s river”, the lion and the lamb lie down together, and the symbolism heightens. The symbolism is related directly to the intellectual triumph of the angels of meekness, the messengers of the true God, whose humility annihilates wrath. And we may contrast “His health”, one of the weapons of the God of Innocence with the blight and disease, the false god of Experience always brings. Eternal life and the Innocence of life on earth come to a synthesis in this poem. And, finally, the triumph of Innocence is solely intellectual. As always, the vision expands towards an intellectual significance, from any given, initial poetic situation.

Likewise “The Divine Image” sets forth the virtues of the state of Innocence at its most confident:

For Mercy has a human heart,  
Pity a human face,  
And Love, the human form divine,  
And Peace, the human dress.

The human form divine is the God of innocence, but this God is not presented as a visual form or the image of the title, but rather as a monster of abstractions, formed out of the supposedly human element in each of Innocence's or four prime virtues.

What is the face of Mercy, as the heart of Pity, we are expected to wonder. In what dress does the human form of Love present itself, and what is the face of Peace? Until its matching contrary comes to it in Songs of Experience.

The same incompleteness, but expressed as an inability to make a necessary moral judgement, dominates in the poem, where for the first time in the poem, the inadequacy of the unsoldered state is stressed. The voice of the Piper is replaced by the voice of the Chimney Sweeper, a charity child sold into bondage by his father and the Church:

When my mother died I was very young  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry "Weep! Weep! Weep! Weep!"  
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

The coming together of "sweep" and "weep" here introduced the cry of Experience, which is "weep". Blake is returning to the rhetorical art of his "Mad Songs"; and we need to understand the limitations of the poet's dramatic speaker, and yet to feel also the poignancy attained by the intensity of the speaker's Innocence:

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head  
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I saw 'Hush, Tom!  
Never mind it, for when your head's bare  
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair'.

This is the Lamb, called by Christ's name, who became a little child, only to have his clothing to delight shorn by the exploiter of Experience. But more is in this stanza; the child's illogic mounts to a prophetic and menacing sublimity. The bare head remains adorned by an unspoiled white hair, comparable to the "naked and white" appearance of the children in their own liberating dream:

And so he was quiet, and that very night  
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!  
That thousands of sweepers,  
Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack,  
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black?  
And by came an Angel who had bright key,  
And he opened the coffins & set them all free.

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The black coffins are at once confining chimneys and the black ragged forms of the sweeps, in the death of the body which has become their life. Angel's promise is the loving fatherhood of God which, with the loving motherhood of Nature, is one of the prime postulates of Innocence. But the Angel's promise is also the direct projection, as dream-fulfillment, of the church's disciplinary promise to its exploited charges.

The final stanza, more powerful for its lack of consciously directed irony on the child's part, beats, with a new fierceness for Blake, against the confining and self-deceiving trust of Innocence.

And so Tom awoke & we rose in the dark  
And got with our bags & brushes to work  
Though' the morning was cold,  
Tom was happy & warm;  
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

But the poem "A Cradle Song" is not only a lullaby but also a conscious reaction by Blake to a poem, "Cradle Hymn" written by the poet Isaac Watts. In that poem, the child's mother points out to her child that he is materially better off than the infant Jesus. She tells her child that Jesus was born in a stable, whereas her child is surrounded by comfort. But Blake, whilst wishing the sleeping baby peace and joy, sees in the child a reminder, too, of the existence of the child Jesus who, even as a baby, began the work of Redemption. Even there in the manger that was his cradle Jesus wept for sorrow because of the sins of mankind.

This poem has a surface of even more exquisite sentimentality, as it identifies the lovely infant with the Christ Child for whom "all creation slept and smiled". The poem's enigmatic beauty hovers in the juxtaposition of its final stanzas with the silkiness that has gone before:

Sweet babe, in thy face  
Holy image I can trace.  
Sweet babe, once like thee,  
Thy maker lay and wept for me.

The tears of the Christ Child were not an image of infant helplessness, but a lament for all mortality, for the transience of Innocence.

Yet the mother singing a cradle song will not see this; but converts the infant god of Innocence very rapidly into a father god of the same state, with a supposedly inevitable movement from "wept for me, for thee, for all" to "Smiles on thee, on me, on all".

The tense shifts from past to present, for Christ's Incarnation, to the Mother of Innocence, is a past moment, and his heavenly smiles a perpetual present. In "The Chimney Sweeper" we notice a challenge to authority, and a zeal for social reform, that anticipates Shelley's *Christ the Lamb*. Charity children sold to commercial bondage and church portrays the pathetic condition of some five years old who slept on the bags of soot in cellars and as a consequence grew stunned and deformed.



This roused Blake's fury. The poet aptly exposes the psychic repression and exploitation:

Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smiled among the winter snow  
They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

Undoubtedly, "The Chimney Sweeper" is one of the better known poems because of its conjuring rhythmic jingle of "sweep, sweep", the usual cry of the sweepers. The boys are so small that in their lisping way of speech, they pronounced "sweep" as "weep" which ironically was not far from true. In *Songs of Innocence*, he makes an orphaned chimney sweep innocently relate how an angel in a dream told his companion to "be a good boy" and have god for his father but in this poem parents and church both join to bring this degradation:

They think they have done me no injury  
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King.  
Who make up a Heaven of our Mistry?

The closing lines powerfully depict his parents. The alliterative emphasis of gone/God, praise/Priest, make up/Misery and the brutal paradox of offering praise to the originator of misery. The parents have smugly departed to the praising and left their child to his own unhappy devices and the ironic play on words make up meaning both-construct and tell lies about.

