THE PRESENTATION OF THE ORPHAN CHILD IN EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE IN A SELECTION OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S *SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE*, AND IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE*, AND EMILY BRONTË'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the presentation of the orphan child in eighteenth and early nineteenth century English literature, and focuses on William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. It is concerned with assessing the extent to which the orphan children in each of the works are liberated from familial and social constraints and structures and to what end.

Chapter One examines the major thematic concern of the extent to which the motif of the orphan child represents a wronged innocent, and whether this symbol can also, or alternatively, be presented as a revolutionary force that challenges society's status quo in Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

Chapter Two considers the significance of the child "lost" and "found", which forms the explicit subject of six of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and explores the treatment of these conditions, and their differences and consequences for the children concerned.

Chapter Three focuses on Charlotte Brontë's depiction of the orphan in *Jane Eyre*, which presents two models of the orphan child: the protagonist Jane, and Helen Burns. The chapter examines these two models and their responses to orphan-hood in a hostile world where orphans are mistreated by family and society alike.

Chapter Four determines whether the orphan constitutes a subversive threat to the family in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and also explores the notion that, although orphan-hood often entails liberation from adult guardians, it also comprises vulnerability and exposure.

The thesis concludes by considering the extent to which orphan-hood can involve a form of liberation from the confines of social structures, and what this liberation constitutes for each of the three authors.

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Note on References and Abbreviations

I have followed the MLA guide to referencing in this thesis, and full versions of all references can be found in the Bibliography.

I have included Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* under "Primary Texts" in the Bibliography even though I have not referred to it as such - however, because of the nature of the work it could not be placed under "Secondary Texts".

Throughout the study, I have abbreviated the full title of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience: Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* to either *Songs of Innocence and Experience* or *Songs*.

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Introduction

"The Lamb misus'd breeds
Public strife"
– William Blake
"Auguries of Innocence" (Blake 431)

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore various presentations of the orphan child in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English literature through a comparative close analysis of a selection of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, and Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*. The term "orphan", when used in this study, denotes either a child "both of whose parents are dead" or "one of whose parents has died" (*OED Online)*. Where metaphorical orphaning is discussed, the term's extended definition of "an abandoned or neglected child" will be employed (*OED Online)*. An examination of whether orphan-hood constitutes a form of liberation from the confines of family and social structures will also form a central focus of the study.

The numerous texts depicting the plight of the orphan in the eighteenth century reflect the anxieties surrounding orphans and illegitimate children in the "century of illegitimacy" (Zunshine 1), for the upsurge in illegitimacy that commenced around 1750 is a phenomenon that historians and demographers argue permeated every level of society and played a crucial role in the economic, social, and cultural life of the Enlightenment (Ibid). Examples of eighteenth century novels dealing with orphan-hood would be Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (published in 1749), Edward Moore's *The Foundling*, and the anonymous *Fatherless Fanny* (Ibid 6-7). These novels are, however, concerned with the adult protagonist rather than with the predicament of the orphan child, and it is in the nineteenth century that the trend for orphan children as central characters, and even protagonists, of novels becomes common. Amongst the most famous of these are the orphan characters of Charles Dickens: Oliver Twist and Little Dick in *Oliver Twist* (first published in book form in 1838), Pip in *Great Expectations* (published in serial form between 1860 and 1861), Smike in *Nicholas Nickleby* (published between 1838 and 1839), and Charley in *Bleak House* (published between

1852 and1853). Thus, although orphans and orphan children abound in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature, the combination of, and tension between, liberation deriving from the state of orphan-hood and the real or perceived subversive potential of this state, for society and the family, is perhaps most complexly dealt with in the writings of Blake and the Brontë sisters, hence the explicit focus on their writings in this study.

Before examining the significance of different presentations of the orphan child as portrayed by the three writers, several significant historical shifts in attitudes towards children need to be taken into account. The notion of a major shift in attitudes towards children during the eighteenth century has formed the basis of several historically based studies including Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, and Philippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, both of which posit that before the eighteenth century the concept of childhood did not exist and that prior to this many children were not treated with affection by their parents. The kind of shift posited in these studies has recently come under scrutiny, and has, for the most part, been discredited by later studies. In an essay entitled "Children in Early Modern England", Keith Thomas explodes several myths, including the long held belief that there was no medieval conception of childhood. Despite debunking these fallacies Thomas admits that the older picture of early modern England as portrayed by his predecessors is not entirely unfounded: he argues that the poor could not afford to prolong childhood because children needed to earn their living as soon as possible, and the emphasis on "Original Sin" as espoused especially by Calvinist doctrine meant that young children were thought to exemplify it as much as did adults (Thomas, Keith 47).

In the eighteenth century the concept of "Original Sin" was one of several competing theories that attempted to determine what influenced human nature and specifically the nature of the infant. Other significant theories included the "*tabula rasa*" (blank tablet) argument, the "biological" theory, and the theory of "innate purity". The notion of "Original Sin" was strongly present in traditional Calvinist theology and posited that children are born sinners and need to be restrained by society. The theory of "*tabula rasa*", promulgated by English philosopher and physician John Locke, argued that children are affected by the environment in which they are reared. The "biological theory" put forward the idea that the child's character is determined at conception and

that subsequent environmental influences have little effect (Stone 255).The fourth view, that of "innate purity", maintained that the child is born good and is corrupted by society.

This theory of "innate purity" formed the foundation of French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau's seminal eighteenth century educational work *Émile*, which was published in 1762. Despite the sexism exhibited in his educational policies, which was noted and interrogated by some women educationalists of the Enlightenment, Rousseau's theories gained currency in England, together with those of John Locke. Drawing on the theories of these philosophers, a number of Enlightenment educationalists focused on ensuring that children developed into rational, responsible adults – thereby ensuring that childhood was a "a stage on the great turnpike of improvement" (Porter 353).

The doctrine of "Original Sin", a central tenet of Calvinist doctrine, also influenced mainstream Christian belief during the early decades of the eighteenth century, and is discernible in the belief of Hannah More, one of the leading Evangelical educators, that infants brought into the world "a corrupt nature, and evil disposition, which it should be the great end of education to rectify" (Porter 339-340). Thus, 'spare the rod and spoil the child' sentiments, in line with the tenet of "Original Sin", often resulted in brutal child-rearing practices being preached and practised (Ibid 340). This sort of treatment was not limited to the poor, but extended across all levels of society, with beatings at home, school, and in the workplace being a common occurrence for many children (Ibid). The relentless imposition of corporal punishment was also exacerbated by the notion that children were the private property of their parents, or those *in loco parentis* (Ibid).

Although such beliefs permeated all levels of society, some thinkers began to challenge such hard line views (Porter 340). One such thinker was John Locke, whose '*tabula rasa*' theory put forward the idea that human nature was malleable, and stressed that the child should learn through self-control. Adults should thus appeal to reason and attempt to win over the child's will rather than resort to beatings in order to instil discipline and build character (Ibid 341).

This Enlightenment emphasis on reason is evident in the literature of the period, for it seems apparent to many eighteenth century writers and thinkers that the young are beings of passion (Meyer Spacks 91). The belief that reason should always control

passion remained central to didactic teachings which promoted the idea that moral dilemmas in the lives of the young derived from the fact that the passions reach highest intensity before reason has fully developed (Ibid 109). In order to prevent the domination of passion, childhood was viewed by many as a preparatory period that enabled parents and society to promote and inculcate religious training, schooling, and appropriate social skills (Jackson 21). These views were fostered by many adults who held to the notion of the child as an incomplete, diminutive adult who differs only in quantity of experience or fixity of character (Ibid 21). Once again, Locke's influence is apparent here: in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* published in 1693, he had placed the onus on parents, schoolmasters, and eventually government for what is written on the blank slate of the child's mind (Postman 57). He also recognised the importance of shame as a powerful teaching and motivational tool in improving the self-control of children and argued that "[e]steem and disgrace are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind, when once it is brought to relish them. If you can get into children a love of credit, and an apprehension of shame and disgrace, you have ... put into 'em the true principle" (Ibid).

Thus, in theory, good parenting practices would result in children developing into rational, responsible adults, yet the very fact that children require guidance and protection makes them vulnerable to various forms of exploitation by adults, including adults within the family circle (Richardson 31). This kind of exploitation was especially apparent among the poorer classes, where children were often viewed as chattels whose interests were not as important as the family's survival and well-being, especially as children were valuable sources of labour in the home as well as in the industrial sector, which enabled them to provide the family with a source of income (Postman 56). The introduction of the idea that the state had the right to act as a protector of children, which came about during the mid-eighteenth century, was thus viewed as both novel and radical (Ibid). By the early nineteenth century 195 000 children of paupers were permanently relieved by parishes, and as the state recognised that children contributed to the cycle of poverty of the poor it began attempting to address this problem (Cunningham 111-112).

Yet another complication exacerbating the cycle of poverty was the increase in the numbers of illegitimate children amongst the poorer classes, especially during the eighteenth century. Writing in 1727, Tomas Coram, a champion of the infanticide

prevention campaign, complained about the "daily sight of infant corpses thrown on the dust heaps of London" (Zunshine 4). Poverty-stricken mothers often attempted to conceal their pregnancies and get rid of the infants to avoid shame, the certain loss of employment, and punishment for burdening their parishes with fatherless charges (Ibid). Mothers who could afford a nominal fee could hand over their infants to wet nurses who were willing to starve the babies in their custody (Ibid). In an attempt to improve the situation, the London Foundling Hospital was established in 1739 and explicitly targeted women who had no means of supporting illegitimate children. The hospital selected 150 babies per year for the first part of the 1750s, but in 1756 the hospital received state funding and began taking in around 3000 babies per year over the next five years, over two-thirds of whom died (Cunningham 125). The evidence suggests that the increase in abandonment coincided with state funding as people took advantage of facilities for abandoning their children where this was apparently sanctioned by the state (Ibid).

In theory, the foundling hospitals prevented infanticide, and removed from the streets the scandal of visibly abandoned and potentially riotous children, but above all, it was hoped that the hospitals could aid in producing a population trained from youth for the service of the state (Cunningham 128). Indeed, as the eighteenth century progressed, and as children were increasingly considered a vital source of labour for many industries, it was believed that conditioning poor children to labour might have both an immediate and long-term benefit to the state (Ibid 129). This idea informed the educational polices of the charity schools, the most significant educational initiative in England during the early eighteenth century. By the 1720s, these schools saw the need for incorporating labour into the curriculum and in the second half of the eighteenth century Houses of Industry were established to put the poor to work, many of them children (Ibid). The increasing number of children in the Houses of Industry was implicitly acknowledged when, from the 1780s, they were renamed Schools of Industry (Ibid). In addition to preparing children for their roles in the marketplace by teaching them skills pertinent to these roles, the charity schools also taught their pupils the deferential manners which would make them attractive to employers (Sommerville 105). As needy and neglected as these children were, some contemporary critics were concerned that the schools promoted ambitious thoughts that made children uppity or rebellious (Ibid).

For many children this was far from the case for, although child labour had existed for centuries, during the later years of the eighteenth century the exploitation of children rapidly grew worse. Industrialisation not only increased the demand for child labour, but it also produced novel forms of employment for children (Pollock 61). Parish children were sent into the navy as "powder monkeys" and into factories where they worked until they dropped (Sommerville 107). Other children were employed in mills where they were housed in crowded sheds and worked to the point of exhaustion (Hibbert 469). It was not until 1819 that it was made illegal to employ children under nine in cotton mills and to keep older children at work for more than twelve hours a day (Ibid). This law was, however, frequently ignored. Children also found work in weeding fields, picking fruit, scaring crows, working aboard ships, and as crossing-sweepers (Ibid). Girls were worked relentlessly as lace makers and handloom weavers, and little boys were employed as chimney sweeps (Sommerville 160). Chimney sweeps are thought to embody one of the most harrowing cases of eighteenth and nineteenth century exploitation and cruelty. Not only were they forced to climb chimneys naked, but they had their feet pricked with needles to drive them up and, if this failed, fires were lit in the grate. Since only the smallest bodies could fit up the chimneys boys were often starved to keep them small, and infant sweeps were a familiar sight in London as parish authorities apprenticed boys as young as four or five (Langford 502). Their work was extremely dangerous: not only were they at risk of falling from great heights, but they also suffered from a range of ailments and injuries including abrasions, wounds, contorted bones, urinary complaints and cancer of the scrotum due to internal and external contact with soot (Ibid). In summer, when there was little work available, the sweeps were hired out to other tradesmen or left to fend for themselves without food or money (Ibid). If they survived to twelve or fourteen, they were too big for their trade and broken in health (Ibid).

Despite such gross examples of exploitation and cruelty surrounding them, many observers believed that poverty was a necessary if regrettable state; and that the work of the labouring poor, including that of children, was essential to the economy, and a benefit to society, which could not exist without poverty as an incentive (Hibbert 469).

Contemporaneous with the worst forms of child labour and exploitation, the Romantic movement (circa 1770-1851) revolutionised literature, art, and philosophy. Not only were writers reacting against and, in many instances critiquing, their Enlightenment predecessors, but a significant philosophical shift occurred as well, particularly with regard to attitudes towards children. For the Romantic writers, the argument for state-supported education, legislation protecting the general well-being of children, and for the curtailment of child labour, rested on the powerful belief that the child represented an image of God, or of our own best selves (Jackson 26).

The dominance of "reason" during the Enlightenment was slowly undermined by Romantic theorists. The Romantics did not simply advocate an emotional counter-weight to reason, but argued that reason as it was conceptualised during the Enlightenment was inadequate in attempting to understand the mysteries of the world, and that a different mode of apprehension was required. In this climate of intellectual and philosophical change, attitudes towards children altered significantly, with graphic artists and writers often envisaging the child as "the purest expression of the human" (Porter 353).

The child became an important motif in the literature of the Romantic period and figured prominently in the work of eighteenth century poet William Blake. In his *Songs of Innocence* (published in 1789) and its companion volume *Songs of Experience* (published in 1794), portions of which were originally composed for children, Blake avoided didactic fulminations about sin and divine punishment and focused on "the intensity and purity of childhood vision, laying emphasis on the god-like qualities in [humankind]" (Wu 170). Rejecting the idea that "society cannot exist without a class of poor", which was propagated by many in the Established Church, he argued that "if there were not 'so many children poor' there would be no need for institutions and moral codes" (Erdman 273-274). Society's treatment of children, portrayed by Blake as wronged innocents, is a particular thematic concern of several of the *Songs*, which often focused on how children are nurtured, what needs to be nurtured in children, and the failure of parents, or those *in loco parentis*, to nurture children. Through his poetry Blake was responding profoundly to the dominance of "reason" in the Enlightenment, and was also reacting against the narrow, unimaginative, and rule-bound practices of orthodox religion. In doing so, he rejected the traditional Protestant view of the child as "an

unformed person who through literacy, education, reason, self-control, and shame may be made into a civilised adult" (Postman 59), and aligned himself with the emerging Romantic views which recognised that "it is not the unformed child but the deformed adult who is the problem; [and that] the child possesses as his or her birthright capacities for candour, understanding, curiosity, and spontaneity that are deadened by literacy, education, reason, self-control, and shame" (Ibid).

Of special interest is Blake's sympathetic rendering of the orphaned and abandoned child; for it is often the orphan child (whether orphaned literally or metaphorically) who, though often portrayed as a sacrificial lamb on the altars of patriarchy, the state, and orthodox Christianity, is at the same time a potential threat to the status quo of society.

In tracing the motif of the orphan through the early nineteenth century, two novels published by the Brontë sisters in 1847 are significant. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* both offer presentations of orphan children, although their depictions are vastly different. The Brontës' depictions also differ from those of their contemporary Charles Dickens, who published several serialised works dealing with orphan children, including two that preceded the Brontë novels: *Oliver Twist* (published in 1838-9) and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (published in 1840).

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* presents two central models of the orphan: the protagonist Jane, and Helen Burns. Jane is viewed as an intruder into the Reed family circle and is continually reminded of her inferior status as a dependant:

> Jane's orphaned status and her role as a family dependant [warrants] her alienation from "gentleman's children." Being "poor" and an "orphan" thus underlies Jane's difference and persecution. [She is made to understand] the socioeconomic power of the family in determining one's place in the world. (Lamonica 71)

However, Jane repeatedly challenges this notion, thereby presenting a threat to the conventional family. She is a direct contrast to Helen Burns, the saintly orphan martyr figure.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, rejects any type of traditional patriarchal religion. The major orphan figure is Heathcliff who, as a stranger

brought into the Earnshaw home, creates confusion and brings destruction. He is referred to as both a "cuckoo" (Brontë 30), and an "it" (31), raising questions about his origins, as well as about his 'humanness'. With his introduction, the identities of the Earnshaw children are shaken, illustrating that, like Jane Eyre, Heathcliff is a subversive figure threatening the family unit.

This study posits a comparison focused on the presentation of the orphan child by Blake and the Brontë sisters. This connection is complicated by the writers' different conceptions of what constitutes an orphan, both literally and metaphorically. It thus seems that, in tracing the representations of this figure in the writings of these three writers, several questions arise. What constitutes literal and metaphorical orphaning for each writer? Are orphans, whether literal or metaphorical, always viewed as objects of pity? Do orphans always occupy a liminal and subversive space in the family as well as in society? Most importantly, to what extent does orphan-hood constitute a form of liberation from the confines of family and social structures? Using these questions as a basis, a comparative study of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* will be undertaken.

Chapter One explores the extent to which Blake's motif of the orphan child represents a sacrificial lamb on the altars of society and orthodox Christianity, whilst also representing the transforming power of the imagination that allows these orphans (whether literal or metaphorical) to survive their often horrific circumstances. Chapter Two examines Blake's treatment of the leitmotif of the child 'lost' and 'found', which forms the explicit subject of six poems, each of which deals with metaphorical orphaning and its implications for the child involved. Chapter Three considers Charlotte Brontë's rendering of the orphan in *Jane Eyre*, and determines the implications of orphan-hood for the two models of the orphan child presented in the novel. The fourth and final chapter looks at the notion of the orphan as subversive to the established notion of the family in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and attempts to determine to what extent the children in the novel, as Stevie Davies contends, are orphaned and exposed through their liberation from adult guardians (*Emily Brontë* 43).

Chapter One

The Blakean Orphan as Sacrificial Lamb

He who mocks the Infants Faith
Shall be mock'd in Age and Death.
He who shall teach the Child to Doubt
The rotting grave shall ne'er get out.
He who respects the Infants faith
Triumphs over Hell and Death.
- William Blake "Auguries of Innocence" (85-90) (Blake 433)

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore the extent to which Blake's motif of the orphan child represents a sacrificial lamb on the altars of society and orthodox Christianity in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, whilst also representing the transforming power of the imagination that allows these orphans (whether literal or metaphorical) to survive their often horrific circumstances. The implications of this will be examined in six poems: "Holy Thursday" in the *Songs of Innocence* and its counterpart in the *Songs of Experience*; "The Chimney Sweeper" counterparts in the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*, and "The Little Vagabond" and "The School Boy". In order to analyse these poems effectively however several terms need to be elucidated according to Blake's understanding of them.

In an essay entitled "William Blake, Songs of Innocence and of Experience", Nelson Hilton argues that

> [f]ollowing his own interpretation of the gospel, Blake thinks 'every Thing to be Evident to the Child", and writes that 'the innocence of a child' can reproach the reader 'with the errors of acquired folly'. His songs 'about' or 'from the perspective of' a guiltless point of view offer parables to test what such pure perception might be, and how our sense might be folly. (104)

Blake's conceptions of "pure perception" and "acquired folly" are set out in his manifesto "ALL RELIGIONS are ONE" (Blake 98), which was etched about 1788. In this manifesto, he was reacting to scientific knowledge based on Isaac Newton's theory of the universe (which was formulated during the 1680s) and its premise that there are physical

laws that govern everything in the universe, and that these can be known through science and mathematics. Blake rejected this in its entirety, not on any scientific basis but because, for him, this framework has its own inherent limitations which cannot be transcended as it is mechanistic and therefore can only ever be partial and inadequate. Accordingly, in this limited view of the world there is no scope for the imagination and it is thus an inferior form of knowledge that is ultimately destructive to the human spirit, and what Blake refers to as the "*Poetic Genius*" in "ALL RELIGIONS are ONE".

