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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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vlastnoruční podpis

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The object of this undergraduate thesis is to analyse the position of a child in society during the period from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century and its reflection in poetry.

I would like to explore the view of Romantic poets on childhood, what circumstances led to their new visions and what were their personal beliefs.

The main body of this work consists of a detailed study of certain poets and their poems. It includes how they viewed children and childhood and their position in the world. I provide an overview of information in relation to the poets W. Blake, W. Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge, which includes details about their lives and work, a focus on some of their poems and how each of them saw children and childhood.

Finally, I would like to attempt to define the vision of Romantic child which persists in our society to this day that these romantic poets redefined throughout their work.

Key words: Romanticism, poetry, child, childhood, poem, analyse, nature, innocence, society, infant, purity

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## INTRODUCTION

Old Times, the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period were not in any way conducive to children. Permanently risky health conditions, high child sickness rate, epidemics, malnutrition and injuries did not give children many chances for survival (Bennett, 2006; Pešek, 2012; Stříbrný, 1987). From this time we do not have many references about children. Historical sources do not rather deal with this. According to historical literature articles dealing intensively with the phenomenon of children did not appear until the early sixties (Pešek, 2012, p. 10). Philippe Aries in the book "Dítě a rodinný život za starého režimu" in 1960 stated the thesis that children were considered as "small adults" in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. According to him, childhood as a separate stage of human development essentially did not exist (Pešek, 2012, p. 10).

This thesis, of course, has its supporters and opponents. In my opinion every period of our history had mothers who loved their children. They wanted them to grow up into healthy adults and tried, whenever possible, to give them the best they could. Even though their surroundings were not always positive and living in these times was not easy for anyone. Everyone was constantly fighting for their own survival, with no social security, a minimum or no support for poor families and insufficient medical support. All this, certainly, did not give much room for contemplation on the meaning of childhood. However, from the available paintings we can see that children of wealthy families were in a completely different position. They had the privilege of not having to fight for survival and their living conditions were probably much better than poor children had (Bennett, 2006; Pešek, 2012; Stříbrný, 1987).

Here, in this work I will look mostly at the visions of childhood of early Romantic poets such as Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge. What circumstances allowed the Romantic movement and the historical background which allowed such a radical change in the perception of children and childhood.

# **1 LIFE AND CHILDHOOD IN THE PRE-ROMANTIC ERA**

## **1.1 Historical Background of Society**

Today's cult of the child could not have occurred without any historical continuity. Children have always been valued as good working forces, and as our descendants and keepers of the genus. If we look at childhood from a historical perspective, children were not always treated badly.

The children of the primeval times lived together with their community, and were equal members of the society. From pieces of anthropological evidence we know that children in the culture of hunters and gatherers educated themselves through their own games and exploring (Bennett, 2006). The strong desire of children to play and explore presumably arose during our evolution, to serve the needs of education. Adults in the culture of hunters and gatherers provided almost unlimited freedom for their children to play and explore, because they recognized that these activities were natural ways of educating children (Gray, n.d.).

Everything began to change with the commencement of agriculture and later of industry. Children began to be forced to work. Games and exploring were suppressed. Wilfulness, which has always been the virtues of children became negative attribute of personality, which had to be beaten out from children (Bennett, 2006; Gray, n.d.; Pešek, 2012).

Hunter-gatherer way of life, their skills and knowledge were demanding, but not for hard work.

Agriculture changed all this gradually. Thanks to agriculture people were able to produce more food, which allowed them to have more children. People were pushed to live in permanent dwellings rather than to live a nomadic life, they subsequently started to grow crops and cumulate property. These changes took place at the expense of the work. While hunters and gatherers skilfully harvested what nature has grown, farmers had to plough, plant, cultivate and take care of the herd, and so on. Successful farming required long hours of relatively unskilled, repetitive work, which could be done by children. Large families required children to work in the fields and help to feed their younger siblings, or



older children had to stay at home to take care of these siblings. Life of children has gradually changed from carefree into more and more time spent by working, which would serve the whole family (Bennett, 2006; Pešek, 2012).

Agriculture and related land ownership and cumulation of property also created, for the first time in history, the distinct differences in social status. People, who did not own land, became dependent on those who did. Land owners also found that they can increase their own wealth, when other people work for them. This created systems of slavery and other forms of servitude. The rich could become even richer with the help of others, who majorly depended on them. All of this culminated in medieval feudalism, when the society became strongly hierarchical, with kings and lords at the top and masses of slaves and serfs at the bottom. Most people, including children, were subjects. In the middle ages Lords did not have the smallest problem with the physical beatings of the children, to get them to obey orders, to get higher amount of work done, and thereby to increase production and their profits (Bennett, 2006; Pešek, 2012).

With the increase of industry and of the new bourgeois class, feudalism gradually declined, but lives of most children did not improve immediately. Businessmen and landowners needed as much cheap labourers as possible so they used children. Everyone knows about the exploitation that followed and still exists in many parts of the world until today. People, including children, worked most of the day, seven days a week in deplorable conditions, just to survive. Child labour was moved from the fields, where at least the sun was shining into dark, crowded, dirty factories without fresh air. In England, those who were in charge of the poor, usually move child beggars in the factories, where they were treated as slaves. Thousands of them died each year from starvation, exhaustion or a variety of diseases (Bennett, 2006; Pešek, 2012).

Not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, England enacted the restriction of child labour. For example, in 1883, England established the new law which forbade the textile manufacturers to employ children under nine and limited the maximum weekly working time to 48 hours for children from 10 to 12 years, and 69 hours for children from 13 to 17 years (Gray, n.d.).

## **1.2 Historical Background of Literacy**

For the change of position of children it was needed to draw attention to their desperate situation to the world. Point a finger on it and put it right in front of society's eyes. However this was not possible without the spread of literacy.