Such is the appeal of his powerfully selected key words that they leave an electrifying impact and show the poet cared about words. The words he chooses and combines them can help us to understand the substance of the poetic text-a skillfully launched argument for a social cause.

The epitome of *Songs of Innocence*, and the best poem of the series, is "The Little Black Boy" one of the most deliberately misleading and ironic of all Blake's lyrics. A detailed reading of this poem will serve as a temporary farewell to Blake's vision of *Innocence*, until we can return to it by juxtaposition with *Songs of Experience*.

The Little Black Boy speaks of his own poem, and his voiced rises to an intensity of innocent love in the final stanza, where he seeks to apply his mother's teaching of the dilemma of his own condition.

His mother's wisdom fuses together the hopeful beliefs of *Innocence*: the loving fatherhood of God, the saving identity of maternal guidance and the natural world, and the brotherhood of all children born from Nature under God.

The child accepts all this as truth, and his clear and sweet urge to work out the consequences of such truth reveals the inadequacy of *Innocence* of the natural context, to sustain any idealizations whatsoever.

The first stanza presents a categorical dualism which is at once philosophical and social, and vicious, to Blake, in either sphere:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,  
And I am black, but O! My soul is white;  
White as an angel is the English child,  
But I am black as if bereaved of light.

The English child is white, angelic, and all soul. The Little Black Boy is a ghost in a machine, a white soul in a black body, as if bereaved of light. "Bereaved" here has the force of "dispossessed" or "divested"; the myth of the fall has entered the poem.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,

To be taught underneath a tree is to learn the lessons of life beneath the shrouding of Nature. The mother instructs her child before the heat of day, in the comfort of morning, not in the naturalistic joy of noonday. God gives both his light and his heat away, but the mother is not altogether of one mind about the heat of divine love:

And we are put on earth a little space,  
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;

Our time here on earth is not the immediate NOW of Eternity for the mother, but only a little space in which we learn to bear the force of God's love. The spatial concept is allied to the mother's obsession with the blackness of the body, the fallen form or debased extension of the soul. The black bodies and sunburnt face are somehow not to be desired, and yet the consequences of having borne the beams of love.

They are a cloud which will vanish, and yet are created by a cloudless sun, emblematic of God. Yet even the mother does not deceive her stronger instinct; the blackness has the providential aspect of a shady grave, and is therefore both trial and comfort. The God of Innocence, when his love has been fully endured, will call mother and child out of their bodies, out from the grave, and into the golden tent of his heaven. On the basis of this unintentionally equivocal teaching, the Little Black Boy makes explicit the full irony of his mother's confused vision:

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear  
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;  
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,  
And be like him and he will then love me.

Nothing in Blake that we have so far encountered has the rhetorical force of that tremendous line in which all the ambiguities of Innocence are implied: "When I from black and he from white cloud free". The Little Black Boy does not know all that he is saying, and it is too much of an irony. To be free of the body's separation from the soul will not liberate us, if the soul continuous to be separate from the body. The Little Black Boy knows what his mother evidently cannot know, that:

Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.

To have a white body is not to have borne enough love, and so in God's revelation the little English boy will need his black friend's body to shade him from the heat of that full noonday. By his own logic, he ought to say that the English boy will be like himself at the last, but instead he gives us the opposite notion, the pathos of unfulfillable wish:

And be like him and he will then love me.

His lively prose work, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is witty, paradoxical apophthegues ascribed to the Devil's party, one of Blake's most accessible, endearing and stimulating works. This furnishes a useful approach to his thoughts, having a suggestiveness deeper than the enjoyable surface, "If doors of perception were cleansed everything world appear to men as it is infinite".

His *Songs of Innocence and Experience* have appeared in every anthology and have simple and artless diction but one also discovers the density of method and imagery in "London", "The chartered streets and Thames" that indicate the mercantile versatility which has inflicted the marks of weakness and woe.

The innocence lyrics reflect a hard-won clarity of vision which is implemented by his insights of Experience. Blake's ideas are fluid developing ever the course of the poem, ringing prophetic voice, the sizzling beauty of lines. New elements begin to surface in lyrical style with Blake's contents in English poetry and it is primarily with Blake that romantic qualities come to light. An engraver by profession, and a painter by choice, Blake took to poetry as passion.

Blake's songs fascinate us after 200 years because it is poetry written by the bard reaching with delight and terror, fascination and anger, to the way the society we still inhibit being violently recreated by a series of war, political and social revolutions. His poetry is about how they coped with that, or sought to control it, and its excitement realigned their lives. In the light of it we see a poetic world distorted and remade into a perfect portrait that need be seen and felt.

### **3.1 References:**

1. Benjamin Heath Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs of His Child*, Reprinted in Arthur Symons, *William Blake*, p. 317.
2. Mark Robert, *Blake and the Damnation of Reason*, Ch. 3 in the *Tradition of Romantic Morality*, p. 83.

## Chapter 4

### Detailed Study of Songs of Experience

The poet here conveys with accuracy what he can master, his ideas and emotions in the choicest combination of words, phrases with a penetrating insight into life. Each one of his songs of experience exhibits the movements of a sculptor, chiseling a bit here, sandpapering a fraction there, knocking off a lamp here and rounding into a prominent theme to give the completed object a specific shape.

Clashing irreconcilable contraries were all around Blake in 1790's as hopes rose and were squashed.

Friends wrote intoxicating manifests and then vanished into exile, men and women fought for a better world but were checked. So his poems in this collection is a piece of raw material that has been worked on carefully to arrive at the particular dimensions and finish.