The manifesto's "argument" states that "[a]s the true method of knowledge is experiment, the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences" (Blake 98), and it appears that the "faculty which experiences" refers to the imagination, Blake's term for which seems to be the "*Poetic Genius*" (Damon 16). In "Principle 2nd" of the manifesto, Blake states that "[a]s all men are alike in outward form, [s]o (and with the same infinite variety) all are alike in the Poetic Genius" (Blake 98). The implication here is that the "*Poetic Genius*" is defined as an inherent and fundamental essence not exclusive to the practising poet or artist, but within every human being. In "Principle 4th" Blake argues that "[a]s none by travelling over known lands can find out the unknown, [s]o from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more: therefore an universal Poetic Genius exists" (Blake 98), which implies that 'finding out the unknown' requires exercising the imaginative faculty. Thus, for Blake, the imagination is the sovereign faculty, and one that enables us to move beyond a circumscribed reality in order to attain new knowledge. Moreover, Blake also believed that all of the senses as well as the imagination need to be actively involved in the way in which we engage with the world, and this is made explicit in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (etched between 1790 and 1793), where the poet-speaker states that "[i]f the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite" (Blake 154).

Throughout his oeuvre, Blake was also reacting against the narrow, unimaginative practices of the Established Church which he saw as cold, judgemental, unaccommodating, and promoting a morality which imposed constraints on the "*Poetic Genius*". Blake believed that in order to revolutionise the institutions and practices of orthodox Christianity, there had to be a recovery of the imaginative, spiritual, and mystical dimensions of religion, for "it [was] only in Blake's own time that the cult of

reason and nature [had] been precipitated from Christianity and made into a dogmatic system with all loopholes for the imagination sealed off' (Frye 53). He also rejected orthodox Christianity's dualism and its separation of the body and soul, as he believed that it was fundamentally wrong to see the body as inherently sinful and the soul as something transcendent because he was concerned with locating the divine within humanity by arguing for a reverence of the "*Poetic Genius*" within the human body. Blake did not, however, simply eschew reason but argued that reason and rational discourse cannot supplant and displace the creative faculty of humanity, for it is the imagination which can explore possibilities for humanity's liberation from the constraints of orthodox religion and society.

To return to Hilton's argument that Blake's *Songs* "'about' or 'from the perspective of' a guiltless point of view offer parables to test what ... pure perception might be, and how our sense might be folly" ("William Blake" 104), it is evident that the state of "innocence" embodied by children offers adults a way to alter the manner in which they engage with the world through imagination. At the same time, the *Songs* offer us the consequences of stifling the imaginative faculty in both children and adults. In many of the *Songs* children are presented as having "pure perception" because their "*Poetic Genius*" has not been corrupted and limited by experiences within narrow parameters which are often accepted and endorsed unquestioningly by the adult. Of course, despite the fact that the poems supposedly show the "Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" as the full title of the *Songs* reads, they do not simply bewail the corruption of "innocence" through "experience", for as Plate 3 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* reads, "[w]ithout Contraries is no progression" (Blake 149). Thus, although there is an implied opposition in the title, Blake would have rejected this kind of easy formulation and hence it is more appropriate to think of the two states as engaging in dialogue (Wu 170).

Indeed, as many of the *Songs* demonstrate, there has to be a descent into "experience" for any growth of the "*Poetic Genius*" to take place. Many critics have argued otherwise however. For Foster Damon,

> ["innocence" and "experience"], as the full title of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* indicates, are the "Two Contrary States of the Human Soul," ecstasy and misery, or heaven and hell.
>
> "Innocence" was the standard term for man before his Fall; Blake extended the meaning to the state of childhood, into which we are all born, a state of free imagination and spontaneous joy.
>
> "Experience" is Blake's term for the contrary of Innocence; it is man's state when disaster has destroyed the initial bliss. (197)

This definition is too simplistic because while "experience" entails cynicism, brutality, hypocrisy, the oppression of self and the suppression of others, it also entails an awareness of the dangers and consequences of mindless conformity to societal and religious norms and regulations, repression of the "*Poetic Genius*", submission to authority that is not designed to advance humanity, and the distortion of human potential, or extinction of divinity within humanity. Blake's representation of the state of "experience" also highlights the fact that the denial and repression of elements of humanity that are destructive may be more damaging to the individual than their expression. Furthermore, "innocence" is not purely positive, as it involves naivety and delusion, against which Blake cautions as perpetuating vulnerability to exploitation. As Jean Hagstrum contends, "[e]xperience is not primarily a state of nature. It is psychological, political, social – a condition of [humankind] and [its] institutions, not of the universe. … Experience is the work of the church, state, and [humankind] in society" (530). It is not however necessarily 'evil' and Blake does not attach moral values to either state. The *Songs of Experience* do not speak in an identical voice about the same thing and neither do they depict only negative characteristics of human nature, but they do offer different ways of dealing with its contradictory elements, and "innocence" and "experience" are not mutually exclusive states but conditions that can co-exist in human consciousness.

The transition from "innocence" to "experience" often involves the internalisation of rules, regulations, and conventions. Thus, for adults in the realm of "experience",

> [c]ontact with innocents can afford us flashes of insight in which the distinctions between subject and object, self and other fall away, and in which [humanity's] creative powers are revealed as divine. But moments of this sort are hard to retain or prolong. They quickly dissolve with the

> return of adult or experienced habits of mind that obscure any sense of unity of inter-relation, and restrict our imaginative capacities. (Leader 92)

Blake is able to depict these states of human nature through a complex use of symbolism which, while linked to traditional Christian symbolism, refashions it. In addition, children often embody the state of "innocence" as they are "still close to the Eternity from which they came ... and [are] as yet uncorrupted by Experience. ... [They] symbolize the fecundity of the imagination" (Damon 81). Blake often uses orphan children (both literal and metaphorical orphans) to demonstrate the "pure perception" (Hilton "William Blake" 104) of "innocence" while juxtaposing this with the marginal space these children are granted in the rule-bound and often unimaginative adult society within which they exist. Thus, "[t]he 'acquired folly' which innocence challenges concerns especially religious ceremony, tedious hymns and conventional theology, and [the] want of perception [these rituals entail]" (Ibid 105). The "acquired folly" (Ibid) evident in society, religion, and patriarchy is questioned by many innocents in the *Songs*, and those marginalised by these institutions: namely, orphaned children. While taking cognisance of the opposition between "pure perception" (Ibid 104) and "acquired folly" (Ibid 105) in "Holy Thursday" (both in *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*), "The Chimney Sweeper" (both in *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*), "The Little Vagabond", and "The School Boy", these terms are also useful for the examination of a major thematic concern: to what extent the symbol of the orphan child represents a wronged innocent and whether it can also, or alternatively, be viewed as a revolutionary force that challenges society's status quo.

The tension between "acquired folly" and "pure perception" is also evident in the manner in which Blake employs language. In attempting to react against the platitudinous moral and rational discourse that characterised many educational and religious writings of the eighteenth century, Blake seems to have accepted that language is contingent on the social institutions and practices of the period. Thus, in his own writing Blake reconfigured language through complex and often ironic language play, illustrating that he saw language as a primary subject within his own mythology (Esterhammer 69).The "Introduction" to the *Songs of Innocence* (Blake 111), sets the tone for language play and ambiguity throughout the *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience* and also serves as an expression of Blake's views on language. It appears that Blake believed that there is no

single version, or vision, towards which writing gestures: instead, he was concerned with tracing the clash of contraries and subverting the tendency to settle into fixed oppositions (Mitchell 144).

As mentioned previously, for Blake, the imagination in conjunction with the senses need to be employed in our engagement with the world. This idea is evident in the "Introduction" where the word "hear" is emphasised. Not only is the word repeated three times in the poem, but it recurs frequently throughout the *Songs*. The repetition of this word implicitly asks, "do you hear?" (Hilton "Blake in the Chains of Being" 76), and in "London" (Blake 216) Blake emphasises this question constantly. In "London" the speaker not only records what s/he hears with her/his physical sense of hearing, but also what s/he believes to be the symbolic and/or implicit sounds of human suffering and the corruption of the human spirit: the "mind-forg'd manacles" (8) and the "[h]arlot's curse" are two examples of this. There also appears to be an embedded command to "hear": the first letter of the first word in each line of the third stanza spells the word "hear" and acts as a prompt for the reader to hear "[h]ow the Chimney-sweepers cry / Every black'ning Church appalls (9-10) and how "the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down palace walls" (11-12).

As is evident in many of the *Songs*, language and word play are vital in the creation of meaning, often in unique or unconventional ways. The ambiguity present in the poems is not necessarily used negatively however, for words which seem ironic and cynical in one context can be transformed by speakers who possess "innocence" and who, through imaginative vision, are able to recreate meaning and offer new possibilities for moral and social models. Even though the Blakean orphan can be presented as a sacrificial lamb, it is also imperative to look at how the child views herself/himself within the marginal social space in which they often find themselves, and how, often unwittingly, the child is able to transcend the boundaries imposed on her/him by employing the "pure perception" and uncorrupted imaginative vision afforded by "innocence".

The juxtaposition of the "pure perception" (Hilton "William Blake" 104) of children and the "acquired folly" (Ibid 105) of adults is particularly evident in "The Chimney Sweeper" poems. Martin Nurmi contextualises the poems thus:

> [w]riting at the time of the passage of the "Chimney Sweepers' Act" of 1788, when newspapers and reformers like Jonas Hanway were publicizing the treatment of the sweeps, Blake could depend on his readers being aware of the facts in a way that modern readers are not. And he can therefore express his deep outrage obliquely and ironically, through the understated discourse of boys who, in the symbolic context of *Songs of Innocence & of Experience*, have somehow learned to preserve their humanity in circumstances that are all but completely dehumanizing. (15)

In "The Chimney Sweeper" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 117), the sweep-speaker reveals that the death of his mother and neglect of his father have led to him being "sold" (2) into bondage, a fact made more horrific as he reveals that he was abandoned in his infancy. He tells us that he was "very young" (1) and that when he was "sold" his "tongue / Could scarcely cry ''weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'" (2-3). The term "sold" (2) is to be interpreted in a literal sense for, in handing over a child to a master, parents or guardians received a payment ranging from twenty shillings to five guineas (Nurmi 16). Significantly, the speaker's detachment from his unfortunate circumstances and his unselfconsciousness heighten the reader's sense of the actuality he relates (Hilton "William Blake" 107). As a result of being sold into hard labour, the child is forced to sweep the chimneys of a society that is blind to his distress and yet, when addressing the members of that very social world his remark "[s]o your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep" (4) contains no hint of bitterness, but it is this simple utterance that implicates the reader as well as other adults, by identifying them as members of a social structure that is built upon the exploitation of others. The word "your" ensures that readers cannot distance themselves from certain uncomfortable truths, and because we are implicated in the social world that is being critiqued, we are not permitted to fall back on complacent or self-righteous pity. The child's unselfconscious reference to his living conditions serves as a direct allusion to the harsh physical reality that sweeps were made to endure: they were made to sleep on bags of soot that they had swept, forced to go for months without bathing, and suffered all kinds of physical abuse. In addition, sweeps were sometimes sold for twenty or thirty shillings, which was less than the value of a terrier (Glen "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking" 35).

With the introduction of Tom Dacre in stanza two, the speaker shifts the focus from himself to another victim of society's abuse and exploitation. Nurmi argues that Tom's weeping signals that he is aware that his haircut is a ritual one and that it transforms him into a subhuman creature (17-18). While the child may recognise this, he is comforted by the older child, whose sympathy is highlighted when he assures Tom that the haircut ensures that the soot cannot "spoil [his] white hair" (8). The older child's utterance also reveals how, even when forced to endure the worst kinds of debasement and indignity, the children can still find beauty in the world: his admiration for Tom's "white hair" (8) which "curl'd" like a lamb's back" (6) allows him to comfort the young boy by affirming that, in his sight, Tom's innocence and beauty cannot be destroyed (Glen "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking" 37). Ultimately, it is the older child who offers Tom a comforting new perspective that transcends his bleak circumstances. The mention of the colour white in line 8 contrasts with the black soot the boys would have been covered in, and is also symbolic of purity, particularly of the boys' moral purity and "innocence" that is not compromised by a hypocritical social and religious system which professes to uphold a just and God-sanctioned morality, but which fails the majority of those like the "thousands of sweepers" (11) that it should protect. Indeed, it is the children's "innocence" that enables them better to endure hardship, and it is through Tom's imaginative vision, which is manifested in his dream, that he is able to reconcile the conflicting forces of the actuality the speaker relates with his own understanding of the world. Despite the fact that the boys exist within a society that has exploited them in the worst possible way, the children have retained their imaginative vision and this enables Tom to take comfort in a dream where he and other suffering children are free from their appalling living and working conditions. The "coffins of black" (12) could possibly refer to the chimneys many sweeps died in, but the fact that the children are released from them is significant symbolically as it could allude to the fact that the coffins represent a world that has been 'blackened' by the moral corruption of the social institutions that are complicit in the children's exploitation (Thompson "London" 16) and ultimately, their deaths (Blake 216). There is also the suggestion that as the children are released from the coffins by an angel they escape the morally corrupt world they had

inhabited to attain liberty in heaven, and this is significant because it implies that despite their abuse and exploitation the children have come to no spiritual harm.

The heaven that Tom imagines contains both an angel, who liberates the children from the coffins, and a benevolent God, who is presented as a father figure. Tom finds the angel's assurance that "if he'd be a good boy, / He'd have God for his father, & never want joy" (19-20) comforting for, although in it we 'hear' the authoritative adults who abuse him, Tom views the words with a child's freshness and innocence. The same injunction to "be a good boy" would probably have been spoken by the adults who exploit him, but the platitude is recreated according to his understanding, and offers him solace so that he is better able to endure his miserable circumstances. There is also the suggestion that, in Blake's terms, 'goodness' and 'being good' imply living one's imaginative potential as Tom as has done.

The harsh realities of a sweep's life presented in the last stanza contrast dramatically with the beauty of Tom's dream, and the fact that the children rise "in the dark" (21) and go "to work" (22) on a cold morning would be bleak indeed were it not for the fact that Tom is sustained by the dream and thus kept "happy & warm" (23). The last line of the poem: "[s]o if all do their duty they need not fear harm" (24) appears to echo a religious commandment and seems to be spoken by another, external speaker. The implication is that those who perform the 'duty' of practising compassion, kindness, and love for one another, are exempt from "harm". What this "harm" constitutes precisely is unclear, but there is an insinuation of a "veiled, innocently spoken threat" (Glen "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking" 39), suggesting that those who purport to uphold religious and moral laws, and who employ religious doctrine to their own ends, need fear harm for their hypocrisy has meant that they have not fulfilled their duty towards others. The word "all" indicates that we are all subject to this law or truth, and thus makes us question our own positions in a society that has been built on the exploitation of others, and how we allow for such exploitation to continue.

The last line of the poem also hints at the possibility of an avenging force or energy at work within society (Glen "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking" 43), and one that will "harm" those who have debased not only themselves but others, like the children in the poem, and the society within which "all" must live. Though sometimes subtle, the

idea of an avenging force at work within society is present in all the *Songs* to be discussed in this chapter, and this avenging force or energy seems to be a result of the destruction or repression of the state of "innocence" within ourselves, as well as others, because of which we destroy the "*Poetic Genius*" of the individual and the collective "*Poetic Genius*" of humanity. The destruction of the "*Poetic Genius*", which constitutes our hope for salvation from the constraints of our own and society's "mind forg'd manacles" (8) (Blake "London" 216), means that we would not be able to imagine new possibilities for humanity.

The religious hypocrisy of a society blind to the injustices it inflicts upon those it marginalises is more fully explored, and criticised in "The Chimney Sweeper" of the *Songs of Experience* (Blake 212). The initial voice is that of an adult observer who identifies the child as "[a] little black thing" (1). The word "black" could be interpreted in a literal sense and refer to the sweep being covered in soot (as often was the case with sweeps, who went for months without bathing), or it could symbolise the stigma attached to being a sweep, for they were often considered dispensable objects who existed on the fringes of society. After being prompted by the speaker the child reveals that he has been abandoned by his parents who have "both gone up to the church to pray" (4), and it is significant that he does not go: sweeps were not welcome at church (Nurmi 18); and yet this is not the reason for his distress. Rather it stems, from the fact that "[b]ecause [although he] was happy upon the heath" (5) his parents "clothed [him] in the clothes of death" (7) and taught [him] to sing the notes of woe" (8), intimating that he has been orphaned metaphorically by parents and society alike. The boy recognises that as a sweep he is sold into the kind of bondage where there is the very real possibility he will be worked to death, hence his observation that he has been clothed in the "clothes of death" (7) and the "notes of woe" (8) not only demonstrate his dismay, but probably also allude to the cries of sweeps advertising their services on city streets.

Despite the boy's astute insight into the social and religious world that his parents inhabit, the child has not yet entered the state of "experience", for the fact that he is still happy and dances and sings (9) reveals that he has retained some of the spontaneity, energy, and joy of "innocence". The child's "innocence" serves as a reminder of what his parents, and other adults like them, have lost. These adults have repressed their

inherent "innocence" to such an extent that they can no longer relate to, or value, the qualities the state affords, especially in relation to others. They have chosen instead to subscribe to a God, priest, and king who demand allegiance and who, like their followers, are devoid of the 'divine spark' of the "*Poetic Genius*".

The child's perceptive analysis of the adult world he describes means that he is aware of the disparity between prayers and suffering for he recognises that God and 'divine law' may be distorted and have many injustices carried out in their name (Gillham *Blake's Contrary States* 45). The child also comprehends that it is "God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery" (11-12) since it is this artificial, human-made trinity that dominates the adult world, and has led to the a corruption of the human mind and repression of the "*Poetic Genius*", which means that the sufferings of the innocent, including children like the sweep, go unheard or unheeded. The words "make up" (12) also hint that the God, priest, and king create their own rules and regulations and impose a hierarchical social structure for their own benefit and to the detriment of others. With the words "our misery" (12), the poem's focus moves away from the child's misery to encompass society as a whole. It seems that the point being made here is that "[t]yranny requires a priesthood and a god first, and these make it permanent. Religion has been called the opiate of the people; but religion in its conventionally accepted and socially established form is far more dangerous than any opiate, the effects of which are transitory" (Frye 60). In addition to religious tyranny, the "misery" (12) inherent in this artificial, hierarchical social order includes the complete submission to authority, which is inimical to humanity and to the "*Poetic Genius*". Thus,

> [the sweep's] father and mother have turned a happy boy into a symbol of death. Once a year he still does dance and sing – on May Day, when London streets are given to the sweeps and milkmaids to perform for alms in grotesque symmetry. *The Chimney Sweeper* is saying to the London citizen: you salve your conscience by handing out a few farthings on May Day, but if you really listened to this bitter cry among the snow you and your icy church would be appalled. (Erdman 275)

The God, Priest and King who are responsible for the misery of sweeps' lots are also critiqued in the "Holy Thursday" poems. In the "Holy Thursday" of the *Songs of*

Innocence (Blake 121), the reader is immediately introduced to children led by "[g]rey-headed beadles" (3) entering St. Paul's Cathedral on Holy Thursday. In this poem Blake describes the service for 6000 or so of the poorest children in the charity schools of London, held in St Paul's cathedral, where they would be marched by their beadles for a 'compulsory exhibition of their piety and gratitude to their patrons' on the first Thursday in May from 1782 onwards (Wu 186). The 'generosity' of some of these patrons was however, motivated by a false and complacent piety for, during the mid-eighteenth century, pamphleteers like those from the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers promoted the idea that society cannot exist without a class of poor (Erdman 273). Furthermore, this Association, and those like it, claimed that as the hierarchical structure of society was sanctioned by the Bible, the poor should be taught that their sufferings were necessary, natural, and not to be remedied by laws or constitutional changes (Ibid 273-274). The so-called "charity schools" that were established for children of the poor were often nothing more than extensions of Sunday schools, with the ability to recite the Church catechism and read from the Bible considered an adequate education (Ellis 16).

The speaker of "Holy Thursday" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 121) is an adult observer who observes the parade without viewing the children as objects of charity, pity, or contempt. In stanza one, instead of moralising over what s/he sees, the speaker admires the spectacle of the parade and the vitality of the children (Glen "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking" 48).The children's liveliness and colourfulness is contrasted with the colourlessness of the beadles and their wands. The wand, particularly, symbolises the religious authority of the established Church and institutionalised religion, and the fact that it is as "white as snow" (3) suggests the frigidity of humanly-instituted moral purity, as opposed to the warmth and exuberance of "innocence" that the children embody (Gleckner 13). The wand is also suggestive of the concept of "duty" (Ibid), specifically religious duty and the 'duty' of worship, concepts which were rejected by Blake as they were diametrically opposed to his conceptions of freedom and spontaneity. The sterility and frigidity of the beadles and what they represent contrasts with the energy and vitality of the children in line 4, where they are likened to "Thames' waters", which links them to

the symbol of life, thereby reinforcing the importance of the state of "innocence" they embody.