Since antiquity until the Middle Ages which is approximately up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, literacy was considered to be the privilege of the higher class of society. Ability to read and write was a device to control their subjects, and it was undesirable for the lower classes of the population to acquire the skill of writing and reading, which could spread the rebellious thoughts (Gray, n.d.; Košťálová, n.d.; Pešek, 2012).

Later the society proceeded towards education, which was largely characterised by the effort to crush the independent will and thought and made subjects good workers. A good child was an obedient child, which suppressed its desire to play and explore and honestly fulfilled the orders of the adult masters. This idea was very clever, but its consequence was the spread of literacy among the broader mass of the population. Human instincts to play and explore are so strong that it is not possible to completely erase it from children, as well as the longing for freedom of the will and the desire for a better life. The historical context and the invention of the printing press were then the last part that finally made it possible to change the position of children in society. In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century the printing press became an essential medium, which influenced the reformation movement. Thanks to the printing press the mass production of books and leaflets was possible, and therefore it was possible to print the hundreds of thousands of, for example, Luther's Bibles or Rousseau's books and thus their reformative ideas (Gray, n.d.; Košťálová, n.d.; Pešek, 2012).

## **1.3 Historical Background of the New Perception of the World**

To change the children's position in the industrial world we also need the new way of thinking. Reformative thoughts spread thanks to wider literacy which helped to open peoples' minds and started a new movement, not only in approach towards children but even the approach of whole world itself.

Anthropocentrism or the focus on man, on human reason, knowledge, and earthly life in the Renaissance period helped to all-round progress of human personality.

Biographies, self-portraits of painters appeared. Artists, unlike the middle ages, started to sign their works. The development of technology pushed mankind's understanding of the new guidelines, anatomy, astronomy or optics. Thanks to the exploring voyages the world became smaller and information and new practices were expanding faster (Bennett, 2006; Stříbrný, 1987).

Because of the development of technologies the industrialization could proceed and this process changed the society. Pre-industrial society is therefore transformed to industrial (Thornley & Roberts, 1984).

The name of the Enlightenment movement captures the conflict of the world of reason and of faith. The conflict of progress and knowledge with the darkness, ignorance and prejudice. People were starting to believe in a better future. Religion began to be rejected because of its unsubstantiated dogmas and the doctrine. Emphasis was placed on person's right to a free life and to freedom of thought. The ideas of the Enlightenment flowed into the world through publications. We can say that Enlightenment is the typical input of bourgeois class in public life. This phenomenon begins with the concern about education, its own philosophical and literary creation and ends with the pursuit of its own participation in political life. Its outcome we can see in the French Revolution. Desires for education, thoughts of reason, law or a personality of each human taking the leading position and therefore the Enlightenment is often called The Age of Reason (Carter, McRae & Bradbury, 2001; Oliveriusová, 1972; Stříbrný, 1987).

A man gets the opportunity to use the written texts actively for recording, transmission or storage of information and passively for obtaining of information as well as for the experience of the pleasure of written text by reading. This also changes the human position in society (Carter et. al., 2001; Oliveriusová, 1972).

The desire for education led to increasing literary production in quality and quantity and it also increased consumption of printed materials such as books and newspapers. In the urban environment the increased interest in the philosophy and culture was distributed in the so-called salons. Companies were meeting in their homes or in cafes, where they were discussing news of literary creation or the broader spiritual concepts, such as human rights or freedom of the individual and so we reached the topic of the child and childhood (Bennett, 2006; Košťálová, n.d.).

Civil society based on the French ideals of equality, freedom and brotherhood caused the end of absolutism, and permitted the establishment of republics throughout Europe. Over time this, unfortunately, reached a different dimension. Napoleon, once again, became the absolute ruler and re-established the empire. It was possible to find the contradiction everywhere. What seemed promising at the beginning gradually faded so the sense of the contradiction and the gradual abandonment of values enabled the Romanticism to arise (Bennett, 2006; Oliveriusová, Marek, Grmela & Hilský, 1984; Stříbrný, 1987).

In opposition to Enlightenment the Romanticism places in the centre an irrational feeling. The desire to know and learn is opposed by the desire to relive mysteries and experience secrets. Against rationality stand the mystery, secrets and imagination. It's an artistic and philosophical movement and the attitude of the Euro-American culture of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The development of Romanticism was affected by education of the townspeople, which increased thanks to the liberal reforms. Also the horrors of wars and military conflicts, which at that time swept throughout Europe, were very noticeable. The need for heroes who can lead the conflict to a victorious end led romantics to look for a knight or a special hero. This person was usually alone and they often went to nature in search of knowledge and serenity, and most often they were also unlucky in love (Oliveriusová, 1972; Stříbrný, 1987; Thornley & Roberts, 1984).

Romantics lived according to their ideas and stated the disagreement with the arrangement of society, for example, by roams or unusual behaviour. Romanticism finds delight in the dim light and the game of shadows, instead of rules it praises emotions, passion and free will. The contradictoriness, in which people found themselves, thanks to revolutions and their consequences, intensified the feelings of uprooting from the society and their conversion to the only unchanging and that was Nature (Oliveriusová, 1972; Oliveriusová et. al., 1984; Thornley & Roberts, 1984).

For the romantics the nature embodies the primordial paradise, constancy, and stability compared to the changing society and civilization. A feeling of weakness, tearing apart, the hopelessness of young intellectuals, the loss of ideas, spiritual uncertainties, the collapse of ideas about the possibility of creating a better world – this all contributed to the search for new perspectives of the world and thus to greater exploration of the world

around us (Oliveriusová, 1972; Oliveriusová et. al., 1984; Stříbrný, 1987; Thornley & Roberts, 1984).

Why did they actually begin to turn to children? What did they see in their eyes? Did they see the passing years or the flow of time, irreversibility of youth and their own weight of age?

