

## **Poetry Methods in Songs of Innocence and of Experience**

The simplicity of Blake's poetry was one of the first things I noticed while reading *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. For me, it complemented the subject matter and what seemed to be the intended purpose of the works: to remind the reader of the purity of the human spirit, which is most pronounced during youth. While many of the topics and themes relate to childhood, I don't feel that these poems were meant for children. In fact, I don't think that they have anything to offer children, aside from the artwork that accompanied the original pieces. Instead, I feel that Blake intentionally employed a more simple method of poetry and carefully wove it into his subject matter so that he could tap into the childhood memories of his adult readers.

Many of Blake's poems deal with mature ideas that are sometimes discomfiting or frightening. For example, in *THE Chimney Sweeper* it reads at the end of the first stanza "Where are thy father & mother? say? / They are both gone up to the church to pray" with the final stanza reading "And because I am happy & dance & sing, / They think they have done me no injury: / And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery." This represented to me how the inconvenience of a child can be adjusted so that it becomes convenient, which is an incredibly powerful idea. In this story the decision has even been justified, as the child's parents continue to do things that upstanding individuals would do. Another good example is in *The CLOUD & the PEBBLE*, which ends with "Joys in anothers loss of ease, / And builds a Hell in Heavens despite". This statement announces the frequency of malice in everyday life, whether it be obvious or subtle.

It's almost as if Blake is attempting to tap into the hurt that is experienced in adulthood and use it as a vehicle to reconnect the reader with the unfamiliar clarity of childhood. I think that writing in a more "complicated" or "mature" tone would interfere with these intentions.

### **Re: Week 2- Blake's Poems, Simple?**

*I agree with your opinion, and when you state that the uncomplicated form helps establish the narrator as a child in most of the poems is a bit saddening. As a child, it was so easy to think nothing bad really happened in the world or that you would ever have to deal with those occurrences. Only to grow up and realize it's not as simple as you once thought. Blake seemed to certainly point that out in a few of his poems and it was a good observation you made.*

To what time period are you referring?

According to some of the themes in this week's assigned readings, I don't know if many adults during the Romantic Period would have similar memories of their childhoods. "The Chimney Sweeper" does not suggest that children of the time had much reason to be optimistic about their futures.

### **Re: Simple?**

*I had an unnecessary sense of dread at having to read 20+ pages of poetry.*

Hahahahaha!! You're not the only one!

[EDIT]

I'm not referring to myself, of course.

### **Re: Simple?**

*This is really my first learning experience with any type of poetry, unless you count "Where the Sidewalk Ends."*

I was initially reminded of Shel Silverstein's poetry while reading *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. I eventually realized that, unlike the poems in A Light in the Attic and Where the Sidewalk Ends, William Blake wrote about childhood, but did not purpose children to read them. As I mentioned in my main response to the topic, I don't think a child would get any enjoyment out of these poems, aside from looking at the artwork.

Blake's poems have qualities that many of his latter day readers no doubt misinterpret as being intended for younger audiences. However, this probably did not happen when they were first published, and for a good deal of time afterward. (How many children's books were there back then? According to Wikipedia, Mother Goose's Melody was published in England only in 1781; what a strange idea to not have children's stories exist.)

### **Question About THE Chimney Sweeper**

Given that this week's quiz is now closed, I assume that it's okay to talk about the answers to the questions.

For question #4: "In the second 'The Chimney Sweeper' poem (p. 179), whom does the speaker blame for the sweepers' misery?", the answer turned out to be "God". I had answered first "The Church" and then "All of the above". I was convinced (and still am) that "The Church" is the correct answer with "All of the above", which included "The government", being a potential answer as well.

By my best interpretation, the entire poem is putting the spotlight on what people do through or because of the church (as it is mentioned, there is a mother and a father who recklessly absolve themselves of the responsibilities of parenting and yet continue to be good little churchgoers and citizens).

Honestly, if I had four attempts at the quiz, "God" would have been the last of my answers. Would someone be so kind as to offer some input?

### **Re: Question About THE Chimney Sweeper**

This is what I got from it too, except that the Church and society as a whole tolerated and even excused such behavior.

### **Re: Simplicity in William Blake**

*Yet whether Blake intended to make a case against the employment of chimney-sweeps is certainly not clear from his poems. Nor does he directly state any message at all.*

Perhaps all he needed to do was draw attention to them within his poetry in order to have a desired effect.

It's probably safe to say that it was very uncommon at the time for anyone to pay much attention to the chimney-sweeps and their plight.