

TPOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF IMAGES IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY

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Abstract:

The current article discusses the main features of literary images and typological analysis in the poetry of William Blake. Additionally, author emphasize symbolical meaning of mystic images in the works of William Blake including "Songs of Innocence and Experience". The mastery of William Blake is closely connected to religious and mystical philosophy of Middle Ages Literature which reveals real rebellion to injustice in Middle England.

Keywords: Symbols, imagery, Romanticism, illustration, divinity, religious concept.

Introduction

The poetics of artistic imagery depends on how symbols are depicted, the results achieved by the author in their expression, the techniques used, and their effectiveness. Identifying the reasons behind each character's actions and ensuring credibility is crucial in the study of artistic imagery. The poetics of images are also evident in their beautiful expression and perfect depiction. In this regard, the poetry collection Songs of Innocence and of Experience by William Blake provides essential information.

Literature Review

Songs of Innocence and of Experience is a collection of illustrated poems by William Blake. Initially, Blake published Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience separately. Only in 1794 did he combine the two collections into Songs of Innocence and of Experience: Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. Even after this, Blake continued to publish the collections separately [4].

Before creating this work, Blake was an artist, and he supplemented each poem with intricate artworks. He engraved, printed, and hand-colored these illustrations himself, making each poem's content richer and reflecting its intended interpretation.

Blake's work was also inspired by children's literature and their upbringing. In Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Blake portrays childhood as a state of innocence and protection. However, he later acknowledges that children are not entirely shielded from the "fallen" world and its institutions, a concept that later became a fundamental characteristic of Romanticism. Additionally, Songs of Innocence and of Experience had a significant influence on musicians. Several composers have adapted the poems into musical compositions [5].

Methodology

Scholars who have analyzed and categorized the images in William Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience are mainly experts in Romantic literature and Blake's works. The primary



categories of images include:

- **Symbolic images**
- **Divine-fantastic images**
- **Images representing human love**

Songs of Innocence depicts themes of purity, childhood, sincere emotions, and spirituality. The collection is rich in mystical imagery, with characters often built upon religious motifs and symbols. Mystical symbolism plays a central role, making most of the characters symbolic representations. One of the foremost symbolic images in the collection is the child.

The child symbolizes purity and innocence, often urging people to perceive divinity through an understanding of nature. In Blake's philosophy, the child is the ultimate representation of innocence and sincerity [1]. In *The Lamb*, the child asks about the lamb, reflecting the kindness of its Creator.

Closely linked to the child image is the **Lamb**, a symbol of innocence and divine power. It represents God's kindness and the purity of the world. In *The Lamb*, the lamb is depicted as a miraculous creation.

Blake preferred to express his views through vivid images rather than abstract concepts. His poems are rich in extensive symbolism. For example, in *The Lamb*, Blake uses the image of the "little lamb" to imply humanity and illustrate the idea that people are created by God.

The imagery in *Songs of Innocence* has been extensively studied by various scholars through different analytical approaches. One of the key scholars is the Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye. In his 1947 book *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye introduced a new theoretical approach to Blake's poetry, significantly reevaluating his literary legacy. *Fearful Symmetry* remains a respected academic source for understanding Blake's complex works.

Frye analyzed the images of the **lamb, shepherd, and child** from a religious and divine perspective, considering them crucial to understanding the contrast between innocence and experience. He explored archetypal images in Blake's works, interpreting them in connection with religious concepts [6].

The American literary critic Harold Bloom, a professor at Yale University, examined these images in the context of the relationship between humans and divinity. He viewed children as symbols of pure humanity, while the shepherd and lamb represented spiritual idealism.

In *Ah! Sunflower*, Blake uses the sunflower to reflect on the natural cycle of birth, aging, and death. Meanwhile, in *The Book of Urizen*, he creates a mystical world, depicting his own vision of God, who constantly watches over his immense creation. This world encapsulates Blake's unique religious beliefs and imaginative visions [2].

Blake's goal as a poet and artist was to create a unique mythology rooted in pagan and Christian elements. He sought to unite heaven and earth, transforming the divine man into a crown of faith [3].

Among the most prominent divine-fantastic images in Blake's poetry are:

- **God and Jesus Christ:** Symbols of compassion, salvation, and divine power.
- **The Shepherd and Angels:** Representing guidance and protective forces.
- **Nature and Light:** Expressions of innocence and divine creation.