The question of what remains of us when we die has been dealt throughout different eras and it is not otherwise in the romantic period. Now this question turns to children – and it's so logical. They are what is left here after we die. Our children and their children after them and so, we are going to live forever. It is the same as the plants. Every plant grows from the seed, it grows to be a flower, later when it becomes ripe it throws off its seeds and dies, and the cycle of nature is closed with a new plant that will germinate... These were the thoughts of Renaissance (Oliveriusová, 1972; Oliveriusová et. al., 1984; Stříbrný, 1987; Thornley & Roberts, 1984), but did Romantics see it in the same way?

Death has its inseparable place in the history. It has occupied many ideas, it has got many rituals and even many literary forms – the epitaph, the elegy, the death march, requiem, letters of condolence and so on. Death and its immediacy engage people as well as artists throughout the times, but the development of technology and the sciences provoked a lot of doubts about God and the afterlife. Therefore, people turned to nature and to a child as an expression of our own immortality (Bennett, 2006; Oliveriusová et. al., 1984; Stříbrný, 1987).

Here in this work I would like to look at the work of Romantic poets and try to define what they found in children and how this influences present perception of childhood.

## 2 LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born on 28<sup>th</sup> November in London and died shortly before his 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1827 in London.

He was one of the greatest and most original figures of European Romanticism. He skilfully combined his literary and graphic work. He was using his own art technique which he called "illuminated printing" (Stříbrný, 1987).

He was also an engraver, scientist, inventor and mystic. He believed that the spiritual life is more important than material and therefore he also disagreed with the official doctrine of the church and preferred his own religious studies. England, which then went through a Romantic movement, supported his unusual religious beliefs (Stříbrný, 1987).

"He did not believe in the reality of matter, or in power of earthly rules, or in punishment after death." (Thornley & Roberts, 1984, p. 77).

According to the available information Blake spoke with angels and the spirits of deceased friends and family members and often had visions. All this formed an incredibly versatile personality, unappreciated in his time, but admired today (Oliveriusová, 1972; Philosophical Mindz, 2014; Stříbrný, 1987).

He was writing in a lyrical visionary style (Carter et. al., 2001) and often used symbolism in his poetry for example to express innocence he used children, flowers, lamb or particular seasons (Carter et. al., 2001; Oliveriusová, 1972).

### 2.1 The View on Childhood in Blake's Poetry

For the analysis just a few of Blake's poems were chosen with his collections of poems called *Songs of the Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* as the main of the interest. There are five years between these collections (Carter et. al., 2001) and we can see how Blake's vision of the world around him changed. The main difference between those two collections can be immediately seen from the view of illustrations (See Appendix, Figure 1 – Figure 5).

According to Carter et. al. (2001, p. 204) "Images of childhood have a central place in Blake's poetry..". His most famous collections of poetry *Songs of Innocence and Experience* are full, not only of poems regarding children, but it is full of images of children in a world in which people are exploited. In Carter et. al. (2001, p. 204) it is stated that "The child in Blake's poetry stands for the poet's dissatisfaction with society and his belief in the power of uncorrupted feeling and imagination." This thought resonates in other publications I have read regarding Blake (Ford, 1990; Oliveriusová, 1972; Oliveriusová et. al., 1984; Stříbrný, 1987; Thornley & Roberts, 1984). But for example in *Dějiny anglické literatury* Stříbrný expressed Blake's visions on childhood: "Childhood is not just a period of life, but also the mental state of innocence and purity for which one has to struggle for all life." (Stříbrný, 1987, p. 360 – my translation).

In the book of Stříbrný (1987, p. 360 – my translation) he wrote that *The Songs of Innocence* were "a romantic celebration of childhood and the simple things". On the contrary, about *The Songs of Experience*, he wrote that they were much more complicated and dark, and that here "it reflects Blake's experience of the society, when he found out that the person is tied to the church, the army, the factory and the bourgeois marriage and its negative side was prostitution." (Stříbrný 1987, p. 361 – my translation).

We can see many contradictions in those two collections. In *Innocence* there is a child piper and in *Experience* here is a bard (Blake, 1996; Stříbrný, 1987). In opposition to smiling child there is the mother Earth bound by the chain, the lamb, soft and fair against the tiger with the blazing eyes in the middle of the dark night. (Blake, 1991; Blake, 1996; Ford, 1990; Stříbrný, 1987).

The first thing that catches reader's attention on *The Songs of Innocence* are beautiful illustrations. Right next to the title (See Appendix, Figure 6) we see a mother with children looking through a book in the beautiful, sun-drenched landscape. Was this Blake's vision of innocence? The pictures are cheerful, clear, filled with laughter and children. The poems are written in simple verse, reminiscent of nursery rhymes. Compared to *The Songs of Experience*, where some of the images directly show sadness or despair, and the poems are a little more complicated and regarding to Thornley & Roberts (1984, p. 79) "..darker and heavier..".

Let's look at "The Chimney Sweeper" (Blake, 1996, p. 74). The motive of the child is quite clear here.

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry "Weep! weep! weep! weep!"  
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

In the first stanza we learn some information about a speaker and his fate. Then questions and doubts come "How old was he when he was sold? Is the word "Weep" an interjection or is it just a mispronounced word "Sweep" in a baby talk? This keeps readers attention and hunger for answers. But it also tells us how difficult and horrible life some children had. The thing which struck me was in the second line: "My father sold me" What kind of a father can sell his own child? And somebody *bought* the poor child. What evil world would allow that? We can believe these few words had the same effect on many readers and people might have started to ask questions. How come that such a modern state as England, at the top of industrial expansion allows selling its own children like they were a sack of flour or just a piece of meat? From the books I read I got the idea that slavery was widely tolerated. One can assume it would be highly unacceptable with "our" children, the children of England, as it was acceptable for "them", for those who were "rescued" from barbarous coasts. This, of course, had an easy explanation, the English children were sold for seven years for apprentice (Ackroyd, 2000). That was absolutely acceptable, or wasn't it?