The selection of the words in the form of raw material and their combination help us to see a penetrating insight that might have gone into the making of a finished product- a powerful visual image.

If one can put the combined songs into an overall context in terms both of the history and experiences Blake was living through and the idea he has held than to act, he will realize the sharp change of tone from laughing lyrics of Innocence to the anger of Experience. Blake's attitude to experience is blazingly clear.

Hear the voice of the Bard!  
Who present, past, and future sees.

After drawing the reader's attention to an omniscient "Bard's" dramatic call pointing to the bad state of mankind and the potential power of the "Holy Word", the speaker directly appeals to "Earth" (mankind) to heed the "Bard's" warning and return from a fatal course to a new beginning, within the limited period of time granted, till the break of day.

Other than the "naive" shepherd-poet of the first Introduction to Songs of Innocence both the Bard and the speaker are "experienced" figures claiming great power of knowledge and judgment. Harold Bloom rightly says:

"The Bard of Experience is in mental darkness ...  
The Bard is one of the Redeemed, capable of  
Imaginative salvation, but before the poem ends  
He has worked his frenzy into the self-enclosure of the  
Elect Angels, prostrate before a mystery  
Entirely of his own creation"<sup>1</sup>.

Time after time we find Experience in these poems reaching back into the realms of meaning in Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love, the human heart, face, form divine and dress, no longer sway and adorn the actions of Innocence; instead:

Cruelty has a Human Heart,  
And Jealousy a Human Face;  
Terror the Human Form Divine,  
And Secrecy the Human Dress.

There is throughout the poetry of Experience an intense awareness of corporal reality, and this awareness separates Experience from Innocence. The children in Innocence acted simply, with complete joy in their actions.

Then all was harmony and union, now all is division, and separation. The senses are inhibited within a mortal frame, mankind within walls and beneath roofs.

As man is separate from man, so deed is separate from motive; no joy is spontaneous, and the poet turns inevitably from the contemplation of an action to an examination of the ulterior motives and purposes of action, purposes which deprive deeds of their pristine Innocence. When a child slept in Innocence,

All creation slept and smiled.  
And the smile of the infant was the smile of the true  
God, which Heaven & earth to peace beguiles.

The innocence of the child was the peace of the universe, and there was no separation, no division. In Experience there is no unity of child with universal, no glance of God in the infant's eyes. The very smile of a child breeds discord, and divides the eternal peace; the preposition changes:

Infant wiles & infant smiles  
Heaven & Earth of peace beguiles

Even the smiles "as of the morning" are not the daybreak smiles of Innocence. In the age of Innocence, the rising sun, with its bright beams was an image of uninhibited joy:

The sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies.

Now, however, Innocence is robbed in ceremony and sin, and joy is enveloped in the material strife of lust. And above the earth:

The sun arises in the East,  
Clothed in robes of blood & gold; Swords & spears & wrath increase  
All around his bosom rolled  
Crowned with warlike fires & raging desires.

The whole of creation is riddled with the plagues of repression, and sound of thunders and material strife reechoes through the poems. In the years of Innocence we noticed “Old John with white hair” laughing away his care in harmony with the young; or the nurse finally accepting and acquiescing in the children’s argument that they could not and their play while the birds were yet in the sky, and the lambs on the hills accepting the inevitability and universality of joy; and even the grey headed beadle who walked in front of the children into St. Paul’s were “wise guardians of the poor”. The old were then either involved in Innocence, or at worst observed it with a benignant eye. But in Experience the grey-headed and the priest are caught up in the conflict of the symbolism. The parental glance conspires with the glance of the priest; or at best the parent is flaccidly submissive to the dictates of the church, and will “admire the priestly care” with which the child is seized by the clergy, and will only watch weeping with the priests have:

Striped him to his little shirt  
And bound him in an iron chain.

In the poem “A Little Girl Lost”, the atmosphere of religious awe is set at the beginning. Even when the “Age of Gold” is mentioned, it is put in contrast with “winter’s cold”, and the naked joy of youth and maiden in the “rising day” is only an escape from winter into the “holy light”. There is already the simulacrum of Innocence, and, after a repetition of the phrase “holy light”, the symbolism soon extends in Experience. The children meet:

In garden bright  
Where the holy light  
Has just removed the curtains of night.

The state of the children in this poem comes near to Innocence, and yet is so sharply divided from it. The drama of the situation lies in the forlorn yearning towards joy, the impossible quest. In the Songs of Innocence the

poetry was in essence a synthesis of youthful joy and eternal creation; in Experience the guile of knowledge paradoxically governs the impulse of ‘Innocence’ and the child is conscious of his/her separate existence and the union of Innocence-

Love and harmony combine  
And around our souls in twine,  
While thy branches mix with mine

Is never achieved Instead the search for it ends in frustration, and the hatred of bandage:

Why should I be bound to thee?  
O, my lovely myrtle tree?

“The Little Girl Lost” and “The Little Girl Found” are the longest of Blake’s songs and among the most baffling. Their meaning has eluded even the most perceptive of Blake’s critics. Trying to discern the meaning of stanzas 9-11 of “The Little Girl Lost”, Kathleen Raina has suggested that Blake probably meant to recall Virgil’s descent into Hades.

