

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier in Chapter one, the poem under investigation in this thesis is "The Ecchoing Green" which is part of the collection of poems called Songs of Innocence and of Experience written by William Blake. This chapter will start analyzing the poem itself stanza by stanza.

3.1. Analysis of the poem

The poem consists of three stanzas, each of which will be analyzed respectively for their content of innocence.

3.1.1. Analysis of the First Stanza

The Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies.
The merry bells ring,
To welcome the Spring
The sky-lark and thrush,

The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bells cheerful sound,
While our sports shall be seen
On the Ecchoing Green.

Note that Blake tries to describe how a bright and cheerful day is welcomed by nature, fauna, flora and human beings.

It is clear that the first lines of the stanza give the evidence of a cheerful day as it says that the sun brightens the skies. More specifically, it could be further interpreted that the first stanza refers to the morning of the day, since the first line says that the sun does arises which of course refers to the crack of dawn or the morning. The delightful situation is more foregrounded by the usage of the words 'merry', 'bells', 'cheerful' and 'ecchoing' used in lines three, eight and ten.

As the majority of people would welcome Spring with joy as the symbol of new life, it is clear that happiness is stressed in the first stanza.

The term 'merry bells' does in addition of the realization of happiness and joy as carried by the word 'merry', and it also shows the involvement of flora in this event as 'bells' is the name of a kind of flower as well.

Note how Blake insert Beulah in this first stanza through the symbol of a flower called bells, and the usage of the name of the season Spring. Through these two terms Blake intends to foreground the innocence of the participants of the delightful and happy morning in the first stanza.

The animal world too is welcoming the day cheerfully as can be seen from the fifth and sixth lines:

The sky-lark and thrush,

The birds of the bush,

supported by lines seven and eight:

Sing louder around,

To the bells cheerful sound,

showing the positive reaction on the animal's part towards the happy atmosphere. Both of the birds are the singing bird, and the sky-lark is famous of its songs because it soars upward and flies high to the sky. This also shows the presence of security and peace among the animals, because their singing will soon become to a stop and total silence if there is danger around.

Note also the closeness of all the nature flora and fauna, where the birds sing louder to the merry bells, it responds to the cheerful sound that the bells produced.

So far it is obvious how well Blake managed to realize his concept of innocence by introducing the existence of

Beulah in the stanza and providing its characteristics: happiness, security and peace.

Further down the first stanza, human's involvement in welcoming the happy morning is introduced. The last two lines:

While our sports shall be seen

On the Ecchoing Green

start with the word 'while', telling the reader that other activities are progress as well. The mentioning of human involvement is clear as Blake used the personal pronoun 'our'. This too is an interesting techniques Blake used to encourage the reader to read the following stanzas in order to know what he means by 'human beings', whether they are children, adults, or people at all ages. At this stage, it is only clear that human beings are partakers of the events, and whether they are children, adults or anyone cannot be decided yet.

In short, the first stanza tells the reader that not only nature (i.e. the sun, the skies, and Spring), the flora (merry bells), the fauna (the sky-lark, the thrush, and the birds in the bush), but human beings (our) as well participate actively in the happiness of the secure and peaceful morning of the day.

The first stanza ends with the stress on the overwhelming joy portrayed by the 'ecchoing' sounds of the songs of birds, the tossing of flowers, as well as cheers and laughter of human beings on the pastures of green.

The word 'green' also has a sense of innocence, it could also mean inexperienced, not trained, easily led, simple and naive (Webster, 1991:592). By the end of the first stanza, the author wants to tell us that all of the activity of the day which is performed by the children, together with the acceptance of other creatures is taken place in the safe and secure place and in a peaceful condition, and the word 'ecchoing' emphasizes the undeniable and unstoppable security, peace and happiness.