In stanzas one and two, the children's innocence is emphasised repeatedly, as they are described as having "innocent faces" (1), raising their "innocent hands" to heaven (8), and are also described as "multitudes of lambs" (7). There is thus an implicit connection between the children and the figures of Christ the Lamb and the Christ-child born in a manger. The children's innocence does not mean, however, that they adopt the meekness, patience, and suffering of Christ, but rather they take on the mantle of Blake's conception of "innocence", for by the end of the poem they are an overwhelming presence with the force of mighty angels (Glen *Vision and Disenchantment* 123): "O what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London town! / ... The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of lambs, ... / Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song, / Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among" (5-10) (Blake 122). These lines echo Revelation 4: 14: 'And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying Allelulia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth' (Glen *Vision and Disenchantment* 124), but Blake reconstructs the Biblical imagery and symbolism because, although the children are seen as angels (12), they are not messengers of Christ, but rather signal "the immanence of a quite other possibility *within* the apparently immutable facts of an unequal society: that of a *communitas* in which traditional hierarchies might be reversed and the powerful potential of those who had hitherto been 'reduc'd to misery' might harmoniously be realized" (Ibid 127). That is, the children are seen as messengers representing the potential for revolutionary change of the existing social order to one where the innocent are no longer exploited and where even those who inhabit the realm of "experience", including adults, could be free to fully explore human potential without fear of religious retribution or social alienation.

The reiteration of the word "multitudes" in line 7 suggests that the children represent a force which might well come to oppose the restrictions of the social position they occupy. The sense of the possibility for revolutionary change, as well as the possibility of coming retribution for those who have chosen to ignore the plight of the "multitudes" (7) is reinforced in the last stanza, where the children's voices are likened to "a mighty wind" which they "raise to heaven" (9) and their "thunderings" (10) appear to

resonate there. In line 11 there is the implication that the seating arrangements symbolically overturn the social hierarchy, indicating that the children are morally and imaginatively 'above' their guardians (Behrendt 68). The last line of the poem: "Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door" (12), appears to be a 'moral' that has been appended, but is incongruous with the imagery that has preceded it. In addition, the two active verbs pose two alternatives that offer no comfortable resolution: here, you either "cherish pity" or you "drive an angel from your door" (Glen *Vision and Disenchantment* 122). What precisely is meant by 'cherishing pity' is unclear, particularly when considered in relation to the ambiguous manner in which pity is described elsewhere in the *Songs*: in "The Divine Image", a Song of *Innocence* (Blake 117), it is described as a virtue "of delight" (3) which has "a human face" (10), and in the first two lines of "The Human Abstract", a Song of *Experience* (Ibid 217), the speaker argues that "Pity would be no more / If we did not make somebody poor" (1-2). If the last line of "Holy Thursday" is indeed intended to be read as a moral it is one that is offered in a context "which emphasises its inconclusiveness and ambiguity [and thus awakens uneasiness] about such 'moral precepts'" (Glen "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking" 51). This uneasiness derives from the fact that pity usually involves a power dynamic, for we often pity those less fortunate than ourselves, and this in turn begs the question: does our pity originate from genuine philanthropic altruism, or is it the result of our wish to appease the guilt about our own privileged social and economic circumstances?

In the "Holy Thursday" of the *Songs of Experience* (Blake 211), the speaker highlights the plight of the children who have been metaphorically orphaned by society, and who, consequently suffer at the hands of unfeeling and "usurous" (4) adults. The first stanza is framed as an angry question and seems to be critiquing religious and moral codes which, though claiming to promote charity and equality, are in fact exploitative:

> Is this a holy thing to see
> In a rich and fruitful land,
> Babes reduc'd to misery,
> Fed with cold and usurous hand? (1-4)

In stanza two the "misery" (3) of the children is emphasised: their "trembling cry" that is meant to be a "song" (5) forms a direct contrast with the "harmonious

thunderings" (10) described in the "Holy Thursday" of the *Songs of Innocence*. Similarly, the potential of the "multitudes" is absent in this poem, where a very bleak picture is presented: there are "so many children poor" (7) in "a land of poverty" (8). This poverty is spiritual as well as literal however, and derives from the "cold and usurous hand" (4) of the God, priest, and king named in the "The Chimney Sweeper" of the *Songs of Experience* (Blake 212). The implication here is that the religious and social institutions and practices that are meant to benefit those who are in need actually only benefit a select and privileged few, thus ensuring that what is meant to be beneficial in society becomes distorted and determined by those who have been corrupted by the same institutions.

There is no clear link between the second and third stanzas, and the third and fourth stanzas appear to be spoken by a different voice. Who is being referred to in the third stanza is unclear: the word "their" (9) could refer either to the children, their adult guardians, or to both groups. If the children are being referred to, the bleakness of the "eternal winter" (12) is a direct contrast to the beauty, colourfulness, and vitality of the "flowers of London town" (5) described in the first poem, and the implication is that even the exuberance and energy of "innocence" cannot survive the moral and religious frigidity described in this poem. There is also the suggestion that the "eternal winter" is the consequence of the restrictions placed on individuals by society and religion, resulting in a loss of imaginative vision and the cruelty, false piety, and greed that are described in the first two stanzas. The loss of imaginative vision not only corrupts the mind and spirit, as it has for those who mete out charity with a "cold and usurous hand" (4), but it also means that adults are unable to empathise with, or relate to, the children in their care; children who, in many ways, embody the "innocence" adults need to preserve both in themselves and in children.

The last two stanzas are spoken in a prophetic tone, and the fourth stanza seems to offer some hope that humankind can find a form of redemption, but what this redemption is, and how it is attained, remains unclear. The threat of the "eternal winter" (12), whether it be in the human mind, or in the hierarchical social structures, appears to be emphasised by the prophetic tone of the third and fourth stanzas, and by the two contrasting visions, and versions, of the possibilities for humanity's future: either we create an "eternal winter" (12) or, through imaginative vision and creativity, we find

ways to ensure that there is equality in society so that "[b]abe can never hunger there, / Nor poverty the mind appall" (15-16). The word "appall" could also well be read as "a pall", intimating that poverty shrouds the mind and effects permanent damage.

Henry Summerfield argues that the last two stanzas recall Christ's words about the Father who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt v. 45) (Summerfield 91). The biblical echoes and parallels that are drawn in the last two stanzas could suggest that the world we inhabit has already become an "eternal winter" (12), and that it is only in heaven that there is no suffering or poverty.

Blake's criticism of false piety and charity is also evident in "The Little Vagabond" (*Songs of Experience*) (Blake 216). The speaker is a vagabond child who, though not a literal orphan, as evinced in the first stanza where the child addresses her/his mother, is metaphorically orphaned by a society which has manipulated and distorted the tenets of Christianity so that only a privileged few benefit from them. The child recognises the religious hypocrisy of the Established Church, which s/he deems to be "cold" (1). The ale-house, on the other hand, is viewed as "healthy & pleasant & warm" (2), and is juxtaposed with the frigid type of religion the child identifies. The most perceptive conclusion the child draws is that the claim of this religion on the human spirit is fraudulent and restrictive: s/he realises that s/he, like society, is being used as a tool in order to maintain the Church's authority, and understands that "[s]uch usage in heaven will never do well" (4). This utterance appears to contain a threat of coming retribution for those who have mistreated the vagabond and others like her/him, though the child may not be aware of this implication.

In order to remedy such ill-usage, the child suggests that, if the Church was more like the ale-house and provided its members with something other than its cold morality and religion, the congregation might be gratified and never "once wish from the Church to stray" (8). The dangers of promoting a false, restricting, and hypocritical morality is evinced in "modest dame Lurch, who is always at Church" with "bandy children" who are disciplined by "fasting" and the "birch" (11-12). This example illustrates how the kind of rule-bound, oppressive religion described has failed both the individual and the society which unquestioningly accepts it.

Like Tom Dacre, the vagabond imagines a benevolent God who is "like a father" (13), and who rejoices to see "[h]is children as pleasant and happy as he" (14): a God entirely different to the one dame Lurch and those like her subscribe to. The idea that all are equal before God is thus taken quite literally in the child's imaginings, so that even the Devil, the quintessential sinner and rebel of traditional Christian teaching, is transformed into one needing "drink and apparel" (16). It is significant that the child imagines the Devil as a vagabond – that is, someone who occupies a similarly marginal position, and yet is recognised and accepted by the benevolent God. The Devil is not portrayed as 'evil' in the poem indeed, it seems that the very notions of 'evil' and 'the Devil' are fictional abstractions created and maintained by the Established Church, for in the child's vision God has "no more quarrel with the Devil" (15) and treats him as he does humankind.

The child's identification of the Devil as a vagabond also suggests that s/he recognises that he is an outcast in much the same way as s/he is, and if the benevolent God could forgive this figure and assimilate him into society, it follows that human society should emulate God's example by assimilating the outcasts into society and treat them with compassion. In moving towards a religious sensibility that is highly individualised, the vagabond child has a means of surviving the harsh reality of her/his circumstances by using her/his imagination and being able to envisage a society that encompasses the principles of equality and empathy.

Like the vagabond child and the chimney sweeper, the speaker of "The School Boy" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 124) is orphaned metaphorically by society. In the first stanza the boy expresses his delight at being able to spontaneously engage with the natural world, but by the second stanza his joy turns to dismay as he describes what it is like to go to school on a "summer morn" (6). His objections about attending school do not involve a humorous litany of complaints that one would expect from a school child, but rather demonstrate a sophisticated insight into how the kind of learning and knowledge promoted there are products of the world of "experience" and do not allow for the development of the imaginative faculty. The child recognises that at school he is watched by a "cruel eye outworn" (8), and this cruelty is manifest in the fact that the adult guardian ensures "[t]he little ones spend the day / In sighing and dismay" (9-10).

The eye is "outworn" (8) because the adult entered the state of "experience" without retaining any of the imaginative vision or vitality of "innocence", which has in turn led to her / his limited view of the world, and one that encourages the unimaginative kind of learning the boy describes in stanzas three and four. This kind of learning does not allow for a creative response to knowledge, but insists on maintaining it in an enclosed "bower" (14).

In stanza four the boy rejects the notion, promoted by some adults in the realm of "experience", that what is routine and passive is considered good, and all that is independent, free, and energetic should be restrained (Frye 63). It is this kind of restraint that makes the boy "forget his youthful spring" (20), intimating that his "innocence" is compromised because he is forced to conform to adult rules and regulations at the expense of his happiness and imaginative responses to the world. The fact that these rules are inimical to human nature, and especially to the nature of children, is made apparent in stanzas five and six. Although stanza five begins as an appeal to the boy's parents, the set of questions is also implicitly posed to society. The child recognises, and implies, that if he loses his imaginative vision he will be lost in the world of "experience" and will be no better than those adults who have compromised his "innocence" and the spontaneity, creativity, and imaginative vitality this state affords.

Perhaps most importantly, the child's questions also force us to consider how we limit not only ourselves but others when we impose restraints on the human spirit and the "*Poetic Genius*". It is unclear whom the word "we" in line 28 refers to and it could refer either to children like the boy, whose promise and potential is threatened by an adult world which values and upholds the characteristics of "experience", or alternatively the word could refer to society as a whole, thus implying that without imagination we cannot survive the "blasts of winter" (30), which possibly refers to the challenges and difficulties of the world of "experience". The real cancer that slowly kills the individual and collective "*Poetic Genius*" is the religious and social indoctrination and cultural conditioning that destroys independence of action, thought, and vision (Behrendt 69).

The six poems examined in this chapter all demonstrate, to some extent, the power of imaginative vision in relation to orphan children. Although the speakers of the "Holy Thursday" poems are adults, both of the perspectives of the children they observe

are accurate: the first poem's speaker recognises the vitality of the charity school children (many of whom would have been literal orphans) and admires their "innocence" without moralising over the children and the spectacle s/he views, and the second poem's speaker observes how society metaphorically orphans children through many kinds of exploitation and abuse. There is the sense however that, though the speaker of the first "Holy Thursday" has retained some form of the "innocence", s/he admires in the children, and the speaker of the corresponding poem recognises the importance of preserving "innocence" in both children and adults, the speakers are as culpable as the rest of society for the plight of the children they describe. That is, though the speakers are correct in their observations, they are uncritical of the fact that they are part of the privileged world which sentimentalises children. As Zachary Leader argues

> [in the second "Holy Thursday" the speaker's] outrage ... is born out of abstract sympathy. Though the speaker cries out for the redress of shameful wrongs, [s/he] does so in a manner which suggests that [s/he] has lost touch with their particular or individual victims. [S/he] never really focuses on what upsets [them]. ... Though [her/his] opinions and attitudes, sparked by meditation on the scene, are laudable, they are also remote and generalized. We react to them as we do to those of many speakers in *Experience*: by agreeing, while at the same time noting a disquieting tendency towards exaggeration and self-righteousness. (Leader 162)

Although the children suffer at the hands of adults, the nature of the "innocence" they embody means that they are able to transcend the grim reality of their exploitation, if only for a time. This is especially evident in the "Holy Thursday" of the *Songs of Innocence*, where the speaker's observations, as well as the symbolism in the poem, seem to indicate that the children are both imaginatively and morally superior to their guardians. The fecundity of imaginative vision that is characteristic of the state of "innocence" is also evinced in Tom Dacre and the little vagabond, both of whom move towards a religious sensibility that is highly individualised and in doing so, create visions that not only comfort them, but allow them to survive the harsh reality of their circumstances. Both the chimney sweeper of the *Songs of Experience* and the school boy recognise the importance of retaining "innocence" and yet exemplify how children who have been orphaned by society assume the mantle of sacrificial lambs, for there is a real

sense that these wronged innocents have had their "innocence" compromised by religious and social restrictions, in the case of the sweep, and by the uncaring, unimaginative adults in the case of the school boy. Both children also recognise that retaining "innocence" and the imaginative vitality the state affords are imperative if they are to navigate the world of "experience" successfully for, without the retention of some "innocence" they risk being transformed into the very adults they critique.

In employing the motif of the orphan child and illustrating how orphans are often both sacrificial lambs and representatives of the imaginative vision which can transcend bleak and circumscribed realities, Blake seems to be addressing two major concerns: how we treat those less fortunate than ourselves, and how we limit and restrict ourselves by adhering to moral, social, and religious codes which are dogmatic and therefore do not allow for other possibilities of social and religious models to be imagined or accepted. Blake appears to be suggesting through the *Songs* that we are responsible for our own spiritual and imaginative well-being, and that all things that can be conceived of by the "*Poetic Genius*" are legitimate possibilities for the liberation of the individual, as well as for society, from the constraints of artificial social and religious structures. Attaining the kind of liberation that is presented to us through the "*Poetic Genius*" may afford humankind some form of redemption or salvation, but precisely how this is attained is unclear. What is made clear however, is that in not employing our "*Poetic Genius*" we perpetuate a cycle of misery that has far-reaching consequences for all members of society. The voices of the orphan children and their observers may present us with poignant examples of human suffering, but they also implicate us all in the creation of the society they criticise and do not allow us to distance ourselves, but force us to question our own positions within that very society.

Chapter Two

Metaphorical Orphaning and the Blakean Child "Lost" and "Found"

Consider me as thine enemy: on me turn all thy fury;
But destroy not these little ones, nor mock the Lord's anointed:
Destroy not by Moral Virtue the little ones whom he hath chosen in preference to thee.
He hath cast thee off for ever: the little ones he hath anointed! (*Jerusalem* Chapter 2, Plate 42, 40-45)
(Blake 670)

Several points regarding Blake's views on religion were mentioned in chapter one, and need to be expanded in order for the six poems which form the focus of this chapter to be better understood. "The Little Boy Lost", "The Little Boy Found", "The Little Girl Lost", "The Little Girl Found", "A Little Boy Lost", and "A Little Girl Lost" all express aspects of Blake's views on religion, while simultaneously offering complex interpretations on the nature of what precisely constitutes metaphorical orphaning and its significant effects for the children involved, as well as for society as a whole.

In the "First Series" of *There is no Natural Religion*, which was etched about 1788, Blake argues in "Principle 2nd" that "[m]an by his reasoning power can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd [sic]" (97), and that since "[m]an's desires are limited by his perceptions, none can desire what he has not perciev'd [sic]" ("Principle 5th") (97). These principles imply that we are limited by our five senses for, although they provide the means with which we attempt to understand our world, they are inadequate if they are not used in conjunction with what Blake call the "*Poetic Genius*" (*All Religions Are One* 97) or "*Poetic Character*" (*There is no Natural Religion* "First Series" 97), which appear to be his terms for the imagination.

The fact that the five senses are inadequate when divorced from the "*Poetic Genius*" is explicitly stated in the "Conclusion" of the "First Series": "[i]f it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again" (97). Blake appears to be arguing that without the divine spark of inspiration the

"*Poetic Genius*" affords, we would not be able to engage with the mysteries of the world in any creative or novel way.

The previous chapter argued that Blake believed that the imagination is the sovereign faculty and it therefore follows that without it any form of knowledge that is derived would be partial and limited. The sovereignty of the "*Poetic Genius*" is expressed in "Principle 1st" of the "Second Series" of *There is no Natural Religion*: "[m]an's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception; he percieves [sic] more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" (Blake 97), and later in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "[w]hat is now proved was once only imagin'd" (Plate 8 Proverb 13) (Ibid 151). Hence, because of its sovereignty, the need to engage the imagination in perception is fundamental. This notion is reinforced when it again emerges in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in the question: "[h]ow do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (Ibid 150).

Once the perception of the five senses has been enlarged by the "*Poetic Genius*", and when "innocence" and "experience" exist in a balance within the individual, the possibility of divinity within humanity is realised, and for Blake this state of existence is both of paramount significance and attainable for every human being, as we all possess the faculty of imagination. The failure to attain, or attempt to attain, this state of existence is the evil consequence of the distortion of human potential resulting from the power of "mind-forg'd manacles" ("London" 8) (Blake 216) created by orthodox religion and a conformist society, and the repression of the "*Poetic Genius*".

In the "application" of the "Second Series" of *There is no Natural Religion*, Blake postulates that "[h]e who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God. He who sees the Ratio only, sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be what he is" (98). Foster Damon argues that the last point describes the "Incarnation" (402), but this is not aligned with Blake's religious ideas, at least not in the traditional Christian understanding of the term. As the "application" of *There is no Natural Religion* posits, divinity is attainable because it is not transcendental, it exists within the human frame. Blake's attack on any religion which posits that God is a transcendent and supreme being is evident in many of his writings, but is perhaps most explicitly expressed in the poem "To Nobodaddy" (which forms part of the collection *Poems and Fragments from the*

Note-Book, written about 1793), where he criticises an impersonal God who is described as the "Father of Jealousy", who is both "silent & invisible" (1-2) (Blake 171), and whose "words & laws" are shrouded in "darkness & obscurity" (5-6). The salvation offered by this kind of God has many conditions attached to it and is not guaranteed. Hence, the only true salvation, Blake seems to argue, exists within humanity and those who are able to fully realise the potential of the *"Poetic Genius"*. There is no 'window period' for the kind of salvation that the *"Poetic Genius"* offers, as it is a process that is eternal and always occurring to some extent (Damon 402). The "application" therefore communicates that this state of divinity is always a possibility for the individual human. Thus, as Northrop Frye asserts,

> the visionary expresses something latent in all [humans]; and just as it is only in themselves that the latter find God, so it is only in the visionary that they can see him found. ... [T]hose who cut their imagination down as far as they can, deny, as far as they can, their own [humanity] and their divinity which is that [humanity]. They will therefore turn their backs on the genius who greatly acts and greatly perceives; but they retain the power to enter into kinship with [it]. (30-31)

Another aspect of Blake's religious notions that need to be considered in examining these six poems is his use of symbolism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he refashions traditional Christian symbolism and imbues it with specifically Blakean aspects. Blake also employed the symbolic potential of maternal and paternal figures in his poetry. The maternal figure is usually a nurturer, although this figure is occasionally portrayed ambiguously, while the paternal figure often represents law, patriarchy, and orthodox Christianity. Accordingly, in order for a child to retain her/his capacity for creativity and "*Poetic Genius*", s/he must rebel against this authoritarian paternal figure. Thus, in examining the leitmotif of the child "lost" and "found", which forms the explicit subject of six of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, this chapter will consider how the metaphorical orphan is often perceived by an authoritarian religious structure as being subversive. Blake's treatment of the child "lost" and "found" is multiple and presents different conditions and consequences for the children concerned. How those identities develop and what shapes them, both positively and negatively, needs special consideration, and is often linked to Blake's depictions of how

the children in these poems are orphaned metaphorically by society, orthodox Christianity, and/or their parents in various ways.