It seems more likely that he was thinking instead of Canto I of Dante's "Inferno". The situations of both poems are identical. The little girl, like the poet, is lost in the dark wilderness; and, like the poet, she encounters three beasts of prey. Dante confronts a gambling Leopard; her, gambling Lion; him, a fierce. Lion and ravenous Wolf; she, playful Leopards and Tigers. In Dante, these images are associated with Lust, Pride, and Avarice, with the master-categories of sin which, unless repented, will land the soul in Hell. Radically altering the orthodox view of the fall, Blake, nevertheless, adopts these images, along with their emblematic significance, to symbolize the stage of experience which Lycia has now entered and the state of higher innocence which lies before her.

The epigraph, written in italics, seeks to make Blake's purpose clear, and thus might be seen as a contrast to some of the deliberate obscurity of some of the poems in this section of Songs of Experience. The first stanza proper introduces the notion of a Utopian environment which he identifies as "the Age of Gold".

The word to notice in the epigraph of the poem is "indignant", for it sums up the tone and attitude not only of this poem but also that of "A Little Boy Lost".

Blake has adopted a different stanza form of five lines for this poem and introduced too an unusual rhyme scheme. The two seem to add significance to the singular setting of the poem in the "Age of Gold".

The first four lines in each stanza are given a kind of staccato quality whereby Blake omits certain parts of his expression as if to add urgency to the incidents involved. Each stanza is marked off the rest by a long contrasting verse.

The sleep at the beginning of "The Little Girl Lost" is akin to that of the "slumberous mass" in "Hear the Voice of the Bard!" which stands as an introduction to the Songs of Experience. The poem "The Voice of the Bard", where the Bard bids the-

Youth of delight, come hither,  
And see the opening morn,  
Image of truth new born.

Is a loose variation of the same theme; and in this poem the Voice of the Bard seems to be the voice of Blake. But, as he has suggested, the promise is circumscribed, and stumbles into a lament at the end. The youth are simply called to view the morning, not to enjoy it. If the bard is Blake here, it is Blake with the chains of experience heavy upon him.

Likewise if, in "Hear the Voice of the Bard!" we identify the Bard with Blake, there is no reason for equating him with the Blake of Innocence. In this poem, too, the promise in the Bard's voice is incomplete and even cynical. It matters little whether we equate the Bard with Blake himself or with a mythological figure. He is a Bard Who Present, Past & Future, sees; and is therefore prophet as well.

The opening line of the Introduction to Songs of Experience strikes a totally different note from that of the corresponding Introduction to Songs of Innocence.

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The lilting lyric of “piping down the valleys wild” changes to the strict, ominous and commanding tones of “Hear the voice of the Bard!” The intrusion in the poem of euphemistic language is noticeable which we associate closely with that type of poetry in the eighteenth century that sought to impress by sound rather than meaning and Blake uses this technique in the last stanza.

What appears striking at once is the deviation from the typographical convention of the ballad stanza: instead of a third line consisting of three or four accented syllables, two shorter lines precede the concluding line. This eye catching phenomenon seems to slow down the reading tempo in correspondence with the imagery, and in order to give the reader or listener’s thoughts a chance to trace the complex images and become aware of their range and significance.

The capitalized words seems to sum up the main aspects: Bard (messenger), Present ... (omniscience, timelessness of message), Holy Word (message), Soul (fallen state), and Earth (addressee).

Exclamation marks make the appeals in stanza one and three more dramatic, and in stanza 2 emphasize the potential power of the Holy Word. In the last stanza, the absence of an exclamation mark gives the imperative phrase Turn Away No More the quality of a logical conclusion to be drawn from the presentation of arguments before and after it. Owing to the absence of a question mark, the subsequent phrase, which is introduced by a colon, is a rhetorical question in the very sense of the word.

Turn away no more;  
Why wilt thou turn away.  
The explicit commands in stanza one and three,  
Hear the Voice of the Bard! O Earth, O Earth, return!  
The calling in stanza two:  
Calling the lapsed soul

And the weaker imperative in stanza four sound especially impressive because they are short-cut. The last line of the poem has an “extra syllable” which reduces reading tempo and attributes more emphasis to this line as the conclusion of the poem.

Is given thee till the break of day.

Also the repetition which is most remarkable is Fallen in stanza two and four expressing “depth” or “downward movement” (state of the soul); O Earth O Earth giving emphasis to the call.

TIGER recalls the question put to the Lamb, “Little Lamb who made thee?” It is a theological question about who made the world. Looking at the tiger the poet asks, working up from Creature to Creator, who could make thee.

The poet has borrowed words from metal-working to shape his ideas into images: the hammer, the furnace, the anvil, the artificer God.



The Tiger extends into realm beyond realm of meaning. The implications in those six short verses are vaster than in anything else Blake wrote of comparable length, and the concentration of cosmic distance and depth, within a single fiery frame, is intense.

And having caught infinity within two burning eyes, and eternal action in a single deed, Blake, in the incredible afterthought that now stands as the fifth stanza, gathers yet another universe of meaning to the immensity. This poem as “one of the finest and most profound poems in the English language” is quite popular in U.K., especially the first line and first stanza tends to be well remembered.

It is an imaginative poem leaving a lot of space to the reader or listener’s own imagination. It is a “poem of open questions” par excellence: questions about a fierce creature, the Tiger, the most probably not just a “tiger”, the origin of the fire used in its creation, the process of its creation itself, its creator and, with a religious undertone, questions about the ethic value of this creation.

At the beginning “the glowing tiger” burns in the “forests of the night”. In the second stanza the fire of his eyes burns “in distant deeps or skies”. The word “burning”, being repeated in “Burnt”, concentrates the whole being of the tiger- in the fire of his eyes, a concentration reinforced in the question:

What immortal hand or eye?