The other disturbing thing on this stanza is the last line, and especially the last four words "in soot I sleep". This brings other uneasy thoughts to a reader. It forces our mind to think about conditions of life of those children who clean "our" (readers) chimneys. Do they have their own beds? Where do they actually sleep? Just a few lines and so many thoughts provoking questions.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,  
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said,



"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your head's bare,  
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

Another child is introduced to a reader, little Tom, whose head had to be shaved. Well, one can assume this could in some of the readers evoke sad or pitiful thoughts, but the logic is clear here, and so "reasonable".

And so he was quiet, and that very night,  
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—  
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,  
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

Those "coffins of black" might have been a discomfoting image for reader in connection with the first stanza. And the number – "thousands" – so many little boys, sold, shaved, sleeping in sooth, locked in coffins. Could possibly readers mind connect this image to the boys who finish their seventh year of apprentice and are exhausted, ill, or deformed? (Ackroyd, 2000)

And by came an angel, who had a bright key,  
And he opened the coffins, and let them all free;  
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,  
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

This stanza leaves me with bright and nice feeling that everything is all right again. All the harm done was remedied. But still somewhere at the back of my mind I feel it is not well. Something is still wrong.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,  
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;  
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

Another nice and, let's say, positive stanza. It is what readers could think. If they obey the rules and do their duty they will be welcomed by God and Angels in Heaven. And here comes the explanation of reader's doubtful feeling from previous stanza, now it seems we know what is wrong. The child has to die to become happy. But this is not positive at

all and these ambiguous feelings make reader feel very uncomfortable. Did readers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century feel the same?

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.  
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm:  
So, if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

I believe that some readers felt the end to be a good end. This is what they were taught. For us it is not understandable. How could be this child labour allowed and accepted! The reader may assume there is a point of irony in this poem. A big disagreement with the society and the policy of church and many readers saw this, too. One can feel uneasy after reading this poem. It points a finger at a thing which many people did not want to see and even nowadays people do not like to be told they are doing something incorrectly.

I have done some research on the poem analysis and from the book of Stříbrný (1987, p. 360) we learn that the chimney sweepers had no childhood, this child, who tells us a story was sold by his father. Stříbrný points out the thought of God and faith in God. When we die we will be better off. We can, too, feel the heavy fate of the chimney-sweepers (Stříbrný, 1987). In the book of Acroyd (2000) there we can find many details on the chimney sweepers life, how they were sold by parents or taken from orphanages, how they were pushed to, and the ways how they were pursued to, climb to the small and narrow spaces and of the sexual connotation their work arouse. This all was well known to Blake and we can see from his illustration around the poem how he sympathised with their heavy fate. (See Appendix, Figure 7) And a reader can agree with Ackroyd (2000, p.~118-119), who wrote that a poem dramatises and expresses the attitude of society, which is reinforced by the hypocritical faith, that duty and acceptance of fate is the only correct path to union with God and salvation. It expresses the innocence and naivety of the speaker which is "destructive and ignorant" because "he is actively undergoing the horrors of chimney-sweepers crafts and the society mindlessly accepts that."

There is another poem called "The Chimney Sweeper" (Blake, 1996, p. 104) in *The Songs of Experience*

A little black thing among the snow,  
Crying! 'weep! weep!' in notes of woe!  
'Where are thy father and mother? Say!'—  
'They are both gone up to the church to pray.

The very first thing I notice here is the word "thing". Is a child the thing? This is how the current society saw their children? Just things? Or was it only regarding those chimney sweepers, were they not children, were they just a thing sweeping the chimneys?

'Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smiled among the winter's snow,  
They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

'And because I am happy and dance and sing,  
They think they have done me no injury,  
And are gone to praise God and His priest and king,  
Who made up a heaven of our misery.'

After reading this poem a reader could feel even stronger irony than after reading the one in *Songs of Innocence*. This definitely sounds as a high condemnation of present society. The child was happy, parents put him to work and because he does not complain his parents think that everything is all right, that this is the way it should be so and they go to thank God.

Acroyd (2000) wrote that Blake expressed his indignation and that we can see this poem from two levels, "there are two realms of Blake's poetry, two worlds; one world on earth, where we live and one the world of eternity." We can, according to Acroyd, interpret the poem to the whole humanity, on our plight, when we are captured in mortal bodies and yearn for freedom (Acroyd, 2000, p. 119). "From sooty body thus becomes the symbol of the coffin which we carry with us everywhere."

It gives the impression that it is just a strong disagreement with the behaviour of society against its own children. Pushing them to do hard work and excuse it with noble words about duty and God on one side or in the worse case pretending that these children are just "things" and no humans at all.

Another poem about children or childhood which is related to in many books is "The Lamb" (Blake, 1996, p. 67).

Blake's lyrical poems are dramatizations of different states of mind and different attitudes to life (Ackroyd, 2000) and "The Lamb" is another poem that reflects innocence, God and the beauty of God's creation (Stříbrný, 1987).

"It reflects the growing interest in childhood and longing for innocence of mind and soul in a way that it might be, in those times, a little sentimental." (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 204) and Dyson wrote that "he reminds us that our childhood is real and not quite extinguished" (Ford, 1990, p. 40).

In its opposition there is fearful "Tyger", a thrilling image of the inexhaustible natural energy. The symmetry up to a terrifying (fearful symmetry) does not inspire horror but rather amazement at the miracle of life (Carter et. al., 2001; Stříbrný, 1987).

When reading The Lamb we can just feel the amusement and joy from life and from creations itself. There definitely is the innocence because a lamb has the connotation of innocence given us through Bible and by church studies. The text suggests that there is a connection to children in the name of the poem itself. Lamb is a baby sheep and first line in this poem even emphasizes it with a word "little". "Little lamb, who made thee?"

The reader may assume that this poem is just a celebration of the world and of things in it and deep humility and gratitude that the Creator enabled us to be here and see and enjoy his work. It expresses amazement and enthusiasm that anything and everything is connected and linked in one.