In "The Little Boy Lost", the first stanza reveals that the child is lost and distressed because of his father's neglect and preoccupation with his own needs. Although the boy is entirely dependent on his father, this paternal figure is presented as an essentially uncaring and unresponsive adult who does not heed the pleas of his son. The speed and silence with which he moves appears to indicate that he is pursuing his own path, and in the process makes the child feel increasingly lost and abandoned. The mood of the poem is one of despair and loneliness: the speaker reveals that "[t]he night was dark" (5), [t]he child was wet with dew (6), and that he weeps in distress (7) (Blake 121). The child's abandonment and despair is amplified by the hostile environment that he finds himself in, which is one that is devoid of light and sound.

The "vapour" (8) is a will-o'-the-wisp that disappears at the end of the stanza two and presents a menacing and even sinister apparition which distracts and misleads the child. It also appears to obscure the boy's perception, and vanishes at the point where he is lost and stranded. There is also the suggestion that what the boy perceives to be the form of his father could be the will-o'-the-wisp. Why this apparition, whatever it represents, would lead the child into a state of being lost remains unclear, and the apparent abandonment of the child is startling, particularly because this is a condition over which he has no control. He is alone, bewildered, and vulnerable. This is a compromising position for an innocent, and the ominous nature of the poem's conclusion seems to be more fitting for a song of "experience" than one of "innocence". The close would be ominous indeed were it not for the corresponding poem, "The Little Boy Found".

In "The Little Boy Found" (Blake 121), the child is led into a deeper state of "lostness" by the ambiguous will-o'-the-wisp. At this point the image of God as a "father in white" (4) appears, but God appears "like his father" (4) and the earthly father figure (or an apparition of the father, as the case may be) who has abandoned the child is replaced by an image of the divine. This God does not seem to be equated with the traditional Christian conception of God as the omnipotent creator of the universe and ruler of humankind: his function involves leading the child out of the state of being lost.

This benevolent father figure is similar to the figures of God in "The Chimney Sweeper" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 117) and "The Little Vagabond" (*Songs of Experience*) (Blake 216) and is also imbued with the characteristics of "The Shepherd" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 117), who "follow[s] his sheep all the day" (3). Although God's presence is more abiding and more powerful than any diversions and illusions that could distract or mislead the child, he returns the child to his mother. The mother's actions offer a contrast to the neglect of the father figure (or apparition) for she has sought the boy alone and weeping "thro' the lonely dale" (7) and has evidently been as distressed as the child.

It is significant that the boy is rescued by God in human form, who provides an alternative paternal figure. In the context of Blake's symbolism it is important that the child is returned to his mother, so that he can be nurtured by her in order for him to develop a fuller understanding of the potential for divinity within himself, as well as within humanity. Since the boy's father, or what he perceives to be his father, is not mentioned in the second poem, this is suggestive of the fact that the boy requires a guide into the spiritual realm and, although the figure of God assumes this role for a brief period, it is his mother, and apparently only his mother, who can assume the abiding role of a spiritual guide. However, there is also the possibility that the boy's attachment to his mother represents a regression into the kind of "innocence" that is disparaged as too limited in many of the *Songs*.

Gillham argues that the boy thinks "not in terms of natural and supernatural illusions but of affectionate relationships and of realities" (*Blake's Contrary States* 102). The affectionate God who leads him out of his state of "lostness" takes on a human form because, it appears, this is the only way in which the child can conceive of, and relate to, God. According to Blake's symbolism, the father figure, whether real or imagined, would have represented, amongst other things, orthodox Christianity. Perhaps what is suggested here is that the child must break away from orthodox religion in order to be "found" by a God in human form, and thus come to accept that divinity resides in humanity, and not in the supernatural and transcendental for, as is stated in "The Divine Image" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 117), "every man, of every clime, ... [p]rays to the human form divine" (13-15). "The Little Boy Found" thus prefigures two ideas that are central in

examining the other four poems: the fact that God is conceived of in human terms suggests that the divine can be known and understood, and that the divine nature of God is not divorced from human nature, for Blake seems to have believed that God is the creative and spiritual power that exists within every human and that if the idea of God is divorced from humanity it has no meaning (Bowra 144). What is less clear however, is how precisely Blake conceived of these ideas in metaphysical terms and how they would manifest themselves. Despite the fact that Blake offers little explanation for how these notions would work, they recur in his poetry and the little boy in "A Little Boy Lost" (*Songs of Experience*) (Blake 218) is persecuted for expressing similar ideas. Another idea that is prefigured in "The Little Boy Found" is the notion of initiation into a new conception of spirituality, as evinced in "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found".

The positive maternal attitude in "The Little Boy Found" is not evident in "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found". In these two poems Lyca's relationship with her parents is portrayed as both complex and ambiguous. Both poems appear to explore what it means for a child to be "lost" on a physical and psychic level, and in relation to her parents. These two poems have been interpreted in a multiplicity of ways by critics, and yet seem to defy a clear and definitive explanation. Nelson Hilton argues that

> [t]he two poems seem obviously allegorical, but of what? The absence of compelling interpretations – invocations of the soul's journey, the myth of Persephone, and female adolescence notwithstanding – suggests that the text may be a failure of obscurity. (Hilton 107)

The allegorical nature of the poems means that they are difficult to understand within the context of Blake's symbolism, and any one interpretation seems to be limited, for Blake appears to be utilising several mythological archetypes in conjunction with his own symbolism. The myths of Persephone and Psyche probably inform the two poems, as do the notions of sexual maturation and spiritual initiation. Taking these interpretations into account, I attempt to locate and explain the poems within Blake's symbolism and religious attitudes, whilst also allowing for plausible mythological interpretations to be assimilated into my reading of the poems.

The framing vision, which forms the subject of the first two stanzas of "The Little Girl Lost" (Blake 112), focuses on "the earth" (3). Although "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" were originally included in the *Songs of Innocence*, they were later transferred to the *Songs of Experience*, which seems to suggest that the poems share a common theme with the "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer" (*Songs of Experience*) (Blake 210-211). This raises several questions: firstly, is Lyca's mother "the earth"? Secondly, is this the same earth portrayed in the "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer" and, if so, is Lyca's father the "[s]elfish father of men" described in "Earth's Answer" (11)? Does the prophecy about the earth in "The Little Girl Lost" foreshadow Lyca's spiritual journey and her potential to synthesise the states of "innocence and "experience" so that she can enter a spiritual Eden – the "garden mild" (8) named in the vision? Once again, there are no easy answers to these questions, and in considering them it is imperative to separate Lyca's perception from that of the obviously "experienced" speaker, and it means that her/his perception of Lyca's situation needs to be scrutinised. As was pointed out in the first chapter, the perception of "experienced" speakers is frequently limited, uncritical, and often shows a lack of awareness. In the case of "The Little Girl Lost" however, the speaker's view of Lyca's parents seems to be corroborated by Lyca.

In "The Little Girl Lost", Lyca acknowledges that she is "[l]ost in desart wild" (21) but instead of being distressed by the prospect of being alone in a hostile environment, she is distressed by the thought of her weeping parents. Her parents have not come to terms with her disappearance and continue to search for a child who, it seems, is beyond their reach, both physically and spiritually. The parents' distress thus has to be understood in terms of their limited vision (Chayes 74). Their incessant worry is itself the "[f]rowning, frowning night" (29) (Blake 113) that prevents Lyca from finding her way, as there is an inter-relatedness between her emotions and those of her parents, and specifically those of her mother. In a reversal of the parent-child relationship, it is her mother's distress that prevents Lyca from sleeping:

> How can Lyca sleep
> If her mother weep?
>
> If her heart does ake

> Then let Lyca wake;
> If my mother sleep,
> Lyca shall not weep. (23-28) (Blake 112-113)

The reference to herself in the third person in stanzas five to seven suggests that there has been a division between the "little child" (22) (Blake 112) Lyca's parents conceive her as, and which she is attempting to cast off and lose in the "desart", and the new state of being which she attempts to initiate into the "garden mild" (8). Lyca is arrested in the transitional phase of a metamorphosis but what precisely constitutes the new state of being is unclear. The transition from "innocence" to "experience" may be a possibility but the mythological and prophetic aspects of the poem render this kind of reading too simplistic. Whatever the nature of this transition, it seems that Lyca has entered the "desart" because she is aware of the need to be initiated into a new state of being, but she is "lost" at this critical juncture because of her parents' insistent worry, and not because she has doubts and fears of her own. In Lyca's case it seems that her becoming "lost" is equated with some form of doubt, if not guilt, about leaving her parents and previous state of existence behind. The period of doubt passes, however, and in her succumbing to sleep, Lyca's metamorphosis begins. Her transition commences with her electing to be 'orphaned' because of her understanding that this kind of initiation is a personal journey and can only be undertaken alone.

The expected transition is initiated when "the beasts of prey" emerge from their "caverns" (34-35) to convey Lyca to the caves where her transformation will take place. The acts of these beasts accentuate a sensual dimension of the poem: the lion licks her "bosom" (45) and the lioness loosens her "slender dress" (50), so that she is conveyed to the caves naked. This highlights a sense of vulnerability on Lyca's part, especially since the intentions of the animals are unknown. The vulnerable and compromising situation Lyca finds herself in has led critics like D.G. Gillham and Stanley Gardner to argue that the poem is primarily an allegorical account of the transition from childhood to puberty and the subsequent separation of the child from her parents as she moves into the realm of awakened sexuality.

However, the focus, and emphasis on, sexuality both complements and distracts from the spiritual dimension of the poem, for Blake was concerned throughout his oeuvre

not to separate these two realms. Although the intentions of the animals are unknown when they are introduced in stanza nine, it soon becomes apparent that the lion is a benevolent and protective paternal and God-like figure, for he is described as "kingly" (37) and presides over "hallow'd ground" (40). The figure of the lion is highly symbolic as it occupies a secure place in scripture and is frequently presented as the emblem of Christ (Stock 359). The lion also symbolises nobility and is often portrayed as the protector of the lamb (Damon 242). In "The Little Girl Lost" the lion's God-like nature is emphasised by allusions to Christ: his "ruby tears" (48) are symbolic of Christ's blood and sacrifice. The lion in this poem also appears to be linked to the lion in "Night" (Blake 118-119), who is a protector of "new worlds" (32), as well as the guard of the "lamb" (41). In "The Little Girl Lost" the lion's tears also allude to the possibility that he empathises with the sleeping child. The lion's function, and that of the lioness, is the adoption of a parental role or guardianship in lieu of Lyca's human parents, who are unable to induct her into the realm of the spiritual and physical wilderness she finds herself in. In effect, the child has to be lost to her parents in order to be found by the benevolent lions that are able to introduce her to a new state of being. Irene Chayes argues that the lion and other beasts of prey also represent part of the violence of the Last Judgment and are a "last manifestation of ... power, including the human passions, that is also the first manifestation of divine power and is indispensable to a return to the state of Eden" (Chayes 70).

The concept of Lyca undergoing a transition is supported by images of "caverns" (35) and "caves" (52), which are symbolic of rebirth as there are parallels between the symbols of cave and womb. The child is brought to the caves so that she can undergo the process of a transition from one state of being to another, and is protected by benevolent spiritual forces embodied in the animals. In "Night" (Blake 118-119) we are told that "angels bright" (12) "visit caves of every beast" (19) and a similar idea seems to be presented in "The Little Girl Found" where the lion is transformed into a "[s]pirit arm'd in gold" (36).

In "The Little Girl Found" the state of being lost as envisaged by Lyca's parents reflects their fears about their daughter as well as their states of being: as adults in the realm of "experience", their fear for their child is linked to their desire to control her. The

parental wish to control the direction of their child's emotions is understandable, but if they succeed in maintaining their hold on her, it would only inhibit her (Gillham *Blake's Contrary States* 146). Lyca's parents imagine that she is unprotected and bereft in what they perceive to be a dangerous environment, and "dream they see their child / [s]tarv'd in desart wild" (11-12) (Blake 114). This "fancied image" (14) proves to be as misleading as the will-o'-the-wisp in "The Little Boy Lost", and as they imagine that Lyca is "[f]amished, weeping, [and] weak" (15), they are led into a state of deeper "lostness".

It is the parents' encounter with the lion and his subsequent transformation into a "[s]pirit arm'd in gold" (36) that finally convince them that their child is safe. Although the divine nature of this ethereal vision is difficult to decipher because of the allegorical nature of the poem, the point here seems to be that the parents have to see and understand what the lion represents on their own terms, so that their inner vision creates the qualities of the lion.

These two poems are thus grounded in positive assumptions about individual choice (Cox 106). In changing their perspectives of what Lyca's state of "lostness" entails, her parents are restored not to a state of child-like "innocence", but to a kind of state that incorporates both "innocence" and "experience" in some kind of balance, and in this there seems to be the suggestion that this is a possibility for all humans. The parents have to follow the child into a state of being lost and that is where they remain, but with the new understanding that the "wolvish howl" (51) and "lion's growl" (52) are not to be feared. By the end of the second poem there is a sense that the vision of the "desart wild" (7) becoming a "garden mild" (8) envisaged in the first poem has become a reality, and that Lyca's parents are able to harmonise their existence in the "lonely dell" (50) with the predatory animals that inhabit it. The imagery of the last stanza is however ambiguous, and we must take into account that we hear only the speaker's version of events. As mentioned previously, speakers who inhabit the world of "experience" sometimes offer uncritical perspectives hence perhaps the poem's ending is more ominous than the speaker realises. The speaker unquestioningly accepts that "the vision" (46) that leads the parents to Lyca has not harmed her and that she is indeed asleep and not dead. S/he tells us that the parents find "their sleeping child / Among tygers wild" (47-48) a fact which, according to Blake's symbolism, is particularly significant for "tygers" are frequently

represented as symbols of wrath, destruction, and potentially dangerous revolutionary energies. The "tygers" are also described as "wild" and thus offer a stark contrast to the tame lion. The speaker does not offer an explanation for why the dell the parents dwell in is "lonely" (50) or what becomes of Lyca. Since we are given only the speaker's positive version of events, perhaps we are to assume the dell is lonely because only a few individuals ever achieve the synthesis of "innocence" and "experience" that Lyca and her parents apparently have.

Gillham argues that the contentment the parents find amongst the beasts signals that they have come to terms with the "animal" or "instinctive" part of themselves, and presumably, of their daughter (*Blake's Contrary States* 143). This interpretation is limited because it does not allow for the complexity of Blake's symbolism. The animals in his poetry serve as heraldic ciphers and do not only represent the "instinctive", animalistic tendencies of humanity. These ciphers often represent or illustrate various forms of vigour, vitality, energy (latent or active and creative or destructive), sanctity, and wrath. Of particular relevance to these two poems is one of the "Proverbs of Hell" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man" (7) (Plate 8) (Blake 151).

The allusions to myth and mythological archetypes seem to suggest a didactic dimension to these poems, and the underlying message appears to be that

> [t]o the extent that a [human] has imagination [they] are alive, and therefore the development of the imagination is an increaser of life. It follows that restricting the imagination by turning from instead of passing through perception is a reduction of life. (Frye 55)

The development of Lyca's imagination, her *"Poetic Genius"*, enhances her ability to interact with the world in a creative way, allowing her to engage with life in a way that her parents cannot. It is not because they lack imagination that the parents are restricted, but because they have repressed their *"Poetic Genius"*. What seems to be suggested is that in order to qualify for paradise, represented by the "garden mild" in the "The Little Girl Lost", "we must perfect ourselves, transforming the desert we inhabit into a fruitful garden" (Gillham *Blake's Contrary States* 143). That is, we must incorporate the *"Poetic*

Genius" into the way in which we engage with the world and attain a balance between the states of "experience" and "innocence". The possibility of this kind of balance appears to be illustrated in Lyca, for

> [t]he reaffirmed prophecy, the strange actions of the animals, Lyca's serene and confident acceptance which her parents come to share, all suggest that she has advanced further than any of the other "children" in these songs toward a resolution of the problem of "the two contrary states of the human soul." (Chayes 69)

In a note written on a page of *The Four Zoas*, Blake states: "*Unorganiz'd Innocence: An Impossibility.* Innocence dwells with Wisdom, but never with Ignorance" (Blake 380). It appears that through this statement, Blake was suggesting that there could indeed be some kind of synthesis of "innocence" and "experience", leading critics like Robert Gleckner to suggest that there is a third state which incorporates both "innocence" and "experience", and is the ultimate realisation of human imaginative potential, characterised by a Christ-like "higher innocence" (Gleckner 9). The notion of a Christ-like "innocence" is however problematic, for Blake did not view Christ as a human person who is or was a god, but used him to symbolise the manifestation of the divine mind in human form (Raine *Blake and Tradition: Volume II* 189). Blake does not offer an explanation for how the individual could possibly attain a synthesis between the states in practical terms but he clearly identifies and emphasises the need to understand the states so that one does not dominate the other.

In "A Little Boy Lost", the child's attempt to understand the two states of the human soul leads to condemnation. The poem's title is ironic in relation to its content: the boy expresses what he believes to be true about the nature of love and God, and is therefore condemned as a "lost soul". The title of the poem suggests yet another manifestation of a child being "lost" in the *Songs*, but as the poem demonstrates the notions of what it means to be "lost", and who exactly is "lost" in the poem, need to be interrogated.

The poem opens with the child expressing his views on the nature of love:

> Nought loves another as itself,

> Nor venerates another so,
> Nor is it possible to Thought
> A greater than itself to know: (1-4) (Blake 218)

His next utterance is directed at a paternal figure, of whom he asks: "And Father, how can I love you / Or any of my brothers more?" (5-6). In questioning this figure, the boy undermines paternal authority by expressing that to be bound and fettered by love and duty is antithetical to the nature of a child, and this is made clear when he tells the figure that he loves him "like the little bird / That picks up crumbs around the door" (7-8). What the child appears to be articulating is that the universe is sufficiently contained in humankind and that any true knowledge of divinity is to be derived from all awareness and perception as a human being (Gillham *Blake's Contrary States* 86).

Who precisely the child is addressing remains unclear: at first it seems that it is his father, but with the introduction of the priest in stanza three it seems that the child is addressing him, hence the priest's "trembling zeal" (10). This "trembling zeal" appears to be a blend of fear, which possibly emanates from the priest recognising some truth in what the child has pointed out, and the perceived opportunity to punish what he perceives to be the child's insolence. The child's address may also be directed to God with whom he attempts to commune, when he is overheard by the priest. The ambiguity of "Father", whether it refers to the boy's biological father, the priest, or God, seems to point to the fact that the wrong kind of patriarchy can be distinguished from the truly paternal and caring.

The boy's utterance also expresses the fact that he cannot reconcile the notions of the God he is taught about at Church, and his own conception of God. He articulates his confusion through the example of the bird: "I love you like the little bird / That picks up crumbs around the door" (7-8), and through this confession intimates that he makes "as complete an acknowledgement of God as is appropriate to a little boy by partaking of His creation, without it being necessary that he should understand the priest's ... points of doctrine" (Gillham *Blake's Contrary States* 86). It is because the child conceives of God in his own way, and because he unwittingly challenges two Old Testament commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii 35-40) (Summerfield 91), that he is castigated by the priest.

According to Blake's religious ideas however, the child's utterance aligns him with the figure of Christ for, as the Devil states in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules" (Plates 22-24) (Blake 158). Virtue is thus associated with spontaneity and feeling rather than with observance of moral law (Stock 353), and this implies that in expressing his beliefs, the child is morally superior to his elders, for he embodies the spontaneity and feeling that is characteristic of true virtue and not the false virtue the priest promotes.