The echo of “burning” in “Burnt” and the repetition of the fire symbol also carries the reader into an association of the “forest of the night” with “distant deeps or skies”. The body, with its five senses, forged round the infinite mind, separates that mind from its infinity; and once more we are led to an inevitable poetic sequence, for the introduction of this new intellectual relevance gives Blake the opportunity to return from the corporal deed to the spatial theme, and to ask of the tiger’s brain, as he did of “the fire”:

What dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

It is true that the poem would have had a more obvious unity had the stanza of the lamb been omitted. The mind has travelled from the black forest of the night into the glowing forge of the creation, making a compact poem, rounded off by a mechanical repetition of the first stanza to recall the initial synthesis. The poem would have been considerable. But the stanza of the Lamb makes yet a further synthesis with that which has gone before, and the poem as it stands has a unity that transcends the original.

The stars are a symbol of material power. In the throwing down of the spears the instruments of strike are cast aside, and pity assumed; and the Creator, the God of Innocence, smiles upon the triumph of the Lamb. In the symbol of the stars throwing down their spears, the symbolism of night implicit in THE TYGER is itself used to express the triumph of Innocence over Experience, and the vision moves from the spatial theme (the stars throwing down their spears) to the deed of creation, the handiwork-

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Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

The mystery of the contraries in creation appears in this poem in Blake's amazement that the God who created the aggressor, the tiger, could also create the prey, the Lamb. It is with this in mind that in the last stanza Blake introduces the word 'dare' in the final line-

What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

To replace "could" in the corresponding first stanza. In this respect, the poem may be viewed as an allegory reflecting the opposing power of God and Satan, of good and evil. God created Satan in the first place and now Satan challenges him for supremacy in the world. Satan's lures and temptations are always more attractive, or "shining bright" and many choose to follow his lead. This may well be the source of the image in the penultimate stanza where "the stars threw down their spears". There the "stars" are representative of the angels who, in an act of rebellion with Lucifer, who was to be known subsequently as Satan, refused to serve God.

The TYGER is characterized directly by the following words: in first stanza, Burning Bright; this attribute might, in a hyperbolic way, describe the black- orange flame-like color pattern, of a genuine tiger seen against a dark background; metaphorically; it could hint at the fierceness, aggressiveness of creature; Fearful Symmetry can be attributed to the outline, proportions and locomotion of the predator (powerful muscles etc.) in perfect anatomical arrangement, responsible for the big predator's elegant "cat-like" movements; in second stanza the element of fire is associated with its Eyes, i.e. the organ which focuses the prey with the born killer's penetrating, sharp look. In the third stanza the heart, the muscular motor of each living organism, is twisted out of sinews; physiologically, a "sinewy" muscle suggests stamina, power, endurance, not just pure strength. Such a powerfully beating heart may demand great courage of the one handling it; the Brain, another vital organ, characteristically treated in a furnace is the source of the TYGER's instincts etc.

The repetition of TYGER, TYGER in stanza one and six recalls the beginning of invocations. The word DARE in stanza 2, 4, 6 and DREAD in 3, 4 attribute extreme courage, aspiration, and dreadful proportions to the creator of the creature, and, indirectly characterize the TYGER. Could in stanza 1 and 3 highlights the craftsmanship. Except for one word, stanza 1 and 6 are identical; the word DARE thus receives special attention and stress.

Fifteen question marks are used in the poem.

The meter used is "pounding" tetrameter (regular beat of pulse or hammer).

Different sort of contrasts have been made in the poem, like, Burning Bright-Night in stanza 1 and 6 emphasizes the visual impact of the TYGER; HAND OR EYE in stanza 1, 6 contrast practical skills and strengths etc.; DEEPS-SKIES in stanza 2 illustrates vast dimensions of the universe, universal significance, sources of evil powers versus good powers (hell,

heaven); HAND-FEET in stanza 3 (essential elements of the blacksmith's craft). In stanza 5, the LAMB is implicitly contrasted to all-present TYGER, i.e., a good, innocent creature vs an evil natured, ferocious, harmful killer.

Unlike a living creature, now in "LONDON", looking into the streets of England's capital Blake provides a very gloomy views of the mental state of society and presents pictures of social injustice, and expresses outspoken and bitter protest "against the evil effect of industrial civilization upon the life of the individual". The opening stanza provides an ironic contrast between the promise of freedom (represented in the "charter") and the signs of distress as evidenced in the misery he sees everywhere.

The repeated use of the word "chartered" makes us think of organisation, control of this great metropolis and the capital city called London that serves the title. This poem, i.e. namely a cry of rage, a protest against a state of affair which is abysmally wrong and corrupt in certain ways. In order to be more precise about what the poem says the analyst will have to look closely scanning the linguistic resources of the poem.

The speaker describes the progress through the streets of this sprawling city where he encounters wide spreading misery. He listens to the cry of men, cry of babies and draws attention to the chimney sweep and the soldier and in the concluding stanza he portrays the emblem of a harlot. Before concluding the poem with the image of "plague" obviously there is something amiss in Blake's "London". Some of the critics have pointed to its social perspective but the poem serves a window on the social life of the London society. It's only the close analysis through the linguistic meaning that we can reach the understanding of the poem with its social critique.