Blake's primary divine image in *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience* is that of God. He is depicted as the Creator and guide of all things, embodying kindness, care, and assistance to



humanity. In *The Lamb*, the lamb is portrayed as a pure creation of God, emphasizing His benevolence and closeness to the human soul.

Jesus Christ is another divine figure in Blake's work, depicted as the savior of humanity. He is associated with the lamb, symbolizing innocence and sacrifice. This representation elevates the image of Christ to a new level of symbolism in *The Lamb*, where the lamb metaphorically refers to Jesus Christ's divine love and selflessness [4].

The **Shepherd** image in *The Shepherd* is one of the most studied after *The Lamb*. The shepherd remains with his flock (humanity), providing them with love and peace. He serves as a guide, akin to God or Jesus Christ, leading humanity on the right path and embodying divine care.

Angels also play a significant role in both *Gulshani Raz* and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, appearing as divine protectors. Blake portrays them as guardians who save humanity from danger and guide them to salvation. In *The Little Boy Lost* and *The Little Boy Found*, angels rescue the lost child, symbolizing divine mercy. In *Night*, angels protect children and innocent souls, representing protection, kindness, and divine presence.

Blake frequently uses **nature as a divine image**, differing from Shabistari by directly animating nature and imbuing it with a divine spirit. This is evident in *Laughing Song*, where nature symbolizes harmony between humanity and divinity. Natural elements represent life's pure beauty, renewal, and divine inspiration. In *Laughing Song*, the joy and beauty of nature reflect the Creator's perfection.

The Sun and Light symbolize the continuity of life, divine illumination, and hope. Since they represent the inner enlightenment and spiritual growth of a person, these two images are given a divine character in Blake's poetry, particularly in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. In this regard, the symbolism and divinity in the image of "Light" resemble certain elements of the image of "Light" in Shabistari's *Gulshani Raz*. Additionally, the Sun is often mentioned as a symbol of a new day and a fresh beginning. Light, as a representation of God and divinity, embodies the power that illuminates the human soul. It signifies spiritual growth, salvation, and hope. In William Blake's poem *Holy Thursday*, light is depicted as a symbolic representation of divine guidance and innocence. Thus, Light serves as a force that leads humanity toward the divine path and spiritual elevation. Moreover, the images of the Sun and Light illuminate spiritual transcendence and hope.

Results and Discussion

While we have defined one of the symbolic and divine images above, a distinctive feature of William Blake's works is the frequent use of special images that reflect love, which are not found in Shabistari's poetry. In Shabistari's work, particularly in *Gulshani Raz*, these images appear within the framework of symbolic imagery. Images that reflect human love refer to symbolic or concrete representations of affection, care, and sincere emotions between people. These images highlight the positive qualities of human nature, such as kindness, love, and empathy. They are usually expressed through family, friendship, education, and human relationships [6].



Characteristics of Images Representing Human Love:

1. **Kindness and Care:** These images express helping others and being sincere and compassionate toward them. Mothers and caregivers are among the brightest examples of human love.
 - **Example:** In William Blake's Nurse's Song, the caretaker allows children to play and finds inspiration in their joy.
2. **Protection and Support:** Human love is often demonstrated through protecting others and feeling a sense of responsibility toward them.
 - **Example:** The devotion of a mother or father to their child is a classic example of human love.
3. **Innocence and Sincerity:** These images depict unconditional love and genuine attention. Love for children and nature particularly fits into this category.
 - **Example:** The mother-child relationship in Songs of Innocence is shown as a pure example of human compassion.
4. **Social Bonds:** Friendship, communal affection, and kindness toward others are represented through these images.

Images reflecting human love highlight the highest emotions of human nature, such as kindness, sincerity, and care for others. In William Blake's works, these images deeply express a person's spiritual world and the need for connection with others.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that symbolic images play a significant role in William Blake's Songs of Innocence. Beyond their surface meanings, these images carry deeper, multi-layered symbolic significance, further enriching the work's theme. Symbolic images invite the reader to explore various aspects of divinity, humanity, nature, and childhood.

In conclusion, Blake's imagery, particularly divine-fantastic and symbolic representations, plays a crucial role in shaping the themes of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. His work aligns with Shabistari's mystical poetry in its deep religious undertones, demonstrating a shared emphasis on divine imagery.

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