As a result of his beliefs he is proclaimed a "fiend" (14) and his deductive, yet innocent, reasoning is viewed as a threat to the "holy Mystery" (16) upheld by the Church, for the priest and the form of religion he represents propagate the false idea that God can only be known to a chosen few. In "The Human Abstract" (*Songs of Experience*) (Blake 217), "Mystery" is described as the "dismal shade" (13) that "bears the fruit of deceit" (17). Deceit breeds hypocrisy, which is tantamount to cruelty, and Blake seems to have held that they both arise from the same cause: the submission to fear that arises from a refusal to obey the "*Poetic Genius*" (Bowra 149). The implication that God can be known by the child is seen as a threat to the Church, for "only those to whom direct revelation is given are entitled to make confident statements about the divine purpose. Others must trust what they are told" (Gillham *William Blake* 109). According to the priest, the boy has challenged the Established Church's view of the divine nature and thus the will of God. What the speaker appears to be emphasising here is the response and hypocrisy of the Established Church, the lawmakers, and those who frame society's notions of ethics and morality, to those it views as subversive and threatening to its authority, as well as its absolutist, despotic response to these individuals or groups.

The kind of atrocities committed by the priest in the name of religion suggests that it is not the child but the representatives of false security, stability, and religion who are "lost", since they have rejected the divinity that, according to Blake, is potential within humanity. The individuals who promote and endorse a false religion that "postulates some kind of God who is unknown and mysterious because he is not inside us but somewhere else" (Frye 60) preach submission and unquestioning obedience so that the religion they invent merely functions as a buttress to the status quo of society (Ibid).

The child is not afforded an opportunity to explain himself, and his parents weep "in vain" (18) because they cannot save him by justifying what he has said (Gillham *William Blake* 111). Whether they are unable to defend him because they are powerless to challenge the authority of the priest and Church seems likely, but there is also the implication that they are afraid to do so as a result of their "innocence" being compromised by the world of "experience" they inhabit so that any empathy with their child is limited at best.

Thus, the child is punished for his perceived challenge to the Church's authority by being "strip'd" (19) down virtually to nakedness, bound in a chain, and "burn'd" (21). The fact that the child is "burned" at the end of the poem draws on a long history of such dispatch of heretics. As a critique of the practices of the Established Church the image signals the Church's power and will to destroy those who challenge its authority in the most extreme way, and also illustrates how far religious fear can drive individuals. Effectively, it is the thwarting of the "*Poetic Genius*" that has resulted in this cruelty and fear (Frye 57). The child represents the "innocence" that is within every individual and, in turn, his destruction represents the destruction of individual, and also communal, "innocence" as no one is willing to defend him. The child's Christ-like sacrifice thus seems futile in this context. The destruction of the child on a figurative level illustrates that the child is believed to be "lost" to the Church because he does not subscribe to the conventional view of the nature of the relationship between humanity and God. Thus, although the child is not lost in a physical sense, or in a state of mental confusion, there seems to be no hope of salvation for him as there is no corresponding poem signalling that he has been "found" and therefore vindicated in some way.

In "A Little Girl Lost" the state of the child comes near to "innocence", but is also divided from it (Gardner, Stanley 103). The children in the poem are initially unafraid:

> Once a youthful pair,
> Fill'd with softest care,
> Met in garden bright
> Where the holy light
> Had just remov'd the curtains of the night. (10-14) (Blake 219)

They appear to exist in some kind of Golden Age where the shame of the body is unknown. The "garden bright" (12) is also reminiscent of the promised "garden mild" (8) (Blake 112) in "The Little Girl Lost". Lines 13-14 could possibly refer to morning, the Garden of Eden, the classical Golden Age, or some sort of lost paradise, and are thus suggestive of a place, space, and time free from the ignorance and fear of the "night" (14) which appears to signify an experienced state divorced from any kind of "innocence". The mention of "curtains" signifies some kind of limited vision that seeks to conceal, and though this image contains an intimation of unease, the threat suggested by the "curtains of the night" (14) appears to be eliminated, or at least reduced in the presence of the "holy light" (13).

The reference to "rising day" (15) in stanza three possibly suggests the children's youth and "innocence". It is significant that "parents were afar" (17) and "[s]trangers came not near", for it seems that the corrupting influence of the limited world view that is symptomatic of the state of "experience" is absent when the youths meet. Although their meeting is tentative to begin with, the girl, we are told, soon forgets "her fear" (15). This "fear" appears to be one or more of the restrictions and morals that have been imposed on her by authoritarian adult figures, and which they have presumably indoctrinated into her so that they could be recalled and adhered to if she found herself in a compromising moral situation.

Ona's fear returns, however, when she encounters her father, and the fear that she experiences is aroused by this paternal figure whose love is repressive and priest-like (Gardner, Stanley 103). Presumably, Ona is terrified at the prospect of having to give an account of her actions to her authoritarian father as she recognises that he is aware that something has taken place between her and the youth, and his look of distrust and fear infects her (Gillham *William Blake* 57). The pale and trembling figure of Ona contrasts with the "maiden bright" (7) she was in the garden. The youthful vitality and love that she shared with the male youth is consumed and forgotten by the terror her father instils in her, so that the "dismal care" (33) symptomatic of "experience", which is over-anxious, possessive, and destructive, is contrasted with the "softest care" (11) of "innocence" that is displayed by the children in the garden (Gillham *Blake's Contrary States* 132). The figure of Ona's aged father and his "dismal care" also contrasts with

"Old John" (11) in "The Ecchoing Green" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 116), who "laugh[s] away care" (12) and who bears no resentment towards the children's "play" (15), nor attempts to restrict them in any way. In "The Little Girl Found" (Blake 114), Lyca's parent's "care" (40) disappears when they cease attempting to control the direction of her spiritual journey.

The tyrannical nature of Ona's father adversely affects her individuality as well as her youthful spontaneity and gaiety. Her father's "loving look" (27) amplifies her terror as the prohibitions of the "holy book" (28) are remembered by Ona, and are reflected in her father's look of mistrust. In her father, Ona is reminded of "God as the law giver, the prohibitor and the punisher" (Gillham *William Blake* 59) and this leads her to submit to him and to her terror. Effectively, her resignation to, and acceptance of, her father's "dismal care" (33) renders her lost, and she is lost on both an emotional and spiritual level as terror has destroyed passion.

What makes Ona's situation pitiable is that a chance for love has been thwarted through personal inhibitions informed by religious prohibitions. In the poem, lofty spirituality is embodied by Ona's father, who reflects traditional Enlightenment attitudes toward sexuality, for the expression of sexuality among the young was considered unacceptable (Porter and Hall 30). This belief was also promoted by a late eighteenth century Evangelical movement which wished to banish the subject of sexuality from the respectable consciousness and public life (Ibid 32). As a result, sexuality came to be seen as sinister and sinful (Ibid). As pointed out in the first chapter though, Blake rejected the Christian dualism of body and soul and through his poetry attempted to liberate the body from prohibitions and inhibitions, and also from Enlightenment ideals and conventions (Ibid). Here, Blake is critiquing Enlightenment ideas of sexuality and cautioning against a repression of sexuality, especially if it is informed by the belief that the body was of lesser value than the soul. Blake's criticism of Enlightenment notions of sexuality and sexual conventions is evident in the epigram with which the poem opens:

> Children of the future Age
> Reading this indignant page,
> Know that in a former time
> Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime. (1-4) (Blake 219)

The epigram also introduces the mythic and prophetic dimension to the poem. Gillham argues that "an age of unspoiled innocence does not seem to be imminent, or even possible for [humankind]. ... In the body of the poem [Blake] writes history for children of the present time, and tells the story of Adam and Eve, modifying it so that it is the history of every man and woman (*William Blake* 56). Gillham's assertion that an age of unspoiled innocence does not appear imminent is correct. There is, however, the suggestion in the epigram that it is possible for humankind to attain a state of innocence, and this seems to be the reason that it is addressed to "[c]hildren of the future age" (1). These children presumably have attained a state of being that can be likened to that which Lyca achieves, and would therefore share the indignation of the speaker when they discover that "love" was "thought a crime" (4). This kind of indignation is also expressed in "Earth's Answer" (*Songs of Experience*) (Blake 211) where, it seems, earth attacks the "[c]ruel, jealous, selfish fear" that is characteristic of "experience" and demands whether "delight, / Chained in night, / [can] [t]he virgins of youth and morning bear?" (12-15). Thus Gillham's argument that in "A Little Girl Lost" Blake retells the story of Adam and Eve and transforms it into the history of all women and men is viable, for presumably he means that the fall from a child-like state of "innocence" is necessary to enter the world of "experience" but, as the poem appears to point out, the "innocence" of childhood is precarious, and can be destroyed by the world of "experience". If some of the child-like "innocence" is retained as an individual enters "experience" then the state of being attained by Lyca in "The Little Girl Found" becomes possible.

What "A Little Girl Lost" demonstrates especially is the consequence of the heavy-handed reaction of the authoritarian patriarchy. Ona's acceptance of the authoritarian religion her father represents means that she subscribes to the belief that compliance is virtue and opposition is sin, and resistance to these beliefs is destroyed by spiritual bullying and coercion (Behrendt 70). Ona does not realise that she possesses the ability to liberate herself from these religious constraints and that true liberty can never be taken away but can only be surrendered (Behrendt 70). In "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" (*Songs of Innocence*) (Blake 126) it is the "[y]outh of delight" (1) who, presumably, are uncorrupted by religious fear and are thus able to lead others out of the "endless maze" (6) of folly. There is also an apparent parallel with "A Little Girl Lost"

for the "dismal care" displayed by Ona's father is critiqued: those who "feel they know not what but care, / And wish to lead others" (10-11) should in fact "be led" (11).

Like "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", there is an exploration in "A Little Girl Lost" of sexuality, a presentation of the distance between generations, and of what occurs to knowledge and self-knowledge as that distance grows. "A Little Girl Lost" also has a common theme with "A Little Boy Lost" in that in both poems there are authoritarian male figures who command an extreme form of respect, and who are bent on repressing and condemning any form of youthful freedom or any beliefs not aligned with what they regard as conventional wisdom and authority. Parallels can also be drawn between these patriarchal figures and the neglectful and uninterested father in "The Little Boy Lost". The little boy who is lost does not remain so, as he is reunited with his mother and receives a resolution and reconciliation that Ona and the boy in "A Little Boy Lost" are denied because they remain "lost" in one way or another. Thus, although the poems may have common thematic threads that allow for a superficial comparison, Blake's treatment of the states of being "lost" and "found" is highly sophisticated. Blake's use of definite and indefinite articles in the poems' titles is also significant. The definite article "the" signals that the poem deals with a specific child and fits the visionary and mythic aspects of "The Little Boy Lost" "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found". The indefinite article "a" could possibly apply to any lost boy or girl and perhaps suggests that the fates of the little boy who is castigated by the priest and Ona could very well be, and possibly have been, similar to those of others.

Linked to the theme of children being "lost" and "found" is the notion of parental care and concern. In all of the six poems examined in this chapter, parental care, guidance, and love have had various manifestations, and various implications for the children. In "The Little Boy Lost" and "The Little Boy Found", the maternal figure is the primary nurturer and epitomises parental care at its best. In "A Little Boy Lost", although the child's parents demonstrate concern and distress when he is punished by the priest they are unable to protect their child from the fanaticism of the priest's religion. In "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", the mother's concern is portrayed ambiguously for, although she demonstrates a genuine anxiety about Lyca's safety, she also demonstrates a fear of unknown circumstances that is symptomatic of "experience".

This fear probably stems from the suspicion that certain religious and/or social boundaries are being transgressed by her daughter in the physical and psychic wilderness Lyca inhabits. Overbearing and authoritarian parental care is the result of fear and jealousy, as is evident in "A Little Girl Lost". What these six poems demonstrate is the tense relationship between the various manifestations of "love" evident in the *Songs*. In "The Clod & the Pebble" two views of love are given. The first states that

> [l]ove seeketh not Itself to please,
> Nor for itself hath any care,
> But for another gives its ease
> And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair. (1-4) (Blake 211)

The second reads:

> [l]ove seeketh only Self to please,
> To bind another to Its delight,
> Joys in another's loss of ease,
> And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite. (9-12)

The two representations of love expressed here illustrate that these two versions of love exist in a tenuous balance and, although any relationship, including that between parent and child, may begin with the best intentions, the dynamics of that relationship may change drastically so that selfish motives may be disguised and justified as a protective kind of love. The six poems discussed in this chapter illustrate this precarious balance in varying degrees, and what seems to be suggested is that, although the role of the parent is to nurture the child, the parent does not and cannot control the child's entire identity. In order for the Blakean child to retain her/his imaginative capacity and independence and to develop self-awareness and derive new knowledge, it is necessary for her/him to break away from parental authority. It is this process of breaking away from parental control that frequently renders the child a metaphorical orphan, but this is imperative if self-growth is ever to occur, and for the *"Poetic Genius"* to develop in a manner that will guide the individual through the world of "experience" so that the state of being that Lyca achieves becomes a possibility.

Chapter Three

'The Poor Orphan Child'[1] in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847, presents two significant models of the orphan child: the protagonist Jane and Helen Burns. At the start of the novel the implications of orphan-hood are very precisely defined for both the reader and Jane by John, the tyrannical male heir to the Reed household, when he taunts Jane: "you are a dependant ... you have no money, your father left you none, you ought to beg, and not live here with gentleman's children like us" (Brontë 8). Jane is constantly reminded that John Reed is her "master" (9) and that she is "under obligations to Mrs Reed" who "keeps" her (10) and whose charity ensures that she does not end up in the poorhouse (10). Jane's dependant status is signified in other ways too: after her collapse in the Red Room she observes that Mr Lloyd, the apothecary who ministers to her was "sometimes called in by Mrs Reed when the servants were ailing: for herself and the children she employed a physician" (15). Thus, Jane's orphaned and dependant status constitutes her inferiority to the Reed children, and the fact that she is reliant on the charity of the Reeds means that she is considered "less than a servant" (9).

Despite her persecution on the basis of her orphaned status, Jane presents a model of the rebellious female child who is characterised by her passionate nature and outspokenness. Jane in many ways exemplifies a child who is ruled by passion rather than reason, and there is a real sense in which Jane's rebelliousness is provoked by pronouncements about her orphaned and dependant status. She is the "bad animal" (7) John views as the parasite who is provided for at his "mamma's expense" (8). She is the irksome responsibility Mrs Reed wishes to be "relieved of" (29), and the "unhappy girl" who repays her "excellent patroness" with "dreadful" ingratitude (56). As Adrienne Rich points out in her essay "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman":

> [f]or a powerless little girl in a hostile household ... the temptation of victimization is never far away. To see herself as the sacrificial lamb or scapegoat of this household, and act out that role, or conversely to explode

[1] Brontë 17

> into violent and self-destructive hysterics which can only bring on more punishment and victimization, are alternatives all too ready at hand. (Rich 471)

Although Jane succumbs to hysteria, she also seems to recognise that, dependant and orphan that she is, she is also a "rebel slave" (Brontë 9). She refutes the role of victim and opposes the physical and psychic tyranny of the Reeds, however futile her attempts may be. Indeed, her rebelliousness is the source of her awakening, the true beginning of her "ceaseless inward" questioning (Brontë 12). She recognises that the persecution she endures in the Reed household is because of her dependant and orphan status, and thus economically and socially vulnerable, status and that it is indeed "unjust" (12).

If Jane's fervour means that she is frequently dehumanised and labelled a "rat", a "mad cat", a "fiend", and a "thing", Helen Burns' cool reasoning, Christ-like humility and spirituality seem to be appreciated and recognised only by Jane and Miss Temple. Like Jane, Helen is also parentless: her mother is dead and her father lately married, and she unself-pityingly observes that he will not miss her when she is dead (Brontë 69). They are both "charity children" (42) who rely on "benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen" for their keep. Unlike Jane, Helen is not focused on this world: she accepts the suffering in this world and looks forward to the next, whereas Jane rejects such saintly self-sacrifice as a model for herself because she has already turned against tyranny "like a revolted slave" (Grosvenor Myer 139).

In a world where orphans are mistreated and scorned by family and society alike, neither of these two models is presented as viable: Jane's passion is often presented as self-destructive and masochistic, and Helen's stoicism and forbearance are presented as an ideal: as a guide only these qualities impart hope, but as principles to live by they would be incomprehensible and impractical to many. Indeed, as Helen herself recognises, her brand of spirituality would be misconstrued by others: "[b]y dying young, I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities and talents to make my way very well in the world; I should have been continually at fault" (Brontë 69). It thus seems that the alternative is to chart a middle course between these two extremes: the integration of passion and reason is imperative if the orphan child is to progress both on a spiritual and an individual level.

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Jane's rebellion against the familial oppression she is exposed to coincides with John's violent display of dominance: "the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp: my terror had passed its climax; other feelings succeeded" (Brontë 8). Up to this point Jane had formed opinions but had not dared to express them: "I had formed my opinions of Nero, Caligula, &c. Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud" (8-9). Jane's declaration that John is a "[w]icked and cruel boy" (8) who is comparable to the Roman emperors is significant because, although it marks the originating moment of her self-assertion, her mental conflict simultaneously depicts a sense of self in jeopardy (Glen *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History* 67). That is, inasmuch as Jane attempts to assert herself as an individual and claim a position within the family, her position is defined for her because of her orphaned and dependant status for, although Jane is socially isolated from the family, her identity is both dependent on, and denied by, her relatives (Eagleton 25). Jane later informs the reader that the expression of similar sentiments by the Reed family "had become a vague sing-song in my ear, very painful and crushing" (Brontë 10). Hence, even as a child Jane is aware that she occupies a marginal position as an "uncongenial alien permanently intruded on the family group" (13).

Conversely though, if being an orphan entails solitude and alienation, it also offers liberation (Eagleton 25) for since she is socially isolated and alienated by her family there are no bonds of love that limit her or which demand her loyalty. Jane coolly observes that "if [the Reeds] did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them" (Brontë 12). This liberation is frequently signified by the spoken word that provides Jane with a powerful means of retaliation against misrepresentation. As a child, Jane's first realisation of the power of expression occurs when she confronts John. This is a pivotal moment in Jane's pilgrimage toward selfhood and her resistance is something she finds strangely liberating, even when she realises that she is to be punished for it: "I resisted all the way: a new thing for me ... I was conscious that a moment's mutiny had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and, like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths" (Brontë 9). Jane's mutiny is short-lived however, for although she attempts to resist her punishment, the symbolic gesture of being thrust into a

chair and held down signifies her helplessness and suggests the futility of her rebellion in effecting any real change, except within herself. Her dependant status means that as much as she resists the family structure, she is imprisoned within it and her incarceration in the Red Room symbolises and reinforces this.

It appears that it is only when Jane is incarcerated in the Red Room that she fully comes to question her plight:

> All John Reed's violent tyrannies, all his sisters' proud indifference, all his mother's aversion, all the servants' partiality, turned up in my disturbed mind like a dark deposit in a turbid well. Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned? (Brontë 11)

Ostensibly, it seems that these injustices stem from Jane's orphan and dependant status as an economically powerless and redundant presence in the Reed household. This kind of rejection by the family effectively expresses what constitutes the "reproach [of Jane's] dependence" (10). Jane attempts to reason, but her simplistic child's perspective only leads her to conclude that her situation is "unjust", for she cannot understand why she is made to suffer the way she does at the hands of her family: "[w]hat a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance was the mental battle fought!" (Brontë 12). As limited as Jane's reasoning ability is at this stage, her musings reflect a desperate wish to be liberated from the family structure: "[r]esolve … instigated some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression – as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die" (12). Even though she is excluded from the family circle, her orphaned and dependant status renders her vulnerable because she is reliant upon the family both socially and economically.

If family "engenders an original sense of self that sets the tone for the journey of self development" (Lamonica 4), in Jane's case her sense of self is formed and defined in opposition to the family. For the Reeds, Jane is "a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity" (Brontë 14). As an orphan Jane has no claim of fidelity on the family – she is seen as nothing more than a burdensome charge. Indeed, the adult narrator intuits that Mrs Reed must have considered her an "interloper" whose presence

had to be endured because of a "hard-wrung pledge" made to Mr Reed (13). Jane is not of Mrs Reed's "race", she is a "strange child" who Mrs Reed "could not love" as she was unconnected to her by any tie after her husband's death (13). Mrs Reed's aversion to the alien and dependant presence in her household is so strong that it leads her to believe that Jane is indeed full of "dangerous duplicity" (14) – a poisonous presence that threatens the very well-being of her family unit.