The poem opens with 'I' and the speaker provides us with the central tension of the poem as against the image of the poet wandering. So the tension is between an idea of freedom and the constrains that are placed on the people. The controlling issue is the way in which their basic freedom is stiffened or repressed or completely denied but the interesting thing about the poem is how Blake brings this idea into life by using some subtler linguistic poetic resources. In case of the first stanza one would like to focus on the two key words that are repeated twice, "wander" as Blake wanders and the word "flow" in relation to river Thames and the next item that draws the attention is "chartered" suggesting an idea of confinement. Flow and mark suggests opposing ideas and these words add to the basic issue that the poem addresses. The startling image that next catches our attention is the images of a child, an image of hope for the future but the word "cry" further extends the idea of repression both at physical and mental level. Further the neat, regular form of the stanza suggests how people are affected. It is as if they do not even enjoy the freedom to speak for all we hear is a cry. Next the phrase "mind- forged manacle" rings a tone of ideological repression. Both the chimney sweeper and the soldier have to pay higher price for their livelihood. "Palace" in the next line is linked to the suffering of the soldier and "church" with the child's cry. To these lexical items the word "sigh" is added to the second stanza that concentrate on victims. Blake now identifies the oppressor, the suffering people near grudgingly described as a physical attack and thus having carefully set up the opposites. It develops the basic idea. His words and ideas, carefully chosen, expand this preposition which is established in the first stanza. Notably it is the lyric economy that is interesting and a relieving feature of this poem.

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For e.g. a single reference to church in the context conveys its complicity with authoritarian role and denial of freedom in society. So Blake has powerfully projected the curtailment on denial of freedom and has invited the reader to play an active part in linking word images with the overall theme of the poem. The tension becomes complex as the concluding stanza impress on the image of the harlot who suffers most of all. She swears and in her plague Blake refers to her perennial disease and hypocrisy of the respectable society and its sexual morality. The climax is build round the closing image of “marriage hearse” that only refers to death and generally marriage is associated with happiness. But here in the final concluding line there is a skillful compounding of marriage and hearse that registers a strong forceful protest and what impresses most in Blake’s critique and the cumulative force of it is in the key images and the recurring words that suggest the complex thing about the nature of suffering and repression in the society. Indeed there is something rotten or rotting at the heart of this society which is ideologically oppressed and this oppression becomes the physical one as it seems to threaten the future of the society in the form of blight and curse on the new born that the marriage hearse can account for. The capitalization is done in nouns denoting individuals and institutions. Also there is an absence of playful variation of meter and end-rhyme.

But Blake’s “Ah! Sunflower” is characterized by delicate and lingering rhythm, especially the use of iambic and secondary accent along with anapests. For, e.g. in the first, second and seventh line he substitutes the secondary accent on the first syllable of the anapests:

Seeking after that sweet golden clime

The first and third feet are obviously different from the second foot which is a normal anapests. So “sweet”, “golden” are important terms and sunflower gives glimpse of natural beauty that sends the poet into an ecstatic mood.

Whereas “The Human Abstract” attacks false virtues worshipped by individuals and society as a whole. Virtues like pity, mercy, humility etc. are elements of society’s balancing mechanism which are under permanent threat of being destabilized by self-induced problems. Superficially, compensatory measures help to maintain a functional balance. Since the causes of social injustice etc. are not eradicated, however, social stability is almost due to be lost. A surprising turn at the end of the poem discloses that the human brain’s pernicious reasoning is the source of abstract and destructive thought which can pervert the individual mind spread through society like a cancer growth, defying nature’s powers of self-control.

The poet has used first person plural in-this poem which, involves both the voice of the poet and the reader:

Pity would be no more  
If we did not make somebody poor;  
And mercy no more could be  
If all were as happy as we

Cruelty is personified and uses artful, insidious mirth to achieve ‘his’ goals:

Cruelty knits a snare  
And spreads his baits with care

And personal pronouns are used for cruelty. Also the Holy Fears in third stanza seem to be presence, as much as tears are of crocodile quality and Humility as the trunk; the tree-like growth in fourth stanza as its top have status of plant life (tree = symbol of life). Its product fruit of deceit (the forbidden apple) whose sweetness color are as deceitful as Cruelty's tears. "Animal life" is represented by Caterpillar and Fly and the Raven animals commonly associated with death and decay. In the last stanza Nature and its life-giving spirits, i.e. Gods who control its laws, are juxtaposed to the Human Brain, the source of distorted and destructive thought.

The Gods of the earth and sea Sought thro'  
Nature to find this tree;  
But their search was all in vain;  
There grows one in the Human brain.

The IF-phrase in stanza one repeatedly points out that our actions are the conditions causing the ills of society; thus we could remove the causes instead of curing symptoms. With the exception of the initial SOON in stanza 4,

Soon spreads the dismal shade.  
The anaphora's THEN and-  
And waters the ground with tears;  
Then Humility takes its root.

-function as the only connectors helping to carry on the action in the poem.

But "The Chimney Sweeper" is written in the simplest form of end-rhyme with couplets AA-BB.

We remember that last, troublesome line of the poem of the same name in Songs of Innocence:

So if all do their duty,  
They need not feel harm

This easily seen, from the contents of this present poem, as a kind of panacea, a cure-all, that could be applied at the time to social injustice. The notion of duty, of accepting the way of life imposed by God's will, was a familiar teaching in the pulpits of the day.

The theme is taken up here where the gross sufferings of the little boy doomed to follow his 'calling' are given the blessing of the Church, the official representative of God. The opening stanza introduces the note of criticism in that the parents who ought to have been caring for their child have abandoned him, and

They are both up to the church to pray

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The drama of this short poem is captured in the immediacy of that opening line,  
A little black thing among the snow where  
Blake depicts the helplessness of the child.