The terms 'happy', 'merry', 'sing' and 'cheerful' on their own are bi-referential words, they can be either positively or negatively interpreted. However, a further analysis on the leading images of innocence in this stanza allow to include happy, merry, sing, cheerful as they are all confined to Spring - they all welcome the Spring which is Blake's seasonal manifestation of Beulah.

3.1.2. Analysis of the Second Stanza

After analyzing the innocence carried by the first stanza, let us now proceed to the second stanza and see how

Blake further explains what he means by human beings, and elaborates more about his definition of innocence. The second stanza says :

Old John with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say,
"Such such were the joys,
When we all girls and boys,
In our youth time were seen,
On the Ecchoing Green".

This second stanza is distinctive for the usage of the pronouns they (lines five and six), our (lines five and nine) and we in line eight. It is worth clarifying what they refer to.

Blake opens his second stanza by mentioning Old John with white hair which clearly refers to an adult, an old man. This old man is sitting amongst the folk. The word folk here refers to a group of people with the same dominant feature as the old John, which undoubtedly would be parents or other adults.

Then he uses the term they in line five which refers to the folk. Who then would our refer to? To be able to answer this question we need to paraphrase the second stanza as follows: the old John are sitting together with the folk, with the other parents, laughing and enjoying the games the children play. They become to remember their old times when they were children when they also played and felt the same happiness that the children feel.

The pronouns they in lines five and six, we in line eight, and our in line nine refer to the folk which in this case stands for the adults. The adults may be the parents or any adults watching the youth, the girls and the boys play, how nice it is to be a child. He opened the second stanza by mentioning how happy the adult is watching the joy among the children play. The line 'Old John with white hair' refers to the adult. The line 'Does laugh away care' shows that the adult is in a happy mood, while the line 'sitting under the oak' shows a relaxed state of mind or posture of the adult. 'Among the folk' shows that he is not the only human being present. There are others with the dominant feature of age present, they are other adults which could be either the children's parents or other adults minding the children.

Only after reading through to the last line of the stanza will the reader be able to see that the pronoun our in line five actually refers to girls and boys of line eight

or youth of line nine. Furthermore, 'all girls and boys' in line eight, shows that Blake refers to children in general.

He ends the second stanza by stressing that the life of the youth is mainly happiness and joy, underlined by the repetition of the phrase 'on the Ecchoing Green' showing the dominance of the cheers of the joy of children mixed with the feeling of freedom, security and peace among the animals as the animals keep on singing louder and louder [see line seven of the first stanza].

3.1.3. Analysis of the Third Stanza

After showing the existence and elaborating on the characteristics of innocence in the first stanza, and defining the carriers of innocence in the second stanza, Blake skillfully explains the appreciation and duration of happiness in Beulah in the third stanza as can be seen in the following:

Till the little ones weary
 No more can be merry
 The sun does descend,
 And our sports have an end :
 Round the laps of their mother ,
 many sisters and brothers,

Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest :
And sport no more seen,
On the Ecchoing Green.

In this stanza Blake is more definite in defining the subjects of the poem. Here he makes clear that what he refers to throughout the poem is actually the small children, as he used the words the little ones in the first line of stanza.

In this stanza he makes his point that the happy atmosphere only ends when the participants, 'the little ones', are satisfied and tired of the joyful activities. This is clearly expressed by the usage of the terms 'till' and 'weary' where 'till' shows the end of the duration of the activities carried out, and 'weary' stresses the state of the children where they are feeling tired. They are so tired that they have to stop : 'no more can be' meaning the impossibility of expressing their joy any longer. This happens at sunset as implied by the term 'descend' in line three of the last stanza.

The children soon go to their secure place to have their rest:

And our sports have an end:
Round the laps of their mothers,

These two lines inform that the children have gone to a secure place, i.e. 'the laps of their mothers', a perfect place for children to feel protected and secure.

The author uses the word 'sport' here to emphasize the sense of innocence for sport means 'any activity or experience that gives enjoyment or recreation' (Webster, 1991, 1297).