Although Jane may be imprisoned within, and persecuted by, the family, she refuses to accept that her "place" within it should be defined for her because she is an orphan and dependant, and this is something she affirms when she asserts that her cousins are "not fit to associate with [her]" (Brontë 31), rather than the contrary view held by her aunt. It is only with hindsight that Jane realises that she was "a discord at Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there" (12), and reinforces the idea that it is her differing views and antipathy towards the Reeds and the values they espouse that form the basis of her persecution. Indeed, the aversion between the Reeds and Jane is so strong that the older narrator conjectures that she was probably regarded by the Reeds as "a thing that could not sympathise with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, of contempt of their judgement" (12).

Even though Jane's first experience of resistance against the Reed family results in her incarceration, it is when she turns her attention to expressing the unjustness of her punishment to Mrs Reed that she experiences a true sense of victory for the first time. During her confrontation with her aunt Jane affirms that she must "*speak*", and her retaliation takes the form of a "blunt sentence": "I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved *you*; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed" (Brontë 30). Although she despises the Reed family and all they espouse, Jane is aware that the family space is not necessarily one that is controlled by the cruel and unjust. She affirms that she "never doubted that if Mr Reed had been alive he would have treated [her] kindly" (13) and later, at Lowood, she asserts that if she had left "a good home and kind parents" she would have "regretted the separation" (46).

Jane's resistance to, and scorn of, the Reeds was possibly an attempt by Charlotte Brontë to critique nineteenth century child-rearing practices. One of the most distinctive and powerful ideologies of child-rearing in early nineteenth century England had evolved from the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century. This ideology postulated that the child was "a creature of inbred corruption" and one "destined for hell" (Glen *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History* 68). Thus, the primary aim of evangelical discipline was the subjugation of self, and success in this endeavour meant that the child's will had to be broken, lest s/he be damned (Ibid 75), and families constituted a central mechanism for ensuring that "the principles of subordination [were] implanted according to hierarchy of power relations – children submit to parents, wives to husbands" (Lamonica 16). In effect, the family was expected to cultivate submission and deference as virtues to be carried into society (Ibid 17). Thus, Jane's "place" within the family structure is clearly defined for her: "you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed [.] ... They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble" (Brontë 10). She is later sent to Lowood because her family have failed to teach Jane her "place" within the household as well as within society, and religion and education are expected to complete this job (Macpherson 6).

Though Jane refuses to accept the "place" that the Reeds and society have assigned her, some critics have argued that even as a child she has already absorbed some negative class consciousness, as is evident when she tells Mr Lloyd that she "should not like to belong to poor people" (Brontë 20). Marianne Thormälen argues that Jane's assertion that poverty was "synonymous with degradation" (Ibid 20) illustrates derision so strong that Jane's class pride overrides her aversion to social oppression (Thormälen 128). A fact, Drew Lamonica argues, that affirms how deeply ingrained the equation of money and self-respect is (Lamonica 75) for it reflects a socially conservative ethos: "I was not brave enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste" (Brontë 20). Perhaps Jane's assertions that poverty was for her "synonymous with degradation" and that she "should not like to go a begging" (20), are indicative of a real anxiety that possibly stems from John's earlier declaration that because Jane is an orphan and dependant she "ought to beg" (8). Jane seems to be aware of the vulnerability of the uneducated, poor women she saw "nursing their children or washing their clothes" (20), and she appears to intuit

that her economically dependent status places her in a similarly precarious situation. Indeed, Jane's economic and social standing is determined for her by Mrs Reed's decision to send her to Lowood. Mrs Reed informs Brocklehurst that she wishes Jane to be "trained in conformity to her position and prospects" (29), effectively assigning Jane to the one possible source of income for a poor, genteel woman – the profession of governess (Rich 470). Jane thus passes from the charity of the Reed household to that of the benefactors of Lowood.

The fact that, as a dependant, Jane is reliant upon the charity of others, is not one she is allowed forget. During Brocklehurst's tirade against Jane he describes Mrs Reed as "the pious and charitable lady" who adopted the "unhappy girl" (Brontë 56) in her orphaned state. This description simultaneously recalls the parallels of the "benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen" (42) upon whose charity the orphans of Lowood rely, and Brocklehurst's own pious belief that the orphans under his care should not be accustomed to "habits of luxury and indulgence" but should rather be "hardy, patient, [and] self-denying" (53), as befits an upbringing in an "evangelical, charitable establishment" (54). Hence, the place of the orphan according to "Reed, Brocklehurst and Co." (55) is one of deference, not equality: as dependants that are reliant upon the contributions of others, orphans are subject to their benefactors' conditions and impositions. This constitutes the "very painful and crushing" (10) reproach of the orphan's dependence: the reminder that they will have very little wealth and that their social standing will be determined by their dependant status – a condition that is compounded in the novel by the fact that they are female.

Jane's rebellious nature means that she resists the temptation to view her dependant status as one of complete helplessness, but her unbridled passion and anger are often critiqued by the adult narrator, and these emotions are ones that Jane herself does not approve of, not even as a child. She admits to concurring with Bessie's argument that she was "the most wicked and abandoned child ever reared" for she "feels only bad feelings surging in [her] breast" (Brontë 23) after one of her confrontations with Mrs Reed. Even after her final confrontation with her aunt, Jane recognises that, like her mental battle in the Red Room, her argument with her aunt is also fought in "dense ignorance" (12). This fact is affirmed by the narrator:

> A child cannot quarrel with its elders, as I had done; cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine, without experiencing afterwards the pang of remorse and the chill of reaction. … [H]alf an hour's silence and reflection had shown me the madness of my conduct, and the dreariness of my hatred and hating position. (Brontë 31)

Thus, rebellious as she is, Jane's desire to love and be loved is paramount, a fact that she affirms to Mrs Reed: "You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness, but I cannot live so" (Brontë 30). She recognises "the dreariness of her hatred and her hating position" (31) and how her anger is counterproductive to attaining the love and approval she seeks. However, despite the fact that she recognises the destructiveness her anger, Jane does not attempt to conform to conventional child-like norms in order to be loved by Mrs Reed. She rejects the notion that one has to be amenable to society's expectations in order to be loved, a fact that is implicitly acknowledged in her unwillingness to seek Mrs Reed's forgiveness after their confrontation:

> [w]illingly would I now have gone and asked Mrs Reed's pardon; but I knew, partly from experience and partly from instinct, that was the way to make her repulse me with double scorn, thereby re-exciting every turbulent impulse of my nature. (Brontë 31)

However, Jane's notion of love is one tainted by masochism and selfishness. Not only does she assert that if others do not love her she "would rather die than live", but she also seems to fervently believe that she "cannot bear to be solitary and hated" (Brontë 58). Moreover, she relates a truly horrific example of her desperate need for affection to Helen:

> 'to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest[.]' – (Brontë 59)

Arguably, the conflict between reason and passion focused particularly in Jane draws on the eighteenth century belief that youth was a period of ambiguous potential, a

necessary turning point at which individuals establish their moral direction and fate (Meyer Spacks 90). What seems to be apparent too is the inheritance of eighteenth century authors' ambiguous attitude to passion: sometimes passion accounts for weakness, sometimes for strength, and there is also a similar assessment of the value and limitation of reason as a directing force (Meyer Spacks 91). In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë appears to portray these two polarities in the figures of Jane and Helen respectively, but one of the first lessons Jane learns at Lowood is to navigate a middle course between these two polarities by assimilating reason and conscience with passion. Indeed, Jane's social progress is tempered by the religious principles taught her by Helen Burns. One of the hardest lessons Jane has to learn is that passion and anger may render her repulsive to those around her, and need to be controlled and channelled into socially acceptable forms. Helen explains to her that

> '[i]t is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you.' (Brontë 47)

It is also Helen who presents Jane with an example of female character without pettiness, hysteria, or self-repudiation (Rich 473): "[it] would be your duty to bear [your punishment], if you could not avoid it: it is weak and silly to say you *cannot bear* what it is your fate to be required to bear" (Brontë 47).

Helen's doctrine of patient endurance, self-control, and the mastering of powerful and anarchic emotions enables Jane to not only heal the emotional damage incurred at the hands of the Reed family, but also to present herself with integrity and self-possession. Self-possession facilitates credibility as an individual, as is evident when Jane recounts her history to Miss Temple:

> I resolved, in the depth of my heart, that I would be most moderate – most correct [.] ... Exhausted by emotion, my language was more subdued than it generally was ... and mindful of Helen's warnings against the indulgence of resentment, I infused into the narrative far less of gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible [.](Brontë 60)

Whilst Helen teaches Jane the importance of self-control, she also imparts to her an understanding of Christian principles. Helen points out that Jane's quest for autonomy must occur within the context of the recognition that she is a child of God, and that this enables her to claim equality as an individual from a marginal position outside family and social structures; however, such a claim cannot be motivated by hatred, self-pity, or anger. Rebellion should be inspired by a wish for the liberation of self – a God-created self (Thormälen 133).

When Jane arrives at Lowood, her understanding of God has been limited and influenced by negative examples, such as those of Abbot and Brocklehurst. The first mention of God in the novel is made by Abbot, who portrays God as vengeful and unforgiving:

> 'God will punish her: He might strike her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go? ... I wouldn't have her heart for anything. Say your prayers, Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself; for if you don't repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch you away.' (Brontë 10)

Similarly, Brocklehurst seems convinced that Jane will have her "portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone" (Brontë 28). As mentioned previously, the doctrine of "Original Sin" permeated nineteenth century child-rearing practices and literature and was fed by the tradition established in the eighteenth century. By 1780, many women writers modelled their children's books on the pattern of Anna Barbauld, which led to the creation of a new archetypal child who "lapped up lessons hungrily, was eagerly obedient or lavishly repentant, [and most importantly], the new good child seldom made important, real decisions without parental approval" (Jackson 129). The 'bad child' on the other hand was one who embarked upon some project of their own, having erroneously assumed themselves capable of astute judgement and of having the right to exercise their independence (Ibid). What is apparent here is a real clash between what being good and amenable means in terms of social expectations and the idea that rebellion is essential for individual independence and self-development at times. Thus, when Brocklehurst demands of Jane whether she is a "good child" (Brontë 26), it seems that Charlotte Brontë is critiquing and satirising this fundamental assumption of the

conservatives of the day, whilst highlighting the extent to which tales of hellfire and damnation could instil fear in children.

Brocklehurst's anecdote about the pious little boy who "knows six Psalms by heart" and who wishes "to be an angel here below" (Brontë 27), and the implicit warning in the story of the "awfully sudden death" (29) of Martha G, draw on the teachings illustrating "whither good children go when they dye [sic], and whither naughty children go", the effects of which are evinced in late seventeenth century biographies of children (Thomas, Keith 68). These biographies recount how many children were desperately worried about their lack of assurance of salvation, especially when on their deathbeds (Ibid 69). Brocklehurst's reminder that children younger than Jane "die daily" (Brontë 27) illustrates a social truth: child mortality remained high in the nineteenth century, a fact that Jane herself appears to be aware of when she asserts that she "must keep in good health and not die" (27), but her answer also suggests that Brocklehurst succeeds in eliciting some anxiety about the fact that her soul may not end up in heaven. Indeed, when incarcerated in the Red Room, Jane had already begun to question whether she was wicked as "[a]ll said" and whether she was "fit to die" (13). It thus seems that at Gateshead Jane's spiritual growth has been stunted by negative images of God, and there is a real sense that "the twilight [will] close moonless and dreary / Over the path of the poor orphan child" (17).

It is hardly surprising then that, when faced with such negative presentations of God, Jane invests so much importance in human love. The importance of human love to Jane is especially apparent in her moments of distress when imprisoned in the Red Room, for she does not appeal to the protection of the divine, but rather envisages the sympathetic overtures of her dead uncle:

> I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode – whether in the church vault, or in the unknown world of the departed – and rise before me [.] (Brontë 13)

Coupled with her desire for human affection is Jane's wish to be recognised as an individual: to be granted autonomy. Jane sees an opportunity for autonomy in attending school: "school would be a complete change: it implied a long journey, an entire separation from Gateshead, an entrance into a new life" (Brontë 20). The oppression she feels subjected to in the Reed household would no longer be part of the "new life" she envisages (20). However her desire for a new beginning is tainted by Mrs Reed:

> I dimly perceived that she was already obliterating hope from the new phase of existence which she destined me to enter; I felt ... that she was sowing aversion and unkindness along my future path; I saw myself transformed under Mr. Brocklehurst's eye into an artful noxious child [.] (Brontë 28)

Ultimately it is Mrs Reed's accusation that Jane's "worst fault" is a "tendency to deceit" (Brontë 28) that leads to Jane's outburst, for it is a proclamation that Jane perceives to be most damaging to her. Indeed, it seems that Jane's worst fears have been realised when she is publicly reviled by Mr Brocklehurst:

> ...this girl, who might be one of God's own lambs, is a little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example: if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinise her actions, [and] punish her body to save her soul [.] (Brontë 56)

Until this point Jane has desperately attempted to remedy her perceived "faults", and her efforts have resulted in a marked improvement in her development as an individual by aiding her in her ultimate goal of independence. Brocklehurst's injunction to the pupils of Lowood echoes Mrs Reed's to her children: he commands that the pupils scorn and shun Jane as the Reed children did, effectively reducing Jane, even among her peers and fellow orphans, to an "interloper and an alien" (56). Jane's indignation at being labelled a liar by Brocklehurst is only soothed when Miss Temple publicly absolves her from this charge.

By the time Jane arrived at Lowood she had already rejected entirely the three main models of conduct she had hitherto been presented with: John Reed's violent

tyranny, Mrs. Reed's cold propriety, and Mr. Brocklehurst's religious tyranny; and it is only within the space of Lowood that Jane discovers two models worthy of admiration and emulation: the intellectual prowess of Miss Temple and the spiritual force of Helen Burns. The positive influence of these two models enables Jane to embark upon a new phase in her spiritual journey.

The healing, positive influence of Miss Temple and Helen Burns ensures that Jane develops a sense of self that cultivates independence of thought and intellectual and spiritual principles that enable her to recover from the injustices, perceived or real, of the past. As mentioned previously, it is Mrs Reed's accusation that Jane is deceitful that accounts for Jane's ire as the child senses that this declaration will have far-reaching consequences for her and indeed, by sending Jane to Brocklehurst's institution Mrs Reed is assigning her a specific role in society. Mrs Reed declares that she wishes Jane "to be brought up in a manner suiting her prospects ... to be made useful, to be kept humble" (Brontë 28), and echoes the sentiments of such eighteenth century educationalists as Hannah More, who in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1779), argued that the real aim of girls' education should be to make them "good daughters, good wives, good mistresses, good members of society and good Christians" (Porter 322). Unlike Miss Temple and Helen, Mrs Reed is not sympathetic, and focuses only on "uprooting" what she deems to be Jane's "bad propensities" (Brontë 16) always believing that she knows best, as is evident when she condescendingly asserts that: "you don't understand these things: children must be corrected for their faults" (31).

The perceived threat that this rebellious orphan interloper presents to the family is later echoed by Brocklehurst who appears to receive and communicate Mrs Reed's perception of Jane unquestioningly, implying that he too shares her beliefs about the subversive traits supposedly embodied by the orphan. Brocklehurst claims that Jane's presence in the Reed household led Mrs Reed to fear her "vicious example" would "contaminate [the] purity" of the Reed children (Brontë 56). He asserts that in order to cure Jane of her vices, the family were forced to send her to Lowood to be "healed" (56) – that is, healed of the vices that, for individuals like Mrs Reed and Brocklehurst, appear to be characteristic of the orphan.

Helen too points out what she deems to be Jane's faults by affirming that she thinks "too much of the love of human beings" and that she is "too impulsive, too vehement" (Brontë 59), but Helen also soothes her fears and teaches her how to discard these faults by taking comfort in the salvation offered by God:

> 'Life appears to me too short to be spent in nursing animosity, or registering wrongs. We are, and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world: but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbrous frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain, – the impalpable principle of life and thought, pure as when it left the Creator to inspire the creature [.]' (Brontë 49)

Although Jane admires Helen she cannot, and does not, wholly adopt Helen's doctrine of patient self-denial. Jane draws comfort and strength from Helen's kind sympathy, but even as a child she senses that Helen is too good for this world. This is evinced when Jane observes Helen's reaction to her punishment:

> [Helen] looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment – beyond her situation: of something not round her nor before her. ... [H]er sight seems turned in, gone down into her heart: she is looking at what she can remember, I believe; not at what is really present. (Brontë 44)

Of course, much as Jane has made progress on her spiritual journey and her journey toward selfhood and autonomy with the help of Helen and Miss Temple, there is always the temptation to relapse into the former state of perceiving herself as being ever persecuted and reviled. Helen's mysticism and self-restraint are not attributes that Jane can easily emulate. One of the instances which demonstrate Jane's inner conflict occurs when she is singled out for punishment by Mr Brocklehurst:

> '[a]nother minute, and [Miss Temple] will despise me for a hypocrite,' thought I; and an impulse of fury against Reed, Brocklehurst, and Co. bounded in my pulses at the conviction. I was no Helen Burns. (Brontë 55)

Yet, it is Helen who consoles and encourages Jane by implicitly reminding her of the principles she has taught her:

> It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head, and took a firm stand on the stool. (Brontë 57)

Terry Eagleton argues that the conjunction of martyr and hero is significant for it symbolises both "saintly self-abnegation and heroic self-affirmation" (Eagleton 16), and it appears that Jane both appreciates and admires these qualities in Helen. Indeed, the manner in which she deals with punishment at this juncture is the ultimate test for Jane. The very girl who claims that she "could not comprehend [Helen's] doctrine of endurance; and still less ... understand or sympathise with the forbearance she expressed for her chastiser" (Brontë 47), endures her own punishment with similar fortitude. This suggests that Jane finally ceases to ask the self-pitying question of why she seems to be constantly persecuted; however, this does not result from feelings of resignation and defeat but rather from recognising the value of self-possession. There is no suggestion here that Jane attempts to adopt Helen's example of self-surrender and self-immolation: she does not view herself as a martyr, but elevates Helen to that status as a tribute to her spiritual excellence, which Jane recognises is no model for herself. She seems to understand that through self-mastery she has attained the autonomy she sought by accepting Helen's lesson that "[i]t is not violence that best overcomes hate – nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury" (Brontë 57). The "strange little figure" Jane describes as "half fairy, half imp" (11) who was imprisoned in the Red Room and which symbolised Jane's fury and hysteria is replaced by a child who understands the power of self-control and introspection and who no longer views herself as a "slave or victim" (57).

Although Jane recognises that she is "no Helen Burns" (Brontë 55), and that she cannot entirely adopt Helen's forbearance, Jane's understanding of God is shaped by Helen. Jane learns to value the love of a creator whom she comes to view as both benevolent and a parent figure rather than the vengeful God of Abbot's and Mr Brocklehurst's imaginings. As much as Helen understands and accepts that there is

suffering in this world, she does not advocate a religion that is based on fear and which relies on masochistic forms of worship rather than an attempt to understand the nature of God. This is the primary difference between Helen and Mr Brocklehurst, who uses scripture to his own ends as is evinced when he criticises Miss Temple for not referring to

> the sufferings of the primitive Christians; to the torments of martyrs; to the exhortations of our blessed Lord himself, calling upon his disciples to take up their cross and follow him; to his warnings that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; to his divine consolations, "if ye suffer hunger or thirst for my sake, happy are ye." (Brontë 53)

Not only does Brocklehurst use these examples out of context, but he also advocates the use of extreme forms of self-sacrifice and penance to placate and worship God. Helen, however, demonstrates an entirely different understanding of the New Testament and conducts herself according to Christ's example. She encourages Jane to do the same by explaining the fundamental teachings of Christ: "[l]ove your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you" (Brontë 49). Helen's religious sensibility is often portrayed as highly personal, and Jane often presents her as a martyr figure for she feels that Helen considers things "by a light invisible" (47) to her eyes, and in describing Helen's reaction to the punishment meted out by Miss Scatcherd conveys a sense of the mysticism associated with her: "her sight seems turned in, gone down into her heart: she is looking at what she can remember, I believe; not at what is really present" (44).