The blackness spoken of here is treated in a rather macabre manner in a later line where the finality of his fate is summed up by the repetition of the clothing image:

They clothed me in the clothes of death.

There can be no escape. The distress of the child is caught in the way in which Blake shows how one single question-

Where thy father and mother are, say?

Can give rise to a torrent of words of complaint. Once this stranger express an interest and a willingness to listen, obviously in contrast to the child's parents, he is besieged by an appeal for sympathy which lasts for the rest of the poem.

The repetition of weep weep  
Crying 'weep'! 'Weep'! In notes of woe!

Express the monotony of the boy's work and life whereas the repetition of Dear Mother, Dear Mother in "The Little Vagabond" reminds of a repeated call for help. In this poem the first-person speaker is a boy "from the streets" who gives his notion of an alternative existence. Displaying some experience of the morals of the adult world, and of church as one of society's major educational institutions, he sharply criticizes the status qua and imagines Church as a place of profane joy.

Church and ALE-HOUSE are juxtaposed.  
The Church is cold,  
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm.

The enumeration of ideas within repetitive AND... Pattern is typical of a child's language and spontaneous speech. The fact that we can still make out the child behind the acrimony of speech makes the criticism even bitterer. Other elements make plain and credible that the boy has a sharp sense of reality and is capable of using irony and sarcasm as rhetorical devices.

Complex sentence structures are used as: conditional clause in the lines-  
But if at the Church they would give us some ale,  
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale.

-introduced by IF+WOULD+subsequent main clause +subordinate clause.

Also in the third stanza the structural pattern of the conditional sentence is carried on, with an embedded relative clause in the present tense.

While fourth stanza contains a participle clause within the main clause+subordinate adversative clause introduced by BUT.

In “Holy Thursday” rhetorical questions are answered in stanza 2, 4 by a simple affirmative sentence

Is that trembling cry a song?  
Can it be a song of joy?  
And so many children poor?  
It is a land of poverty!

And in the third stanza parallel structures+simple concluding pattern are found.

DOES+VERB pattern is used for emphasis in  
And their sun does never shine,  
For where're the sun does shine.

On Holy Thursday “some six thousand of the poorest children from the charity schools of London had to march into St. Paul’s... for a compulsory exhibition of their pity and gratitude to their patrons”. In this poem, Blake, who witnessed this annual event of former times, attacks society’s hypocritical attitude towards poverty and its youngest victims.

This is easily seen as a necessary contrast and sequel to the poem of the same title in Songs of Innocence. There the charity of the feast-day was accepted, here it is scorned. Their insistence contrasts beautifully with the poignancy of the poetry of the last stanza where the euphony of the rhymes serves to highlight the discord that exists in the middle two stanzas.

Repetition of single word holy in the first line is linked to negative aspects (ironical placement). In the fourth stanza poverty is repeated as a reminder of danger.

Also the parallel in the lines,

Is this a holy thing to see? Is that trembling cry a song?  
Introduces visual (see) and audible (cry) aspects.  
Again parallelism in stanza 3 and 4-  
And their sun does never shine  
And their fields are bleak and bare  
For where're the sun does shine  
And where the rain are does fall  
-intensifies the contrast between the two stanzas.

In Songs of Experience he wrote of things unknown only hinted in Innocence. Here the child and young adult are impeded by social and religious oppression, with a sickly consciousness of it.

The illustrations show death, weeping, menace and desolation. So the poet’s angry tone of protest adds to the cynical reasoning of the world of experience.

“Mind-forged manacles” are not always forged in else mind, as Blake points out in a series poem on inhibition, secretiveness and hypocrisy. Many of the most memorable of these poems consist of slight episode or a single image presented as an enigmatic symbol of a psychological state.

“The Sick Rose” is an image in words and illustration. This poem is a remarkably chilled expression of the taint which affects all life’s terrible vision of experience that poet shapes through the creature. Leopold Damrosch yr. (1980) has probingly and lucidly challenged Frye’s assertion of the exemplary perfect unity of Blake’s corpus-already questioned by E.D. Hirsch yr. (1964).

Damrosch exposes the four inconsistencies-epistemological, psychological, ontological and aesthetic-that he believes to lie at the heart of Blake’s work, but his study though undoubtedly deconstructive is in no way destructive. He makes clear his immense admiration. Blake was far less confused than most men. His difficulties arose from the heroic ambition with which he tackled unresolved tensions at the heart of western thought exploring them more searchingly than most philosophers.

Blake’s poems draw attention not to themselves but expose the tensions and weird energies that the heroic creative endeavors rightly celebrated-a constructor mental figure than nihilistic warfare. The unique experience offered by each hand-colored and hand-assembled copy of his poems has complicated the reading of his work. It should be experienced in color with the design. The verbal analysis, sensitive and alert reading, innocence of radical ideologies can render a good understanding of Blake’s profound experience.

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1. Harold Bloom, Blake’s Apcsalypse. pp. 137-38.



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## Chapter 5

### Summing

William Blake (1757-1827), chronologically counted as the first Romantic, was a poet, engraver, painter and mystic, and his poetry has attracted the astonished admired of people as Word worth and Ruskin to W.B. Yeats. He is one of the finest and most original poet whose powerful and muscular voice has echoed down the generations to the present day:

I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's.  
I will not Reason & compare: my business is to Create.

Blake is like music. Musical instruments with the same vibrations are capable of responding to one another: a note sounded on one will call forth a spontaneous response from another tuned to the same pitch. The reader must be in tune with Blake, but still more with himself. He must be imaginatively awake, intellectually keen and whole-hearted. If not, he will usually hear nothing but the most terrible dissonance.

