

Similar and different in two poems by william blake

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William Blake wrote a dual collection of poems known as the Songs of Innocence and Experience. "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" are perhaps two of his most famous poems. The poems contrast each other, and the reader gets the sense of how Blake sees the world. Jim Baird calls the literary works as "the two contrary states of the human soul (Baird)." The Songs of Innocence captures the viewpoints of a naïve child, while the Songs of Experience captures the cynical view on the world that Blake expresses. Blake offers greater insight and understanding of the human world with the writings of "The Lamb" and "The Tyger."

"The Lamb," published in 1789, is one of the poems included in the set of the Songs of Innocence. The poem's construction is simple. The lines are short and the rhythmic sequence is easy to figure out. Blake uses this structure to lend to the idea of a childish speaker. The poem is referred to as a pastoral poem, which refers to the glorified lives of shepherds. It is fitting that Blake should use a creature like the Lamb because the Lamb is a classic symbol of the pastoral life. The opening two lines of the poem voices the mystery of creation. The question, "who made thee?" is a naïve one, yet at the same it is a simple one. It taps into the deep and timeless question of human creation: who created living beings? As the first stanza moves on, in line 3, it can be reasonably inferred that Blake is alluding to the creation story in the Bible. Blake not only uses God as the creator, but he also represents God as the shepherd in this pastoral poem. God is a great, big shepherd who gives the Lamb all his desires: the desire to feed and to live. Blake uses adjectives, such as woolly bright and tender voice, to represent the Lamb's gentleness, joy, and affection. These adjectives lends to the

description of the Lamb's innocence in the world. The first stanza closes with the same questions that Blake opened up the poem with to grasp the readers' attention into transitioning into the second stanza, where he answers the questions.

The second stanza of "The Lamb" shifts toward answering the question the speaker states in the first. The repetitive use of "I" in lines 11 and 12 emphasizes how the speaker is going to reveal who the Lamb's creator is. The second stanza again contains biblical allusions, and as the poem progresses it is revealed that Jesus is the Lamb. The adjectives used in line 15 and 16 again refer the Bible, as Jesus is referred to as being meek and mild, and they also again show the innocence of the Lamb. A child is meek and mild like the Lamb, so it emphasizes what Blake is trying to capture in the Songs of Innocence. Towards the end of the poem, Blake unmask the speaker as a child. The significance of using a child as the speaker is that Blake refers to all men as the children of God. Therefore, all men are the lambs of god. Ian McGreal writes that through the poem, it becomes clear "all persons are lambs; relative to his knowledge, will, and power, all persons are innocent (McGreal)." Blake concludes the poem by blessing the children of God. "The Lamb" idealizes the views of a naïve child, and it opens the way for Blake to write a poem, which contrasts the way he feels in "The Lamb."

Blake's "The Tyger" is a much dark and sinister poem. As opposed to "The Lamb," the quatrains and rhythmic sequence gives a sense of urgency and power within the poem. Thomas Curley writes, "the first three quatrains

describe the beast (the tyger) in terms of a frightening beauty (Curley)." The first stanza shows how the tyger is a much more powerful and mysterious creature than the Lamb. " In the forest of the night," shows the elusiveness of the tyger. The third and fourth line lends to the idea of the sublime nature of the tyger. The Tyger is this awe-inspiring creature. This creature represents the adult view on God and how they take a much more cynical view towards God. Adults see God as a shadowy figure, and humans are fearful of him because he has infinite power. The question " What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" becomes the focus of the poem and is consistently referred to throughout the poem (" The Tyger"). Stanza two of " The Tyger" asks the simple question of where the tyger was created. This parallels the same question asked in " The Lamb." However, this time the question is referring to a much darker, sinister creature. The use of " deeps" and " skies" refers to hell and heaven. With the addition of " Burnt the fire of thine eyes," it adds the power and fearful nature of the Tyger. Again in stanza 3, the speaker continues the question of who created the sublime, powerful creature of the Tyger.

The second half of the poem contrasts the " The Lamb" more closely. The reader can see how stanza four and five ask the similar questions asked in " The Lamb." The speaker continuously asks how the tyger was created. The speaker states the question, " Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" to float a question: if Blake says the Lamb of God is Jesus, whom is Blake comparing the Tyger to. The answer to this question is contained earlier on in the stanza. " When the stars threw down their spears/

And watered heaven with their tears,” refers to the story of Satan. Satan disobeyed God, and therefore was thrown from heaven to hell. The Tyger was born in fire and violence. Blake is comparing the Tyger to Satan. The last stanza of the poem is a repetition of the first stanza, but with a twist. The last line of the poem isn't asking the ability of the creator, the speaker is now question the nerve of the creator. God created such a gentle, kind creature like the Lamb, and then God created such a frightful, awe-inspiring creature like the Tyger. In the Songs of Experience, Blake is tapping into the view that adults take on God. Blake wonders “ how an all-perfect God responsible for innocence and goodness can be the creator of violence and evil (Curley).”

William Blake's “ The Lamb” and “ The Tyger” are part of the two sets of poetry in the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience. Blake uses these two sets of poems to show the two views on God. The Songs of Innocence captures the naïve view on God, and how he is so benevolent. This view is much like how a child would see God. However, growing up, people see God in a much darker view. This is what the Songs of Experience touches upon. This collection of poetry captures the cynical view on God. “ The Lamb” depicts God as a benevolent, mild character like the Lamb. However, in “ The Tyger,” God is depicted as a fearful, awe-inspiring character like the Tyger. God brings joy to the world with the Lamb, and yet he brings all this hatred and fear to the world with the Tyger.