The fact that Helen's religious sensibility is highly personal is evident in her manifesto on the nature of God and heaven, which challenges the fire and brimstone sermons the pupils of Lowood are subjected to by Mr Brocklehurst:

> 'Surely [the spirit] will never ... be suffered to degenerate from man to fiend? No; I cannot believe that: I hold another creed; which no one ever taught me, and which I seldom mention; but in which I delight, and to which I cling: for it extends hope to all: it makes Eternity a rest – a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss.' (Brontë 49)

Not only do these beliefs reinforce the idea of Helen being a martyr figure, but there are echoes here of sentiments about the nature of God and heaven that Jane has heard before, in Bessie's ballad:

> There is a thought that for strength should avail me,
> Though both of shelter and kindred despoiled;
> Heaven is a home, and a rest will not fail me;
> God is a friend to the poor orphan child. (Brontë 18)

While Jane does not acknowledge, or perhaps even recognise, that she has heard a version of Helen's beliefs before, the repetition of these ideas is significant. Even though Jane is "but a little untaught girl" (Brontë 48) when Helen reveals her creed and explains that since she "live[s] in calm, looking to the end" revenge, degradation, and injustice never worry her (50), Jane is still able to value the lessons Helen tries to impart and inherently senses that they may indeed be correct: "I suspected she might be right and I wrong" (47).

It is Helen who ultimately imparts the lasting vision of God who is "a friend to the poor orphan child" (Brontë 18). Even though Jane persists in questioning the nature of the divine, Helen reiterates her understanding of God one last time before she dies, and there is a sense that she leads by example, for it is her faith and her creed that comfort Helen most in her last hours. Indeed, this appears to be when her beliefs are most assured:

> 'Where is God? What is God?'
> 'My maker and yours, who will never destroy what he created. I rely implicitly on his power, and confide wholly in his goodness [.]
> 'You are sure, then, Helen, that there is such a place as heaven; and that our souls can get to it when we die?'
> 'I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend: I love him; I believe he loves me.' (Brontë 69)

It thus seems that because Helen dies living out the principles and example of her beloved God Jane finally comes to believe and understand the crux of her teaching: that "the sovereign hand that created your frame and put life into it, has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you" (Brontë 59). One of

these resources is conscience, which acts as a direct intermediary between God and humanity (Thormälen 165) and illustrates the power of ethical choice:

> '[i]f all the world hated you, and believed you wicked, while your own conscience approved you, and absolved you from guilt, you would not be without friends.' (Brontë 58)

Hence, Jane comes to realise that whilst Helen fortifies and, to some extent, succours her, she cannot be her moral custodian, for Jane must discover a system of morality within herself. In order to do so, conscience and ethical choice are imperative. The other figure who aids the development of Jane's sense of morality is Maria Temple. Jane affirms that it is to Miss Temple's instruction that she "owed the best part of [her] acquirements" and that "her friendship and society had been my continual solace: she had stood me in the stead of mother [and] governess" (Brontë 71). Jane also asserts that:

> I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits: more harmonious thoughts: what seemed better-regulated feelings had become the inmates of my mind. I had given in allegiance to duty and order, I was quiet; I believed I was content [.] ... I appeared a disciplined and subdued character. (Brontë 71)

Thus, whilst Helen acts as a spiritual guide to Jane, Miss Temple teaches her how to live out those spiritual principles so that although Jane always retains her passionate and rebellious nature, it is tempered by her conscience and sense of morality. This is affirmed throughout the novel, for it seems that Jane returns to her own set of moral principles when in doubt. Perhaps the best example of this is when she decides to leave Rochester:

> I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. ... Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. (Brontë 270)

After she departs Thornfield and is employed at the school in Morton, Jane is able to reflect on her choice and feels that her decision has been judicious:

> Whether it is better, I ask, to be a slave in a fool's paradise at Marseilles – fevered with delusive bliss one hour – suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next – or to be a village school mistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?
>
> Yes, I feel now that I was right when I adhered to principle and law, and scorned and crushed the insane promptings of a frenzied moment. God directed me to a correct choice: I thank His providence for the guidance. (Brontë 306-307)

There appears to be no doubt about the choice Jane has made here: her conscience very clearly lays out what is correct. If she had submitted to Rochester she would have submitted to a form of tyranny, she would have become "a slave" (Brontë 306), and this is precisely what her naturally rebellious nature had turned against as a child. To submit to Rochester would have been to regress, to return to being ruled by passion as she was at Gateshead, and to need to deal with the self-destructiveness that comes with that passion. On the other hand, Jane's fervent need to assert her independence, coupled with the religious and moral principles she has learned enables her to live a "free and honest" (306) existence that forms the basis of self-respect and true autonomy.

Thus, not only does Jane subscribe to the principles taught her by Helen and Miss Temple during morally trying times, but it also seems that she makes a real attempt to live them out. Arguably, the definitive testament to this fact is when, as an adult, she is able to forgive her Aunt Reed:

> It is a happy thing that time quells the longings of vengeance, and hushes the promptings of rage and aversion: I had left this woman in bitterness and hate, and I came back to her now with no other emotion than a sort of ruth for her great sufferings, and a strong yearning to forget and forgive all injuries – to be reconciled and clasp hands in amity. (Brontë 196)

The spiritual excellence that Jane as a child senses in Helen is not something she forgets as an adult. Her ultimate testament to Helen and the principles she taught her is the placing of a tombstone over Helen's grave and marking it with the word "Resurgam" (Brontë 70), so that Helen's Christ-like example is as indelibly inscribed and commemorated on a marble tablet as it is in Jane's mind. This final tribute to Helen and

her teachings is particularly significant for it occurs "fifteen years after her death" (70), testifying that Jane has never forgotten, and truly appreciates, the invaluable lessons imparted by Helen because they have guided the "poor orphan child" (18) Jane through many moral and spiritual perils.

Throughout the novel the ambiguities of orphan-hood are presented as manifold: Jane is excluded from the family but also confined by it, dependent on it but wishing to divorce herself from it and, although orphan-hood often entails liberation and independence of thought, it also signifies alienation and solitude. Helen, the spiritually gifted orphan, is not fit to make her way in the world and dies young; the tranquillity she imparts is filled with "an alloy of inexpressible sadness" (Brontë 59). Despite Jane's independence of thought, mental acuity, and her ability to challenge views held and accepted by her family and society, she is chastened, punished, and forced to modify her passion into a form that society deems acceptable.

Of course, Jane's trials must be understood within the context of the kind of spirituality the novel endorses. Unlike the Blakean orphans who, whether implicitly or explicitly, critique and resist adhering to established social, moral, and religious codes, Jane Eyre's spiritual journey entails some adherence to society's laws and religion. Spiritual enlightenment, an understanding of self, and true autonomy occurs when Jane lives out the moral principles she has learnt, so that the emotional and spiritual starvation she endured at Gateshead at the beginning of her spiritual journey is ultimately replaced and healed by the emotional and spiritual union she attains with Rochester at Ferndean. Thus, Jane's story embraces both the notion that orphan-hood entails isolation, as well as the notion that independence also entails isolation. She is alone in the world because she is an orphan and is forging her own path towards self-identity, ethical choice, and morality, and the novel seems to suggest that this is requisite in order to attain true autonomy.

Chapter Four

'Rude as Savages'[1]: Emily Brontë's depiction of orphan children in *Wuthering Heights*

Like *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* was published in 1847. The major orphan figure in the novel is Heathcliff, who, as a stranger brought into the Earnshaw home, creates confusion and brings destruction. He is referred to as both a "cuckoo" (Brontë 30), and an "it" (31), raising questions about both his origins and his "humanness". With Heathcliff's introduction, the identities of the Earnshaw children are shaken, illustrating that, like Jane Eyre, Heathcliff is a subversive figure threatening conventions of the family. Like Jane, Heathcliff is regarded as a redundant and intrusive figure by the Earnshaw siblings and Mrs Earnshaw, but he does not initially experience the complete alienation and persecution that Jane endures as he is protected by a benevolent paternal figure.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the extent to which the orphan constitutes a subversive threat to the family, and to determine whether the children in the novel are indeed, as Stevie Davies contends, orphaned and exposed through their liberation from adult guardians (Davies *Emily Brontë* 43).

In a novel where identity is a central thematic concern, it is significant that Heathcliff has no other name and, though he is in a manner connected to the family by being given the name of a son who died in childhood, his name contrasts with the names in the proud lineage of the Earnshaws, who are landed gentry. His name suggests a wild and undeveloped nature, and in being described as an "it" (Brontë 31) by Nelly, his apparent inferiority and difference to the Earnshaw children is emphasised. This first 'naming' of Heathcliff as "it" (31), by Mr Earnshaw is significant for, inasmuch as the naming of a child confirms a specific identity and confers a human identity, the deferral of naming suggests a deferral of the granting of a fully human status. Indeed, Mr Earnshaw's use of the impersonal pronoun could refer more to an animal than a human when he initially announces the presence of Heathcliff to the family: "you must e'en take

[1] Brontë 40

it as a gift of God, though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil" (31). This description also suggests a derogatory reference to Heathcliff's race for since he is picked up on the streets of Liverpool, a major slaving and trading port, and is usually described as being dark-skinned, his racial background is frequently questioned. When he is discovered at Thrushcross Grange Mr Linton questions whether he is "a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway" (44), and Nelly later passes a remark about the possibility of Heathcliff being a "regular black" and tells him that his father could be "Emperor of China, and [his] mother an Indian queen" (50). Thus, Heathcliff's name signals acceptance as well as difference and implied inferiority, for by lacking the family name, he lacks full membership in the family, so that, just as his placement on the threshold of the bedrooms symbolises his liminal position within the family, his name also indicates the fact that he is neither in nor out of the family unit (Lamonica 98).

Heathcliff's presence in the Earnshaw home also threatens the identities of the Earnshaw children and a paradoxical portrayal of identity is evinced for, while it seems that identity can only be allocated and played out in this small, circular, and limited society, it also seems fragile and easily shattered. Catherine's animosity towards Heathcliff is, however, quickly dispelled, unlike Hindley's, which grows from hostility to hatred. Prior to Heathcliff's arrival, Hindley, as the only son, had no competitor for his place within the family and recognised the significance of being sole heir and, perhaps more significantly, he had no competitor for his father's affections. Although Mrs Earnshaw does not seem to deviate from the belief that Heathcliff is a "gipsy brat" (Brontë 31), and "never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged" (32), Mr Earnshaw "took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said" (32) and is furious when he discovers Hindley persecuting the "poor, fatherless child" (32). Mr Earnshaw's favouritism ensures that by the time Mrs Earnshaw dies Hindley regards his father "as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his father's affections and his privileges, and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries" (32-33).

The "bad feeling" (Brontë 32) that Heathcliff's presence breeds in the Earnshaw household informs the dynamics of the early hostility between him and Hindley and generates all subsequent conflicts (Gordon, Felicia 198). One of the most significant childhood conflicts that occurs between Hindley and Heathcliff is the incident with the

colt. Not only does this incident demonstrate the perversity of Heathcliff's will and the fact that he will do anything to get what he wants, but it also illustrates Hindley's absolute hatred of the interloper who has usurped his father's regard, and who also represents a threat to his inheritance:

> "Take my colt, gipsy, then!" said young Earnshaw, "And I pray that he may break your neck; take him and be damned you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father out of all he has – only afterwards, show him what you are, imp of Satan [.]" (Brontë 34)

Despite Hindley's fears about Heathcliff's hold over his father, upon Mr Earnshaw's death, Hindley is the sole inheritor of property and position, and it is from this position of power that Hindley lords his status over Heathcliff and deliberately reverses the privileged treatment he received from Mr Earnshaw (Lamonica 101). Thus, after the death of his benefactor and protector, the "poor, fatherless child" (Brontë 32) is left vulnerable and open to exploitation. Catherine affirms in her diary that Hindley's conduct to Heathcliff is indeed "atrocious" (16), and records in detail Heathcliff's treatment at Hindley's hands:

> Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders.
>
> He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place [.] (Brontë 18)

Hindley's treatment of Heathcliff is corroborated by Nelly, who claims that it "was enough to make a fiend of a saint" (58), and she recalls how Hindley drove Heathcliff "from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instruction of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors" (40). This appears to illustrate that Hindley believes that as an orphaned, and therefore dependent, interloper, Heathcliff must be reduced to his "right place" (18) socially, thereby reinforcing the economic and social distance between the Earnshaw family and Heathcliff's own classless and penniless state. However, despite Hindley's efforts, Heathcliff is able to bear his degradation because of his friendship with Catherine, who "taught him what she learnt,

and worked or played with him in the fields" (40). It certainly seems that Catherine and Heathcliff are successful in their attempts to "rebel" (16) against Hindley, and their promise to "grow up as rude as savages" (40) also appears to be fulfilled, as Nelly observes that they grew "more reckless daily" (40). For Catherine and Heathcliff, "punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at" and they "forgot everything the minute they were together again, at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge" (40). Thus, not only do the children show no regard for adult authority, but they actively rebel against it. Although Hindley has become the head of the household he wields no power as a parental figure, proving Catherine's assertion that he is "a detestable substitute" (16) for Mr Earnshaw, and his disregard of the children and their behaviour only seems to encourage their rebellion against adult authority.

In addition to rebelling against adult authority, the children also rebel against orthodox religion. The major advocate of Christianity in the novel, Joseph, is portrayed as an uncharitable, judgemental, narrow-minded, and dogmatic individual, and Catherine and Heathcliff recognise and despise his hypocrisy. Joseph exemplifies an adult guardian who fences and chastens the children (Davies *Emily Brontë* 43), and Nelly describes how "by his knack of sermonising and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression on Mr. Earnshaw, and the more feeble the master became, the more influence he gained. He was relentless about worrying him about his soul's concerns, and about ruling his children rigidly" (Brontë 35-36). The children do not prize his values and for them the traditional patriarchal religion Joseph promotes is irrelevant to their lives and whatever sense of spirituality they have, and is therefore effectively repudiated. On the "awful Sunday" (16) when they are forced to endure Joseph's three hour sermon, the children fling the "good books" (17) they are made to read into the dog kennel, and Catherine asserts that they would find the advent of "owd Nick" (17) more pleasurable and comforting than their present company.

Hence, though the children of Wuthering Heights are frequently described as animalistic and demonic and appear to be unfit to operate in society, they create their own society in which their humanness is enacted, whether that leads to degradation or not. Stevie Davies contends that the depiction of the children in the novel is one that

> praises the life of absolutes, the refusal of compromise or qualification either to love or hate [.] ... Most strenuously, it celebrates a kind of preposterous honesty and directness of speech and action [.] ... Gender roles are consummately without meaning to the children of the novel: hence there is an overwhelming experience of unfallen freedom [.] (Davies *Emily Brontë* 67)

There certainly exists between Heathcliff and Catherine a relationship which is open and direct. Though Heathcliff is made an outcast and made to feel his social inferiority by Hindley, he also represents, for Catherine, a possibility of liberation as one outside family constraints. The family structure may play a crucial role in shaping the identities of those within it, but Heathcliff, a representative of the landless poor, lacking origins, relations, and even a name, also appears to represent the freedom that lies outside the patriarchal family, for he presents the possibility of one developing one's own identity outside this social structure (Lamonica 101). For a male child like Hindley, the patriarchal family acts as a sacred totem in society, by reinforcing and ensuring inheritance rights and male supremacy (Long Hoeveler 188), but for the female child the patriarchal family often functions as an oppressive structure, determining not only identity, but defining that identity in terms of her relationship to the males in her family, as well as determining many of her other social and economic aspects and prospects. As an orphan in an isolated and rural environment, Catherine reaches puberty relatively unhindered and unrestrained by parental and societal notions of suitable female conduct, and her capacity for rebellion means that she develops into an assertive child associated with liberty rather than with the domestic and familial and their constraints (Pykett 89).

It thus seems that the bond Heathcliff and Catherine share means that Heathcliff becomes a projection of Catherine's desire for liberty, and her wish to break the bonds of familial and social constraints that she encounters (Lamonica 102). However, although Heathcliff occupies a space outside the family structure, in casting Heathcliff out of the family and allowing him to run wild, Hindley effectively inverts the potential freedom from social and familial structures that Heathcliff symbolises into degradation and neglect (Eagleton 103). It therefore appears that there is no real possibility for freedom either within society or outside it, for though society discriminates against and oppresses

Heathcliff, any notion of liberty outside society seems a mere illusion, constituting cultural and intellectual impoverishment (Eagleton 104).

Indeed, the world of Wuthering Heights is certainly not a social world which exists in a vacuum, disconnected from society. Though the children do not exist in a social vacuum, they initially demonstrate contempt for society's pettiness, the constructions it forces individuals to adopt, and its lack of liberty. That is, the social world represents for Catherine and Heathcliff "foolish palaver" (Brontë 17): it is a world which has no precise correlative for the type of freedom the children experience (Davies *Emily Brontë* 70). Their contempt for this world is recorded in Heathcliff's account of their expedition to Thrushcross Grange:

> Old Mr. and Mrs. Linton were not there. Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves; shouldn't they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven! ... We laughed outright at the petted things, we did despise them! When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange – not if I might have the privilege of flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the house-front with Hindley's blood! (Brontë 42)

Heathcliff's account of the events at the Grange outlines and articulates the fundamental differences between the isolated world of Wuthering Heights and that of Thrushcross Grange. The liberation that Heathcliff and Catherine experience is one that the Linton children seem unacquainted with, and this is perhaps most effectively symbolised in the fact that the two orphan children are outside the house looking into the enclosed and somewhat claustrophobic security of the Linton world with its petty domestic conflicts. The image of Heathcliff and Catherine outside the house also suggests that they are outside the realm of the domestic and familial, and in a space which offers them freedom from the constraints of this realm. Heathcliff's observations cannot be dismissed as irrelevant however, for they appear to be accurate: the Linton world does indeed seem to be one of stasis and ungenerous and spiteful social judgements (Nussbaum 402). When Heathcliff enters the Linton home with the injured Catherine, not only does he encounter

racial prejudice, but he is pronounced a "wicked boy ... and quite unfit for a decent house" (Brontë 44).

The expedition to Thrushcross Grange also has more significant repercussions for Catherine and Heathcliff. The bond between Catherine and Heathcliff is not broken by Hindley, against whom they successfully unite, but rather when they venture to Thrushcross Grange and Catherine is attacked by the dog. After Catherine's recuperation and the subsequent 'civilising process' she undergoes at the Grange, she is ever after torn between two different notions of home and two notions of herself. She splits off the part of herself that is at home at Wuthering Heights from the part of herself that is responding and reacting to the appreciation and admiration she receives at Thrushcross Grange which, in a sense, represents broader society. She has developed a new awareness of social distinctions and restrains her "true" nature in proper company. Nelly recounts how Catherine

> had no temptation to show her rough side in [the Lintons'] company, and had the sense to be ashamed of being rude where she experienced such invariable courtesy, she imposed unwittingly on the old lady and gentleman by her ingenuous cordiality ... [and this] led her to adopt a double character without exactly intending to deceive anyone.
>
> In the place where she heard Heathcliff termed a "vulgar young ruffian" and "worse than a brute," she took care not to act like him; but at home she had small inclination to practise politeness that would only be laughed at, and restrain an unruly nature when it would bring neither credit nor praise. (Brontë 59)

It thus appears that Catherine has reneged on her promise to grow up as "rude as [a savage]" (40) with Heathcliff. It seems that this is the first time she begins to split part of herself off from Heathcliff, in whom she had not only found a playmate and foster brother, but an integral part of herself, as she later recognises when affirming her duality to Nelly: "[Heathcliff is] more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire" (71).

Catherine eventually recognises that in splitting herself off from Heathcliff, she has lost the liberty of her childhood and has been assimilated into a society in which she

can find no true comfort or freedom, and this is evidenced in her yearning for her childhood in her delirious state. She talks about a feeling of isolation, and what it would have been like to be transplanted at the age of twelve with nothing to prepare her for the transition between her life with Edgar and her life with Heathcliff. It is as if her life was arrested at the age of twelve:

> [S]upposing at twelve years old I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth from what had been my world – You may fancy a glimpse of the abyss where I grovelled! ... I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free ... and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! (Brontë 111)

Thus, Catherine recalls her girlhood as a time of freedom, and her yearning for this freedom appears to express the desire to be liberated from the constraints of marriage, adult life, pregnancy, social conformity, and her own mistakes (Gordon, Felicia 206).

Though Heathcliff makes an attempt to assimilate himself into the society the Lintons represent, and into which Catherine has been integrated, by asking Nelly to make him "decent" (Brontë 49), when his attempts at successful integration fail he realises that the reasons he is discriminated against are not only racial, but also socio-economic: "I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being rich as [Edgar Linton] will be!" (50). When he returns after his three year absence it becomes apparent that his newly-made fortune and gentleman-like aspect constitute a veneer: the "savage sullenness and ferocity" (58) that is characteristic of his boyhood ensures his development into a "fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (90), for Heathcliff cannot deny his true nature as easily as Catherine has (Long Hoeveler 193). Nelly affirms that he still possesses a "half-civilized ferocity" (Brontë 84-85) and recognises that "though his exterior was altered, his mind was unchangeable, and unchanged" (89). Catherine too recognises that Heathcliff remains fundamentally unchanged and warns Isabella that he is "an unreclaimed creature, without refinement – without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone" (90). Heathcliff thus seems to embody more than any other of the orphan characters the freedom to exist for

oneself and for one's own selfish motives. He never experiences the duality Catherine does and this appears to be because he retains much of his childhood self and the liberty that that childhood has entailed.

Arguably, Heathcliff, like Catherine, undergoes some form of civilising process in his three year absence so that, although he does not demonstrate the duality Catherine does, his manner was "quite divested of roughness" (Brontë 85) indicating that he has adapted in some way to the very society that he and Catherine scorned as children. In effect, Heathcliff's yearning for death near the close of the novel suggests his seeking to regain his lost paradise of childhood when he and Catherine were inseparable, and this closely mirrors Catherine's own wish before her death eighteen years previously (Gordon, Felicia 200). Hence, Heathcliff's 'heaven' appears to be the reunification, in death, with his childhood self and with Catherine (Ibid 200). Just as Catherine is unable in herself to locate a coherent identity that is not in some way the mirror image of Heathcliff, he is also unable to forge an identity that does not somehow contain Catherine as the missing half of his own identity. Heathcliff has nothing with which to replace Catherine and he is never able to transcend the feeling of being shattered and splintered when Catherine dies.

Before her marriage to Edgar Linton, Catherine asserts "I *am* Heathcliff – he's always, always in my mind – not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but, as my own being" (Brontë 73), and there is a sense in which her affinity and identification with Heathcliff suggest that they are two parts of a whole. Heathcliff is everything Catherine has aspired to be and he represents that liberation of self that she identifies with, not only as a child, but as an adult. Thus, the bond and bondedness the orphan children share seems to grow out of identification with each other as children liberated from the constraints of society and authoritarian parental rule, seeking fulfilment only in their relationship and the liberating space of their isolated rural world.

The bond between Catherine and Heathcliff is unique, and though the second generation share similarities with their parents, none of them shares the intensity of attachment Heathcliff and Catherine do. In addition, it appears that the sins of their parents are visited on the children: Heathcliff's revenge on Hindley is to degrade his son, he despises Catherine's daughter not only because she is the result of the union between

Catherine and Edgar, but because she acts as a reminder of her mother, whom she is not; similarly, his own son reminds him of the Lintons: Heathcliff "hate[s] him for the memories he revives" and affirms that he is "bitterly disappointed with the whey-faced whining wretch" (Brontë 184).

The position of the second generation of orphan children is perhaps more precarious than that of the first: all three are exploited, degraded, and manipulated by Heathcliff. When Hareton is born he is described as "a grand bairn", the "finest lad that ever breathed", and a "cherub" (Brontë 56), but when he is orphaned by his mother's death, Heathcliff begins to influence him and his influence becomes apparent almost immediately. Nelly recalls an incident soon after Heathcliff's return when there "ensued, from the stammering lips of the little fellow, a string of curses which, whether he comprehended them or not, were delivered with practised emphasis, and distorted his baby features into a shocking expression of malignity" (Brontë 97). Thus begins Heathcliff's debasement and manipulation of Hareton, and in addition to promoting his contempt for the curate, Heathcliff also teaches him to despise his father whom he refers to as "Devil daddy" (97).

Heathcliff's degradation of Hareton is thorough and systematic, and his intention to shape Hareton in his own image is revealed after Hindley's death: "Now, my bonny lad, you are *mine*! And we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!" (Brontë 165). Hence, since Hareton is left both parentless and penniless, he is "reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy" (Brontë 166).

The dependent status of the three orphans of the second generation renders them vulnerable, and this is particularly the case with Catherine's daughter (hereafter Cathy), whose plight is compounded because she is female and cannot earn her keep as Hareton does. Heathcliff asserts that Cathy owes him "her services for her bread; I'm not going to nurture her in luxury and idleness after Linton is gone" (Brontë 254). All three are mere pawns in Heathcliff's plan of revenge on their dead parents, which he reveals to Nelly:

> My son is prospective owner of [Thrushcross Grange] [.] ... [H]e's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing my descendent fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children, to till their fathers' land for wages. That is

> the sole consideration which can make me endure the whelp – I despise him for himself [.](Brontë 184)

Heathcliff views Linton as his "property", and when Nelly arrives at Wuthering Heights with the child, they are met with Heathcliff's suggestive response: "You've brought it, have you? Let us see what we can make of it" (Brontë 182). The fact that Heathcliff employs the impersonal pronoun that was used to describe him when he was brought to Wuthering Heights is not only ironic, but similarly dehumanises his son, a fact that is emphasised in his calling Linton a "puling chicken" and a "thing" (183). Heathcliff's disregard for his son becomes more marked and callous as his use for him wanes. Though Linton is described by Nelly as a "fretful, ailing" "weakling" (178), and "[t]he worst-tempered bit of a slip that ever struggled into its teens" (214), and although this description is verified by other characters who are equally unsympathetic toward him, Heathcliff's treatment of his son is portrayed as despicable and inexcusable. Not only does Heathcliff admit to hating Linton, and being bitterly disappointed in him (Brontë 184), but he lets him die and tells Cathy "his life is not worth a farthing, and I won't spend a farthing on him" and that "[n]one here care what becomes of him" (259), indicating that for Heathcliff, Linton's life is dispensable as he has fulfilled his designated role of securing Cathy's property and fortune.

Indeed, the fact that Edgar Linton is left without an heir is one that Nelly bemoans when Cathy is born. The "feeble orphan" is initially described as an "unwelcomed infant", who "might have wailed out of life, and nobody cared a morsel, during the first hours of existence" (Brontë 145). Since Cathy is born on the same day her mother dies, this suggests continuity between their identities, evinced in the fact that Cathy is her mother's namesake, but there is also a disruption and gap between them. Heathcliff regards Cathy with "singular aversion" (Brontë 195) not only because she is Edgar Linton's daughter, but because she acts as a reminder of her mother. Edgar Linton, on the other hand, shows a more favourable response to his daughter in whom he recognises aspects of her mother, even while he draws a distinction between their identities: "[t]he little one was always Cathy: it formed to him a distinction from the mother, and yet, a connection with her; and his attachment sprang from its relation to her" (162).

Cathy's personality differs markedly from her mother's, as Nelly explains:

> [h]er spirit was high, though not rough, and qualified by a heart sensitive and lively to excess in its affections. That capacity for intense attachments reminded me of her mother; still she did not resemble her; for she could be soft and mild as a dove, and she had a gentle voice, and pensive expression: her anger was never furious; her love never fierce; it was deep and tender. (Brontë 167)

She thus appears to be a more reserved and gentle version of her mother, whom Nelly describes as a "wild, wick slip" (Brontë 36) and a "wild, hatless little savage" (46). Cathy lacks the fierce and untamed nature that is characteristic of her mother, due perhaps to the fact that she is not permitted to run wild, but is carefully nurtured, protected, and enclosed in the world of Thrushcross Grange: "[t]ill she reached the age of thirteen, she had not once been beyond the range of the park by herself. ... [S]he was a perfect recluse" (167). There is a sense in which the Linton world has not changed much from the time Catherine and Heathcliff peered into the windows over twenty years before: it still appears that the Grange represents an indoor world of comfort, pampering, and stasis. It is a world beyond which Cathy desires to explore and expand, not with the desperate yearning and desire to escape that her mother had expressed during her illness, but out of curiosity and perhaps an unconscious desire for liberty from the enclosed and limited world she inhabits.

Thus, unlike her mother, whose 'civilising process' began at thirteen, Cathy's occurs throughout her childhood, but the process which transformed her mother from "a wild, hatless little savage" (46) into a "bright, graceful damsel" (47) also led to her adoption of a double nature, exposing her civility as a veneer that hid her true nature. Cathy's process of 'civilisation' paradoxically occurs at the cost of any social engagement, for it occurs in isolation. The wildness and recklessness characteristic of Catherine and Heathcliff is regularly condemned but, when compared to Cathy there is an authenticity apparent in their wildness that is not present in Cathy's civility, which begins to atrophy during her visits to Linton at Wuthering Heights and, after Linton's death, Heathcliff's brutal treatment seems to elicit a similar brutality in her. That is, though Catherine and Heathcliff are reckless and 'untamed' children, they are allowed to develop identities that are not constricted by social conventions, unlike Cathy. Indeed, the

'civility' that Cathy and Linton hold in such high esteem does not mean that it is something they always choose to practise, either with each other or with those around them. Hence, Hareton is often subjected to their mockery about what they deem to be his lack of civility and sophistication:

> "There's nothing the matter, but laziness, is there, Earnshaw?" [Linton] said. "My cousin fancies you are an idiot ... There you experience the consequence of scorning 'book-larning,' as you would say ... Have you noticed, Catherine, his frightful Yorkshire pronunciation?" (Brontë 194)
>
> [T]he flippant pair ... remained chattering in the door-way: the boy finding animation enough while discussing Hareton's faults and deficiencies, and relating anecdotes of his goings on; and the girl relishing his pert and spiteful sayings, without considering the ill-nature they evinced [.] (195)

Although Hareton is mocked by Cathy and Linton, Heathcliff recognises his worth despite his degradation, and scorns his own son even though he never repents of his treatment of Hareton:

> [H]e'll never be able to emerge from his bathos of coarseness and ignorance. I've got him faster than his scoundrel of a father secured me, and lower; for he takes pride in his brutishness. ... Don't you think Hindley would be proud of his son, if he could see him? almost as proud as I am of mine – But there's this difference; one is gold put to the use of paving stones, and the other is tin polished to ape a service of silver – *Mine* has nothing valuable about it, yet I shall have the merit of making it go as far as such poor stuff can go. *His* had first-rate qualities, and they are lost – rendered worse than unavailing [.] (Brontë 193)

However, though Heathcliff recognises that Hareton is inherently of more worth than Linton, he is mistaken about him being unable to emerge from his degraded state. It seems that Hareton has not lost his "first-rate qualities" (Brontë 193) as Heathcliff supposes, and even though he suffers similar forms of degradation to those experienced by Heathcliff , Heathcliff is unsuccessful in moulding Hareton in his image. It seems that Hareton affirms 'I am *not* Heathcliff', though he has the potential to be. He is thus an example of how deprivation and degradation do not necessarily mean being transformed

into a replica of Heathcliff. In this way, the two offer contrasting examples of orphans who, though both degraded as children, develop very differently as adults.

Heathcliff is the primary example of an orphan who represents a subversive threat to the family unit, for his arrival in the Earnshaw home shakes the identities of Hindley and Catherine. He is seen as a competitor for their father's affection and his intrusion creates confusion, forcing the children to question their positions within the family, and the orphan interloper introduces an unwelcome and 'unnatural' realignment of their positions, for he usurps the role and name of a brother who died in childhood. Mr Earnshaw's inexplicable attachment to Heathcliff proves to be another source of conflict, particularly for Hindley, who views him as a rival for his position of master and heir of Wuthering Heights.

Arguably, Catherine and Heathcliff also pose a threat to the family unit, as is evinced in the symbolic moment of the children peering into the windows of the Linton home and mocking and taunting the inmates. They are children liberated from adult guardians and are thus, in a sense, 'outside' the family unit in a space that allows them to experience a sense of liberty that the Linton children in their cloistered family home cannot fully comprehend or appreciate. Catherine and Heathcliff run wild, defying social and gender roles, whilst rebelling against authoritarian and tyrannical adults and orthodox patriarchal religion. They lack the decorum that would enable an easy integration into broader society, and they create their own society in their isolated rural world, but this is not a possibility that exists forever, and it certainly does not exist after Catherine's five-week stay at Thrushcross Grange.

There is always the implied question as to what extent the children are 'outside' social and familial structures. As mentioned previously, the world of Wuthering Heights does not exist in a vacuum – the inhabitants are aware of social conventions though they do not always practise them. This is evident not only in the fact that Catherine adopts a double nature in her attempt to be successfully integrated into the world of the Lintons, but is also evident when Heathcliff returns after his three year absence, having apparently undergone some sort of 'civilising process' himself. However, Catherine and Heathcliff do exist, at least for a time, in a childhood space that is effectively free from social and familial constraints. Despite this, Stevie Davies's contention that the children in the novel

are orphaned and exposed through their liberation from adult guardians (*Emily Brontë* 43) also proves to be true. For all Catherine and Heathcliff's recklessness and wildness, they are vulnerable, a fact that is perhaps first implied by Catherine in her diary entry where she states "I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute" (Brontë 16) and then catalogues examples of Hindley's tyranny, especially in connection to Hindley's treatment of Heathcliff, who is most vulnerable as Hindley withdraws all the privileges Mr Earnshaw afforded the boy and thus deliberately degrades him. The Lintons too recognise that Catherine, in her orphaned state, is left vulnerable and exposed, though they do not express the same sympathy for Heathcliff. Mr Linton expresses his disgust at Hindley's "culpable carelessness" of letting Catherine "grow up in absolute heathenism" and general neglect, and Mrs Linton expresses similar disgust at discovering "Miss Earnshaw scouring the country with a gipsy" (Brontë 44).

The second generation also offers examples of children exposed through their liberation from adult guardians. Hareton is liberated from his father through Hindley's neglect and disregard for the manner in which he grows up after his mother's death and, after Heathcliff's reappearance at Wuthering Heights, he effectively liberates Hareton from the tutelage of the curate and teaches the child to despise his father. After Hindley's death Hareton is exposed to the full extent of Heathcliff's malice and his plan to shape Hareton in his image by systematically degrading him. Cathy, who grows up with doting adult guardians in an enclosed and protected world is exposed and orphaned by her wish to be liberated from the constraints that are presented by this world. The first time she is liberated from her adult guardians and from the enclosed space of the Grange is at the age of thirteen, when she simultaneously exposes herself to the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights, and this new discovery both by herself and the inhabitants of the Heights later leads to her emotional exposure to both Linton and Heathcliff. Thus, like that of her mother, Cathy's discovery of a new and unfamiliar world leads to exposure, and though for Catherine this exposure ultimately leads to self-destruction, for Cathy it ultimately leads to union with Hareton.

In *Jane Eyre*, the implications of orphanhood are very plainly outlined and, though *Wuthering Heights* also acknowledges that it is a state which entails both liberation and isolation, there are no over-arching moral or religious principles that

inform the characters' lives or trajectories and offer them comfort in the way that the teachings of Helen and Miss Temple console Jane. Indeed, the world of *Wuthering Heights* appears to be one where there is a real sense that the greatest evil is not hatred, but the denial of one's true self, and this is demonstrated most clearly in Catherine's character. Unlike Jane, who has a very clear sense of self-identity as a child, Catherine seems to represent a split unit who has to join with Heathcliff in order to gain some sense of completeness – a pattern that is also evident in the relationships of the other orphan children in the novel. Catherine's trajectory is also significantly different from Jane's because she is never able to reconcile the contradictory impulses within herself, whilst Jane seems to be able to successfully integrate and reconcile inner and outer freedom and constraint. It thus appears that the orphan characters of *Wuthering Heights* are not concerned in forging a path towards selfhood and ethical choice in the same way Jane Eyre does – instead, there is a sense that the divided self cannot find peace except after death, thus implying that in life it is not possible to reconcile the conflicting demands and impulses which, in some way, serve to complete one.

Conclusion

The presentation of orphan children, whether they are literal or metaphorical orphans, is significantly different in each of the texts examined in this study. Though it seems that the orphan children in each of the texts strive literally or symbolically to free themselves from the confines of familial and social structures, in each the need for liberation and the consequences of attaining that liberation differs markedly.

In employing the motif of orphan children as both sacrificial lambs and representatives of imaginative vision which expands beyond circumscribed realities and circumstances, Blake appears to address two major concerns: the manner in which we treat those less fortunate than ourselves, and how we limit ourselves by our often unthinking adherence to moral, social, and religious codes, which stunt and restrict imaginative growth and development. However, through his employment of the motif of the orphan child in the *Songs*, Blake appears to suggest that we are responsible for our own spiritual and imaginative development, as all possibilities offered us by the "*Poetic Genius*" are legitimate and that, through exercising our imaginative faculty, possibilities for liberation from the constraints of artificial social and religious structures can be conceived. It thus follows that by not employing the "*Poetic Genius*" we perpetuate the cycle of misery and degradation that has far-reaching consequences for all members of society, not just vulnerable orphan children. Indeed, though the voices of the orphans and their observers in the *Songs* may present us with poignant examples of suffering, they also implicate us in the creation of that society and do not permit us to divorce ourselves from it – instead, they force us to face certain uncomfortable truths about our own positions within it.

Blake's treatment of the child "lost" and "found", and the notion of metaphorical orphaning appears to indicate that though the role of the parent is to nurture the child, the parent cannot, and does not, control the child's identity. In order for Blake's metaphorical orphans to retain their imaginative capacity and independence, and in order for the development of self-awareness, the child must break away from parental authority and control, thereby rendering the child a metaphorical orphan.

Jane Eyre is a literal example of an orphan who successfully breaks away from familial control and who actively rebels against the persecution that results from her orphaned and dependant status. Unlike Jane, Helen Burns, the other major orphan figure in the novel, is not focused on this world: instead, she accepts that it is one of suffering and looks forward to a reward in Heaven. Neither of these two models is presented as ideal however: Jane's passion is often portrayed as self-destructive and masochistic, whilst Helen's self-immolation and forbearance indicate that she is too good for this world. Hence, it seems that the alternative is to chart a middle course between these two extremes, as the assimilation of passion and reason is integral to the orphan child's spiritual and individual progress. Jane's character also illustrates that although orphan-hood often entails solitude and alienation, it also offers the individual some liberation from familial and social structures and conventions.

The kind of liberation from social and familial constraints Jane experiences is also evident in the orphan characters of *Wuthering Heights*. Unlike Jane, who is forging a path towards a sense of her identity that assimilates ethical choice and a notion of morality that is in some way informed by her sense of religion, the orphans of *Wuthering Heights* reject and repudiate any form of traditional religion and seem to illustrate that, at least in the world of the novel, the greatest evil is not hatred, but a denial of one's true self – so that the repression and thwarting of self-interest is presented as damaging.

Catherine and Heathcliff are permitted to run wild, and there is a real sense that whilst defying social and gender roles and actively rebelling against tyrannical adults and orthodox religion, the children exist, at least for a time, in a space that is free from many social and familial constraints. However, there is always the implied question as to what extent the children are 'outside' social and familial structures. Catherine and Heathcliff certainly enjoy a degree of freedom that the children of the second generation do not, and it seems that the children of both generations are, to varying degrees, exposed and vulnerable when they are liberated from their adult guardians.

It is thus apparent that each author's treatment of the orphan child, and the forms of liberation which they explore, is significantly different. Unlike the Blakean orphans who, whether implicitly or explicitly, critique and resist adherence to established social, moral, and religious codes, Jane Eyre's spiritual journey entails some adherence to

society's laws and religion, and she learns both to moderate her passions, and to contain them within socially acceptable forms in the process of attaining mature autonomy. Such modification of passion and recognition of social obligations are notions that are rejected by the orphans of *Wuthering Heights*, who are liberated from many social and religious constraints in their isolated rural world. However, they also evince a vulnerability that is derived from their orphan-hood. Hence, though all three authors present orphan-hood as a state that offers some form of liberation, there is always a tense relationship between that liberation and isolation and/or vulnerability, which is perhaps reflective of certain social truths about the circumstances of orphan children who were everywhere evident in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Indeed, through their fiction, the authors demonstrate their awareness of the precarious situation of the orphan child in their respective societies. Whilst their fictional creations illustrate the often bleak social and economic circumstances of orphaned and dependant children and contain a sense of the desperate vulnerability that constituted the lives of the orphan children who existed within the authors' societies, they are also transformed into symbols which force us to question our own positions within societies built on the exploitation of others. Perhaps most importantly however, these fictional orphans serve as reminders of the qualities of freedom and originality that we often lose in the journey from childhood to adulthood.

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