He became a little child.  
I a child, and thou a lamb,  
We are callèd by His name.  
Little lamb, God bless thee!  
Little lamb, God bless thee!

The poem is so innocent and joyful that it might reflect the innocence of children and their purity and divinity.

The connection with "The Tyger" shows us that the main point might have been not the innocence and purity of childhood, but the fascination by the world around us and with the incredible variety of life forms around us, and humility to someone who was able to create something like that.

Another poem regarding children is "The Little Black Boy" (Blake, 1996, p. 68). This poem is narrated from the point of a black child and tells the story of how he came to know his own identity and to know God. "My mother bore me in the southern wild," The boy who was born in Africa first explains that though his skin is black his soul is as white as that of an English child. "And I am black, but O my soul is white! / White as an angel is the English child,"

This poem focuses on a spiritual awakening to a godly love that surpasses race. The speaker is an African child who has to come to terms with his own blackness. Blake builds the poem is clear based on the metaphor or conception of light and dark. The contrast in the first stanza between the child's black skin and his belief in the whiteness of his soul lends poignancy to his particular problem of self-understanding. In a culture in which black and white connote to bad and good. "black as if bereav'd of light" This underscores the weight of the problem. The indication of his poem will be to counteract this "as if" in a way that shows him to be as capable and deserving of perfect love as a white person is.

The boy explains to his white friend that they are equals, but that neither will be truly free until they are released from the limits of the physical world. He imagines himself shading his friend from the brightness of God's love until he can become accustomed to it.

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear  
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;  
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,  
And be like him, and he will then love me.

This statement indicates that the black boy might be better prepared for heaven than the white boy, perhaps because during his earthly life he had to bear the heavy burden of his dark skin. He was taught by his mother to be proud rather than ashamed of his suffering, because it will bring him the love of the God.

The reader may be surprised by the boy's attitude towards his white companion. He seems to ignore the racism and abuse, and even accepts the hardship and cruelty he must endure. But the question remains whether the prospect of a child is servile and self-demeaning or is an example of Christian love. The poem itself suggests that they could be the same.

In the book by Carter et. al. (2001) we can read "through the images of childhood Blake dramatises the conflict between nature and social disorder, between natural innocence and the pressures of social experience" (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 204).

There are some other poems regarding children in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, for example "Infant Joy" (Blake, 1996, p. 68) and "Infant Sorrow" (Blake, 1996, p. 100).

Infant Joy is another poem which gave me an uneasy feeling of something bad behind the curtain. From my point of view like all of the *Songs of Innocence*, this one has the shadow of Experience within it.

"Thou dost smile, / I sing the while; / Sweet joy befall thee!" It is, maybe, because of the constant repetition of word "joy" in the poem or because of the word "while" in the last stanza or just because of my own experience, when I know that the time of happiness and innocence lasts only "a while" and then comes the time of responsibility, that a reader can feel uneasy about this poem. But it can be only a reflection of someone's personal feelings and this poem was meant to be just an expression of pure joy.

"Sweet Joy befall thee" This does not sound like only hope, but it might be a longing for the child to experience joy, with the unspoken knowledge that other emotions too will "befall" the child. But in this infant state, the child is still nameless, still pure potential.

Readers may be reflecting their own experience into the innocence of poem and Infant Joy might be just a mere explanation of the relationship between a mother and her child shortly after birth, or it might express Blake's longing for child he never had. For someone this poem could contrast with what comes later with experience, but emphasises the innocence of a new born.

The contrast between this poem and the "Infant Sorrow" is enormous.

My mother groaned, my father wept:  
Into the dangerous world I leapt,  
Helpless, naked, piping loud,  
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

After reading of first line we know that *Infant Sorrow* is a poem of the despair and rejection at the birth of an unwanted child. The world only offers a bleak and dark existence that shall last a lifetime. These poems show two different ways of coming into the world. One that shows peace and purity – *Infant Joy*, and the second is a revelation of depression and rejection – *Infant Sorrow*.

Struggling in my father's hands,  
Striving against my swaddling bands,  
Bound and weary, I thought best  
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

Tightly wrapping babies in swaddling blankets was standard practice in Blake's Day as a mean of giving a sense of security to children and it was believed that it helped limbs to grow straight. Here, Blake uses it as an image of parental oppression, against which stands struggle for individuality. However, the child will figuratively remain bound for its while life to fulfil its parents restrictions and society's expectations (Ackroyd, 2000).

Poems show children as beautiful and unique creatures full of beauty and innocence. And the world around them as a tightening loops of rules, duties and society expectations that will kill all the innocence and joy.

We could feel the same in the poem "A Cradle Song" (Blake, 1996, p. 71).

Sleep, sleep, happy child!  
All creation slept and smiled.  
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,  
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Here is again repeated the motive of the religion and the faith in God and the innocence in children which are given to us from God and they have a God in them.

"Sweet babe, in thy face / Holy image I can trace;" The poem ends with a parallel between the Child Christ and the baby in the mother's arms.

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,  
Who became an infant small;  
Infant smiles are His own smiles;  
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

"Blake presents experience as a dereliction of innocence, in some of his explicitly paired poems the two outlooks seem to be mutually corrective." (Ford, 1990, p. 80).

Poem "Little Girl Lost" (Blake, 1996, p. 88) and "Little Girl Found" (Blake, 1996, p. 90) can be found in *The Songs of Experience* and it follows one another.

From the poem we learn that Lyca was seven years old. "Seven summers old / Lovely Lyca told." And in the previous stanza we can read: "Never fades away, / Lovely Lyca lay." Those words sound definite. Never fades away means to me that she will never grow up and age. This appears to me like she died.

What the reader may assume from the poem is that a little girl is lost in a desert, her parents are desperate to find her, but the lion found her sooner. The lion, to me, represents Jesus Christ. The innocent child is taken from her earthly suffering by death and given comfort and rests for eternity.