Look at the use of the colon at the end of line three of the last stanza, as a substitute for 'that is to say'. Thus Blake means to say that the children are tired and it is sunset, all the activities have to be stopped. By stopping all the activities, Blake means to say that it is time for the children to rest.

He then compares the children, brothers and sisters, to birds in their nest. They are all ready to rest, meaning that there would be silence (no plays, no songs, no activities) on the pastures which were full of songs, joy and laughter throughout the day.

3.2. Analysis on the State of Innocence

As stated in chapter II that the analysis on symbol will be used in this thesis to reveal the innocence in the given poem, the writer then will analyze the symbol used which shows the sense of innocence.

From some criticism and studies, we learned that Blake loves children, as the letter from Samuel Palmer to Alexander Gilchrist stated: '....., he was gentle and affectionate, loving to be with children and to talk about them' (Johnson, 1979:503). Blake considers the children playing in the playground as heaven. Blake's innocence centralized its figures on child, lamb, flower, shepherd and piper.

The Songs of Innocence is introduced by the piper who piping down the stream and wild valleys, reaching out and singing for the children. Here, there is the child who cries while listening to the piper. He then asks the piper to sing, and later he asks him to write down the songs so everybody, especially the children, can hear and enjoy the sweet songs. With the fact that the Songs of Innocence is sung by the children, we can see the child's domination also in the "Laughing Song". This poem illustrates the situation where all the world are laughing together with the child. The green woods, hills, stream, meadows, the grasshopper, the birds, all are joying, merrying and laughing in the voice of joy. The happiness, which is one characteristic of Blake's innocence is so obvious in this poem.

We can also see the innocence Blake employs in "The Lamb". According to Webster's Dictionary(1991:756), lamb means a gentle or innocent person, particularly a child. The

lamb symbolizes also Jesus Himself, the incarnation of God, which can be seen in lines thirteen to sixteen :

'He is called by thy name
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:'

Another presentations of Blake's innocence is in the form of "The Shepherd", for the shepherd is always near his sheep, protecting and giving love and care:

'He is watchful when they are in peace
For they know that their Shepherd is nigh'

He follows anywhere his sheep go patiently from morning to evening but he doesn't feel tired for his tongue is full of praise:

'How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be filled with praise'

Like any other artist, Blake also has his own organization of symbols. His symbols are patternized from the central group of related symbols that form a more dominant symbol. He employed the child, the father and Christ to represent innocence, experience, and higher innocence.

Man as the image of God can also be seen in "The Divine Image". Man is created in the same status, same level that nobody is higher or lower than the other. Even if man is created in so many human form, they are still equal in right, status and all are created in God's love and in God's own image :

'For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is God, our Father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is Man, his child and care'.

Being in the image of God himself, man bears the innocence characters, he has Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love like God, our Father.

Another symbolism of innocence in Blake's Beulah concept in seasonal term can be seen in his "Spring". Spring symbolizes Beulah. During the spring, the sun shines, the flower becomes colorful, the tree green and the children, little boy and girl, are out and playing in the play ground. The little lamb is also welcoming the new year happily. It all describes the happy situation in welcoming the spring.

Blake's works were quiet but also intellectual. In reading the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, we can easily see his symbolism from which all those symbols illustrates a kind of progression, from the state of innocence to the state of experience. Blake's symbols in his

songs consists of smaller units and each of those small units make a series of larger units which bring the work into the key of his ideas. As Blake wrote in the preface of Jerusalem: Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place; the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild and gentle for the mild and gentle parts, and the prosaic for the inferior parts; all are necessary to each other (Johnson, 1979:535).

By studying Blake's symbols, considering each symbol as a small unit, and understanding that every small unit brings us to the bigger unit, we would be able to find the theme in his work. As we understand that Blake focuses his interests on children, together with his other manifestation of innocence, the writer would start examining the poem stanza by stanza.