Mr. Damon agrees that Blake's appeal is primarily and finally a direct one, all that is of real value in Blake can only be obtained by the individual through the exercise of his own imagination in direct contact with Blake's written words. Blake described his work as vision, and vision can only be seen by individual imagination: it cannot be seen through the eyes of another, not by the aid of the most powerful microscope or telescope of encyclopedic commentary.

Blake loved the Elizabethans for their naturalness and rhythmic music but he never imitated them. It is like the singing of a happy child, expressed with the art of a man. He shook off the heavy preoccupation of a world in the first throes of the Industrial Revolution. In the Songs of Innocence, he entered an Eden to which man had long been alien.

Both the naturalism and mysticism of the Romantic revival found expression in Blake; and on this point he differs from pioneers like Burns, who is simply naturalistic, or Cowper who is only slightly touched by mysticism.

The songs of both the books, Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience are integrated, not simply as reflecting oppositions, but as a series of shifting perceptions. These poems not only suggest a falling away from Endemic innocence to experience, but also the possibility to progress towards a Christ inspired "higher" innocence and a future regain of paradise.

His poetry is not a simple reflection on the events, hopes, tensions and fears it generates but we see the poet taking hold of the visionary experiences, exploring and negotiating with it, using the full resources of language to make something new out of it. So making of his poetry takes two major forms-lyric and narrative -but it is lyric form that dominates in the songs.

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A poet like Blake has his favorite words that frequently recur in his style. To discover the mind of a poet, one can find out in his works which words or images occur frequently. Such words will express his habitual bent of mind. The discovery of key words and other deviations from the norms will be a delicate linguistic operation. These small numbers of key words epitomize his ideals and aspirations.

So a method of study of Blake's song must include some instances of lexical recurrence. The key words and their recognition can give Blake's reader a vital clue to the understanding of the poem. When one has identified the key words and the hindered emotion, one can turn to the choice and combination of these words at the syntactical level. It means all the resources of language have been used with optimal freedom in Blake's poetry. He exploits pun, symbol, imagery, and innovative linguistic devices for the purpose of a perfect linguistic construct. Each word used is like a precious stone chiseled till it is rounded out and prominent in the context.

Blake has carefully used his words for their lyric effect. "The Nurse's Song" is about the young conveyed through the laughter and delight of the children. The whole series of simple, colloquial words with their pleasant associations create an atmosphere of celebration, a group of youngsters dancing, playing, and it conveys the notion of innocence. In the key words the poet celebrates the rights of children to enjoy the childhood fancies. The poem builds up indirectly the atmosphere where the children were being headed to textile mills at a tender age and they have no time to play. So the poem stresses through its key words the basic idea.

There is throughout the poetry of Experience an intense awareness of corporal reality, and this awareness separates Experience from Innocence. The children in Innocence acted simply, with complete joy in their actions. The innocence of the child was the peace of the universe, and there was no separation, no division. The smile of the infant was the smile of the true God, which

Heaven & earth to peace beguiles

In Experience there is no unity of child with universal, no glance of God in the infant's eyes. The very smile of a child breeds discord, and divides the eternal peace; the preposition changes:

Infant wiles & infant smiles  
Heaven & Earth of peace beguiles.

The selection of the words in the form of raw material and their combination help us to see a penetrating insight that might have gone into the making of a finished product—a powerful visual image. One can realize the sharp change of tone from laughing lyrics of Innocence to the anger of Experience.

In Songs of Experience he wrote of things unknown only hinted in Innocence. Here the child and young adult are impeded by social and religious oppression, with a sickly consciousness of it. The illustrations show death, weeping, menace and desolation.

So the poet's angry tone of protest adds to the cynical reasoning of the world of experience. The verbal analysis, sensitive and alert reading can render a good understanding of Blake's profound experience.

Blake poured forth his effusions in his own grand style, copying no one but breathing spirit and life into his works. The figures surrounding and enclosing the poems; produce fresh delight. They are equally tinged by a poetical idea, and though sometimes it is difficult to understand his wandering flights, yet the extraordinary power developed in the handling of both arts astonish (es) as well as delight(s). Here and there figures are introduced which, like the spirits of Macbeth, pass quickly from the sight; yet they have been well digested in the brain of a genius; and we should endeavor rather to unlock the prison-door in which we are placed, and gain an insight into his powerful mind than rail and scoff at him as a dreamer and madman. Charles Lamb, in" his letter to Bernard Barton for May 15<sup>th</sup> 1824, writes:

"Blake is a real name, I assure you, and a most extraordinary man, if he be still living. He paints in water colors marvelous strange pictures, visions of his brain, which he asserts that he has seen. They have great merit ... I must look on him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age"<sup>1</sup>.

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## About The Book

*Little lamb, who made thee?  
Does thou know who made thee,  
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed  
By the stream and o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice?  
Little lamb, who made thee?  
Does thou know who made thee?  
Little lamb, I'll tell thee;  
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:  
He is callèd by thy name,  
For He calls Himself a Lamb.  
He is meek, and He is mild,  
He became a little child.  
I a child, and thou a lamb,  
We are callèd by His name.  
Little lamb, God bless thee!  
Little lamb, God bless thee!*

*Tiger, tiger, 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 and what art  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And, when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand and 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?  
p. 52 When the stars threw down their spears,  
And watered heaven with their tears,  
Did He smile His work to see?  
Did He who made the lamb make thee?  
Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*



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