The second poem concentrates on her parents, where they search for their daughter and are dedicated to find her, and are similarly rewarded, although the poem is reticent on the details, do they stop fearing because they are in paradise, or simply because they are dead? Either way, their suffering ended by a more dangerous vision of God than that often presented in the Christianity of Blake's day and that is the Lion. But when we think about Blake's fascination with such a creature as a tiger, than it makes sense.

The constant repetition of words "sleep" and "asleep" gives many of the rhymes dream like quality of the poem. The child died and is united with nature and her parents have the same privilege. Is it because our world is too cruel, too bad for an innocent child?

There is another poem called "A little Girl Lost" (Blake, 1996, p. 103), but that is a completely different topic. Regarding to Thomas E. Connolly the explanation of this poem



is: "The girl, Lyca, without guide or protector, successfully undergoes the experience of sexual maturation, despite her parent's fears, and then serves as a model to rid them of their sexual guilt, and to introduce them to a state of innocence that they had never before experienced." (Connolly, 1989, p. 148).

This poem was a big surprise to me and the only conclusion that can be made is that in this poem is Lyca who was not lost or was found before she entered the paradise, she grew up and matured and this is the continuance of her life. Or maybe it is different Lyca, but then why Blake used the same name? The text suggests that Blake liked Lyca, maybe she was the dream or image of his own child he never had (Blake, 1991) so he created a parallel to the first poem where Lyca is still alive.

In the opposition to the first "Lost Girls" are poems "The Little Boy Lost" (Blake, 1996, p. 79) and "The Little Boy Found" (Blake, 1996, p. 79) in *The Songs of Innocence*.

The message from the first one is clear, the boy cannot keep up with his father, so he cries out at him to slow down or speak to him so the boy can find his way. When no one answers, and it gets darker and darker, the boy begins to weep. It might represent the human soul or spirit, seeking God the Father in a profane world that seeks to obliterate the signs of His presence. In the first of the two poems, the boy calls out to his earthly father, but is left behind. This may show Blake's doubts and discrepancy with the religious doctrine. In the second poem the real God comes to little boy and shows him a way home.

Both poems speak about children, but more than that, it seems, they express the view on religion and faith in God and doubts that Blake has.

But there is one more "The Little Boy Lost" (Blake, 1996, p. 99) in *The Songs of Experience*. Here we can transparently see Blake's disapproval with church's doctrine. A little boy had his own thoughts about the feelings and believes, he presents an honest search for understanding.

‘Nought loves another as itself,  
Nor venerates another so,  
Nor is it possible to thought  
A greater than itself to know.

‘And, father, how can I love you  
Or any of my brothers more?  
I love you like the little bird  
That picks up crumbs around the door.’

The church does not allow such heretic thoughts and the boy’s sincere inquiry and humble recognition of his own limitations are taken by a nearby priest as blasphemy. In an act of almost unthinkable cruelty, the priest ignores the boy’s and his parents’ cries for mercy.

The weeping child could not be heard,  
The weeping parents wept in vain:  
They stripped him to his little shirt,  
And bound him in an iron chain,

And burned him in a holy place  
Where many had been burned before;  
The weeping parents wept in vain.  
Are such things done on Albion’s shore?

I believe that the actual burning alive of heretics may never have taken place in England of Blake’s day, but the poet probably witnessed the abuse of innocence by those with religious authority as he works with this topic in a poems as "The Garden of Love" (Blake, 1996, p. 98), "The Little Vagabond" (Blake, 1996, p. 92), and "The Human Abstract" (Blake, 1996, p. 105). Blake questions a religious system that would denounce human reason as inadequate for apprehending spiritual truth and lack the free spirit of children in rules and doctrines.

In the *Songs of Experience* Blake also turned to the working residents of London and their lifestyle. "He was conscious of the effect on the individual of a rapidly developing industrial and commercial world." (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 204).

His poem London has many explanations, and they correspond with the conclusion that "Exploitation does not spare neither adults nor children." (Stříbrný, 1987, p. 360 – my translation). This poem is not about children and innocence of childhood but it is more

political (Carter et. al., 2001) and shows Blake's fear of potential dangers of a mass society in which individuals were increasingly controlled by system of organisation.

The same connotation has a poem "Little Vagabond" plus there can be seen a strong criticism of church and its clergy. The poem itself is very cynical the little vagabond begins with comments on what is wrong with the church of his day and concludes with a statement of the way things should be. The innocent voice of a little boy comments on the weary world of Experience.

Dear mother, dear mother, the Church is cold;  
But the Alehouse is healthy, and pleasant, and warm.  
Besides, I can tell where I am used well;  
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

In fact, the little vagabond believes that if church were more like an alehouse, with a more merry atmosphere all around, then God the Father would see His people happy and would no longer find fault with "the Devil or the Barrel," thereby eradicating sin in general and the sin of drunkenness entirely.

But, if at the Church they would give us some ale,  
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,  
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,  
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach, and drink, and sing,  
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;  
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at church,  
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see  
His children as pleasant and happy as He,  
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the barrel,  
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.

Blake, through the voice of an innocent child, is trying to point out that the Church is misbehaving, it's not the way it should be. The narrator also indirectly tells us that the

Parson and the Dame are not "as happy as birds in spring" because they see doing God's work as an exertion rather than something they want to do.

The point the child is trying to make is that worship should be a pleasure not a trial and again it points at the position of children in society where church and its Priests had the main word in how to raise a "good" child and the doctrine and rules were a heavy burden for them.

Blake's *Songs of Innocence* are romantic celebration of childhood and simple things and childhood as a mental state. On the contrary his *Songs of Experience* link the verse composition of clarity with life experience.

Terms of opposites are clear in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. "Without Contraries is no Progression" wrote Blake (*The marriage of Heaven and Hell*) (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 203). A major opposition in his poetry is a contrast between the order of the eighteenth century and the sense of liberation felt in 1790 as the new century approached (Carter et. al., 2001).