From the first stanza we could find words such as: 'the sun' and 'spring' which are the natural symbols; bells (name of flower), birds (includes the sky-lark and thrush) which are the private symbol, all of which symbolizes innocence, not to forget that Blake considered flower as the manifestation of his Beulah, as stated in a few paragraph before, while he is referring innocence in the seasonal term to spring. The word 'merry' itself gives a sense of full of laughter, alive, cheerful, suggesting a situation which is

conducive to gay and festive feeling. The flower (bells) rings merrily to welcome the Spring.

The rising 'sun' symbolizes the beginning of a new day continued by welcoming the 'spring' which symbolizes a new life. Spring could also mean the dawn which has a same sense with 'the sun', both of which have the sense of innocence.

The concept of innocence in Blake's existence of Beulah is also manifested in its characteristics i.e. happiness, security and peace, which could be seen in the words 'happy', 'merry', 'cheerful', in first stanza; 'laugh', 'joys' in the second stanza; while in the third stanza we could find it in 'the little ones', 'merry', 'rest'.

In the first stanza, it is obvious that not only the flora (bells) welcomes the morning but also the animal, in this case, the birds (sky-lark, thrush, birds of the bush), and we understand that the characteristics of Blake's innocence are security and peace, because if the animal do not feel secure and peaceful, they will not sing; while flower symbolizes youth, innocence and impermanence (Potter, 1967:187).

The sense of security and peace are also felt by the human being (our) which symbolizes that the human being is also happy and feel secure to begin the day.

We could also see the repetition of word 'the ecchoing green' in every stanza which emphasizes the undeniable and continuous domination of happiness, cheers, and joys of the children blended with the feeling of security, freedom and peace.

In the second stanza, the word 'old', 'white hair', 'folk' are the private symbols suggesting the parents or old people. The old John is referring to the adult sitting happily under the oak watching the children play peacefully which reminds the adults of when they were children themselves. They remember that as a child they only play and have fun and joy which reveals the sense of innocence of young boy and girl.

Another private symbol used in the poem are 'care', 'play', 'joys' 'youth', and 'green'. See how Blake arranged each unit of symbol to illustrate the situation that the old people also remember their old times to be as happy, joyful, and peaceful as their children now.

In the third stanza, 'the little ones' refers to the children who are playing till they are tired and need to take a rest, together with the coming of night (line 1 - 3). The descending of the sun ends all the activities and plays the children have (line 3 and 4). The sense of security and peace, which are the characteristic of innocence, are also obvious when the children go round the laps of their mothers

and take a rest when the sun sets and initially ends all their play during the day (line five and eight). The laps of their mothers are the secure place for as a child they are always protected and guarded by their parents which symbolizes the sense of innocence. The 'mother' in this poem is symbolic in the sense that her protection of the child shared the overall picture of the child which is the symbol of the state of innocence, while 'brother' and 'sister' also have the same symbolic sense, because the older brother or sister tend to protect their younger one.

The 'nest' here also has a sense of innocence in the sense that it gives shelter and place to rest for the birds, just like what the children do.

By studying the symbols Blake used in his poem, especially 'The Ecchoing Green', it is obvious that in each stanza, the word as the smallest unit in the literary work is dominated by those with the sense of innocence. We could see them in the words: 'sun', 'happy', 'merry', 'bells', 'ring', 'spring', 'sky-lark', 'thrush', 'sing', 'cheerful', 'sound', 'sports', 'ecchoing' and 'green' in the first stanza; 'laugh', 'care', 'play', 'joys', 'youth', 'ecchoing' and 'green' in the second stanza, while in the third stanza we could find them in 'the little ones', 'merry', 'the sun', 'sports', 'mothers', 'nest', 'rest', 'ecchoing' and 'green'.

The innocence discussed in this thesis is the central

idea of the work itself. The innocence, here in the Blake's "The Ecchoing Green" is the unifying subject or idea that wrapped up in the sequence of beautiful, single , and symbolic units.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION