William Blake: Literature Analysis Of The Tyger And The Lamb

Blake introduces The Songs of Innocence and Experience to readers with the idea of two antithetical elements of the human soul. The Lamb is a figurative term used for the innocence in a child and the Tyger symbolises adult experience, both reflecting the ideas of the romantic period.

The Tyger is interpreted as evil and the Lamb as good. Blake associates the Tyger with Prometheus, ‘fire of thine eyes’ as fire links to hell and disruption, suggesting that the Tyger is an exotic yet a fierce and dangerous animal that can only bring violence and despair to humanity. Similarly, the Lamb is cited as a child or in Biblical terms ‘Jesus’. The evidence that illustrates this is ‘...became a child:’ In addition to this, ‘Softest clothing woolly bright’ implies to readers one who is loving, nurturing and forgiving. Therefore the Lamb is a mirror image of the divine, Christianity and The Tyger mirrors darkness of society with words like …’ forest’… and …’ night’…

Blake was inspired by nursery rhymes, hymns, songs and music which led to the writing of songs of Innocence and Experience. Interestingly, both poems flow in simplistic language however are also deceptive. The Tyger is overflowing with strong, religious, mysterious imagery and striking metaphors like …‘deadly terrors’… creating a bellicose atmosphere, in addition to this the poem follows a trochaic rhythm sounding like a marching war like hymn. The first stanza in the Lamb is full of pastoral images of nature exhibiting tranquillity of life. The lamb sounds like a soothing lullaby which makes readers feel comforted and at ease. It is structured as couplets and starts with the child asking questions in the first stanza and answering them in the second stanza which could be interpreted as answers lie within ones soul.

The Lamb and The Tyger mirror the artistic movements of the 18th century. Blake used his vision to deploy how the purity and simplicity of a child is corrupted by the superficial values and orthodox traditions of the institutionalised Church and fatalist society. Both poems consist of images of nature, Blake was a first generation romantic and he was fascinated by the beauty of nature. The words ‘Fearful symmetry’ in the Tyger, grabs readers attention as it exemplifies the Tygers’ pattern and leaves readers curious and in awe of the creature.

The narrator is saying a prayer ‘God bless thee’ Indicating Blake’s belief in the divine and hope in humanity. In contrast, the Tyger symbolises the lust of power, tyranny and danger ahead. Both poems are a direct reflection of the religious, social and political surroundings of Blake’s period, which he strongly rejected however supported the movements of the French Revolution, as it gave hope to Britain being close to a revolution. Furthermore, the first stanza in the Tyger questions who ‘Could’ create a destructive animal, the final stanza, Blake replaces it with ‘Dare’ suggesting how a new era of technology and scientific methods were on the horizon something that was a cause of concern for anti-capitalist individuals like Blake. In addition to this Blake’s use of rhetorical questions ‘what the hammer? What the chain?’ suggests that Blake is comparing the creator to the Blacksmith.

To conclude both poems represent a concise vision of the disastrous political and social

environment and how people can easily be influenced into wrong doings. His message within the poems is that humans are complicit and responsible for the consequences of the choices they make as he believed love, purity and forgiveness are at the heart of existence. In comparison of the two poems one reflects the other as Blake is questioning how it is that good and evil can co-exist in the world.