Harding (Ford, 1990, p. 80) in his work about William Blake wrote "generalised truths applied to the situation instead of being a lively outcome of the circumstance itself."

For a conclusion a citation from Survey has been chosen (Oliveriusová, 1972, p. 99) William Blake was "an odd, but good man" who "created under an influence of visions" and "all his works reflect his strong visual imagination." "He was a rebel who welcomed the Revolution in America and in France. He devoted three books to the ideas of independence." From all my research regarding reading many of his poems and many of explanations and analysis on what he probably wanted to say, is that the thought of personal independence was central, particularly the personal freedom. The time of industrialisation was full of inhuman exploitation of capitalists, unsparing even small children and young girls or boys. These thoughts he transformed to his poems. The second thing a reader could strongly feel from his poems is his deep religious believe. He believed in God and that children are given to us by God and His presence can be found in them, but our society, rules and expectations destroy that and we have to seek this state of innocence and purity, for which we have to struggle for all life, to find our way to God and to eternity.

### 3 LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

William Wordsworth was born on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1770 at Cockermouth in Cumbria. Both his parents died before he was 15, and he and his four siblings were each left in the care of different relatives. As a young man, Wordsworth developed a love for nature, which became a main theme in many of his poems.

He studied at Cambridge and in 1790 he went on a walking tour of Europe where he travelled around Switzerland and France. Here he became enthusiastic about the ideas of the French Revolution. After returning to England the inheritance after a friend allowed him to set up his own household together with his sister Dorothy.

Wordsworth established friendly relations with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and together they released a collection of *Lyrical ballads* in 1798. They also visited Germany together. Wordsworth, Coleridge and his brother-in-law R. Southey were called the "lake poets", the name was derived from the place of their residence. After breaking up of a relationship with S.T. Coleridge, Wordsworth moved to Rydal Mount in Grasmere, where he lived until the end of life on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1850.

His literary achievements helped him to gain a place in the civil service (Carter et. al., 2001; McCracken, 1990; Stříbrný, 1987; Thornley & Roberts, 1984).

#### 3.1 The View on Childhood in Wordsworth's Poetry

*Lyrical Ballads* and its second extended version with an important preface collect events and situations from common life of ordinary people and children. They are expressed in their own language, only reinforced by emotions and fantasies (Stříbrný, 1987). Wordsworth cooperated on the Ballads with Coleridge. Coleridge sought to show supernatural things so that they will seem real, when Wordsworth wanted to discover new, previously unsuspected depth, from the ordinary people and in natural phenomena (Stříbrný, 1987).

Let's have a look at some of the Ballads.

"We are seven" (Wordsworth et. al., 1997, p. 52) was one of those which enchanted me. This poem is written in ballad form, and its language is unpretentious and straightforward. It asks the big questions about life and death. While death is certain in all

of our lives, how we think about death is not, and there are probably many ways to think about death. The poem tells the story of a man talking to a young girl about her family.

"And where are they, I pray you tell?"

She answered, "Seven are we,

"And two of us at Conway dwell,

"And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the church-yard lie,

"My sister and my brother,

"And in the church-yard cottage, I

"Dwell near them with my mother."

Though two of her siblings are dead, and only four are probably alive (two are at the sea), she insists, over the protests of the man, that she and her brothers and sisters "are seven" in total. As we read, we begin to wonder if, in fact, the child's vision is not the true one. If she does not know more than the older man talking to her. Children just might understand the meaning of death much better than adults do.

"How many are you then," said I,

"If they two are in Heaven?"

The little Maiden did reply,

"O Master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!

"Their spirits are in heaven!"

'Twas throwing words away; for still

The little Maid would have her will,

And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

This poem introduces different perspectives on mortality and asks all kinds of deep questions. The most interesting thing about the poem is that it focuses not so much on what happens to us when we die, but on how death affects those who are still living. How should we think about our lost loved ones? What kind of presence do they have in our lives after

death? And another question raised here is, do children know more than adults? Does their purity and nature hold some secrets which we lost during growing up?

"Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"  
(Wordsworth et. al., 1997, p. 140)

It is a statement about the effect of childhood memories of nature upon the adult mind. It follows the "Tintern Abbey" (Wordsworth et. al., 1997, p. 57). It interconnects the childhood with immortality of mind and with nature.

The view of the May ceremony evoked in the speaker memories of childhood and a premonition of human mortality.

Then, sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
And let the young lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound!  
We, in thought, will join your throng,  
Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
Ye that through your hearts to-day  
Feel the gladness of the May!  
What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;

Wordsworth in this poem consciously put his narrator in contradiction with the positive atmosphere of joyful nature all around him. The poem's atmosphere shifts from joyful childhood to sad and thoughtful adulthood. The narrator, poet, later realizes that his unhappiness stems from his inability to enjoy this May morning as he would in his childhood.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
And while the young lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound,  
To me alone there came a thought of grief:

A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And I again am strong.

He is trying to remember his childhood emotions, but is able to find true happiness only when he realizes that only through his "philosophical mind" he has the ability to deeply understand nature in profound, more human terms, as a source of metaphors and guidance for human life.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

This poem has some revolutionary thoughts about children and their personalities. Wordsworth states that in birth a child emerges from a state of glory that immediately starts to fade and a child begins to forget those splendid visions of his earlier existence, but the child still remains a "Natural Priest" until becomes an adult.

Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

The Ode shifts from idea to idea, but always tries to keep close to the central scene, but frequently makes surprising moves, as when the narrator begins to address the "Mighty



Prophet" in the eighth stanza, only to reveal midway through the poem that the mighty prophet is a six-year-old boy. But this is the Wordsworth's vision. He believes that a child is so blessed because he still retains a sense of immortality.

Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
On whom those truths rest  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by;  
To whom the grave  
Is but a lonely bed, without the sense of sight  
Of day or the warm light,  
A place of thoughts where we in waiting lie;  
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

Even though in many places the speaker is grieving, the main theme of the poem is to offer blissful, peaceful nature images, frequently represented, for example as the lambs dancing to the tabor, the moon looking about in the sky. But once the writer attains the "philosophic mind" and his fullest realization of memory and imagination, he begins to use way more delicate descriptions of nature.

