

The victorian age in literature



The Victorian Age (1837-1901) is characterized as a period of time where many artists, including poets, tried to bring to light the people that were being mistreated and swept under the rug. In this particular time (The Victorian Age) these mistreated people were mainly women, minorities, the poor, and prisoners.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) and Charles Dickens (1812-1870) were influenced by this movement and took pride in bringing these less fortunate people forward and putting their situations in the face of the general public. While both of these masterful poets did in fact use their poems to bring these unfortunate situations to the surface each of them did this in fantastically different ways. The two poems that will be looked at in detail within this paper are Browning's "The Cry of the Children" and also Dickens' "A Visit to Newgate" both the similarities as well as the differences will be brought up. As soon as confronted with the both Barrett Browning's "The cry of the Children" and Dickens' "A Visit to Newgate" the difference is anything but subtle. As stated before these poets do attack the same topic, which is the overlooked suffering people, but at a glance it is evident that the method used in dealing with their topic is different.

Browning uses poetic structure and keeps with the traditional poem set-up including stanzas and repeating lines along with her subject (small children) being likened to lambs, birds, flowers and fawns which will be further explored in the coming paragraph. Dickens, on the other hand, steers away from the likening to nature and chooses instead to stick with pure

description and detail. As for his delivery method, he chooses the form of a short story.

After the reader moves forward from the mere looks of these literary pieces is when the differences, and for that matter similarities, really come to life. Starting with Barrett Browning the reader is given these lines: The young lambs are bleating in the meadows, The young birds are chirping in the nest, The young flowers are blowing toward the west-But the young, young children, O my brothers, They are weeping bitterly! (5-10) Here the reader sees Browning likening children to their counterparts in nature. While they are off frolicking and being carefree, which is how nature intended young humans, and animals to be, the human children are crying unable to enjoy themselves due to what the reader will find out later is the huge work load with which they are stuck with. As this sorrowful poem continues on the reader is informed of a young child named Alice who has died ??? before her time???. The children in the poem comment on her death by saying ????? | ??? It is good when it happens,??? say the children, ??? That we die before our time.?????? (51-52) These young children feel they have no escape, but death, the narrator notices this and seems to have a solution.

God should be able to help them the children, know nothing of God, figure that he would not be able to hear them seeing as how passersby do not hear, or choose not to hear, them cry. This is a good point to switch over to Dickens, ??? A Visit to Newgate???. Newgate was a prison that was in commission on and off for about 700 years (1188 to 1902).

This short story about prison compliments ??? The Cry of the Children??? very well because of the hopelessness that is felt in both. Dickens is thought of in the same light as Browning and this is captured in Ronald Meldrum??™s ??? Charles Dickens as Artist and Reformer???. Meldrum says ???,??|his anger about public and official indifference to the plight of the educational institutions and his own sense of futility in bring about a sense of public awareness and actual reform, Dickens did what he could.

??? As the similarities stack up it is time to get a closer look at Dickens, ??? A Visit Newgate???. Dickens depicts the same situation only exchanges children for prisoners. He says, men walking past the Newgate prison daily on their daily business route not knowing whistling and singing along are ignorant ?????|of the unhappy beings immured in its dismal cells;??|??? This is essentially the same as the passersby ??? not hearing??? the children??™s cries. While this is a good comparison it is not the only example of how these two pieces of literature complement each other. Later in the same descriptive paragraph as the quote before, the reader finds this, ??????|men in full health and vigour, in the flower of youth or the prime of life, with all their faculties and perceptions as acute and perfect as your own;??|??? Again, this relates back to Browning??™s poem as she was describing the children embracing death at a young age. In conclusion these works are both share the cry for a social reform of what was called the Victorian Age. While Browning used a more poetic sense of earnestness and Dickens used a descriptive firsthand account they each shared in the same ideas. Thanks to each of these writers, situations that were once over looked were now on the forefront of the social agenda.

Works Cited" Reduction Of Infantile Mortality At Creusot." The British Medical Journal 2367th ser. 1 (1906): 1125. JSTOR. Web. 21 Oct. 2010. Meldrum, Ronald M.

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