What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour

Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be;  
In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering;  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.”

The view of a May feast of cowherds, evokes in Wordsworth not only a chain of memories of his own childhood, but also a manly strength that retains child's emotional purity and a premonition of human immortality. (Stříbrný, 1987, p. 369) "A child here is a symbol of wisdom and truth and is many time addressed" (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 206) and our own life is interconnected to nature and influenced by our childhood. Thus, childhood influences how we perceive nature and how we perceive life around us and this all merges into emotion of fullness and happiness.

"Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798".

This poem is not about children and childhood, but it shows us Wordsworth's vision of the world around him and it is highly connected with my next analysis.

The poem opens with the poet visiting a place called Tintern Abbey on the banks of the River Wye in south-east Wales. He has visited it before, but not for five years. He looks back on the past five years that have gone by since his first visit to the place, and remembers how much the memory of this scene meant to him when he had to be in the city. In fact, he practically relied on his memories of the beauty of this place to help him to survive those difficult days.

The poem is mostly about how the speaker is able to compare what he sees with his eyes to the memory of the scene he remembers and can see with his inner eye.

A lot of Wordsworth's poetry is concerned with the relationship individuals have with nature. Like the speaker in "Tintern Abbey," all individuals have the potential to reach

a transcendental understanding of the "presence" in nature that binds everything together and connects all things.

The speaker of this poem has discovered, in his maturity, that his appreciation of natural beauty has allowed him to recognize a divine power in nature. Wordsworth comes up with this idea in "Tintern Abbey," and then really explores and develops it at length in his much longer poem *The Prelude*. Nature can mean several different things in the context of this poem such as the sense of unity or connection between everything or it can refer to a divine "presence" in Nature, like Mother Nature.

The main statement regarding children came in the poem which has in different editions different names. In some publications it is *The Rainbow*, in some others it is *My Heart Leaps Up* and, it seems, it took one of the visions from "The Tintern Abbey" and spreads it. It gives the impression that this has the same base but the mind of the narrator or speaker went the other way.

The Rainbow

MY heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,

Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.

The biggest idea here is, of course, "The Child is father of the Man". It has its roots in the books of J.J. Rousseau but this simple poem says a lot about Wordsworth's view of a childhood and the world around him.

The poem does not actually have a title, so usually is used the first line: "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold." That might explain why the title seems a little long, or somehow incomplete or why it is different in some volumes.

Speaker still gets excited by the sight of a rainbow, even as a mature adult. We understand that the speaker is reflecting as an adult, but really, he feels like a child at heart. The speaker is confident that when he becomes an adult, he will still get excited at the sight of a rainbow. For him, life without the ability to appreciate nature's beauty would not be worth living.

He is saying here that his childhood formed who he is as an adult. It seems the speaker treasures the fact that he still has a childlike feeling for wonder. The capitalization of the words "Child" and "Man" is a way to draw attention to the general truth of the line. It is meant to have a wider meaning than just in the speaker's life. A rainbow brings out the child in all of us.

The last two lines refer to "natural piety". Piety is connected with religion and worshipping to God, but here its meaning is shifted towards nature, so we might interpret "natural piety" as a religion that is natural or not forced. The rainbow, which excites the speaker throughout his life, is an example of a form of natural piety. He hopes to experience this enthusiasm for the rest of his life. The speaker is deeply spiritual about being in nature. It's a kind of religious experience for him and one that he traces back to his earliest years. For him, childhood is not something we can leave behind and forget. It is a source of vitality and peace.

*The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (Wordsworth et. al., 1997, p. 157) is very typical romantic poem composed between years 1798-1805, the song style is like a poetic letter to a friend (Coleridge), there are 14 books and it is regarded as one of the most original works in the English language (Stříbrný, 1987, p. 369).

The hero of the poem is the poet, his heart, his creative imagination, the growth of his poetic personality from childhood to the moment when he feels fully mature. Initially, there are boys' games in the rocks and the lakes, studies at Cambridge, trips to the Alps, revolutionary France, but also the disappointment of revolution that results in severe mental and creative crisis, return to nature leads to healing of the mind.

For me it is the natural evolution from Tintern Abby and The Rainbow. It has the same thoughts and opinions on nature, child and childhood, but it is taken to the most profound details.

I would like to look at The Lucy Poems too.

Their sad and grieving mood and transcendental atmosphere are touching something inner in me. The text suggests a connection with Annette Vallon. She was a French girl who Wordsworth met at his trips around France. He fell in love with her and they had an illegitimate daughter. But unfavourable political conditions (after revolution years), his core divisions and lack of money drove him home. There he settled with his sister Dorothy (Stříbrný, 1987; Wordsworth, Coleridge & Southey, 1999). In 1802, England had a brief period of peace with France, during which Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, went to France to visit Annette and Wordsworth's daughter, Caroline. They came to some kind of agreement with Annette about money and probably never met again (Everett, 2000).

The Lucy poems are five pieces of work which are connected with the person named Lucy. They are presented as a series in modern anthologies, but Wordsworth did not create them as a group, nor did he seek to publish the poems in sequence (Wordsworth, Gill, S & Wu, 1997).

They are:

"Strange fits of passion have I known" (Wordsworth et. al., p. 66)

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways" (Wordsworth et. al., p. 66)

"I travelled among unknown men" (Wordsworth et. al., p. 116)

"Three years she Grew in sun and shower" (Wordsworth et. al., p. 70)

"A slumber did my spirit seal" (Wordsworth et. al., p. 65)

Many critics were trying to reveal true identity or the inspirational character of Lucy, but they never came to a conclusion and Wordsworth himself did not reveal anything (McCracken, 1990).

The Lucy poems are written from the point of view of a lover who has long looked at the object of his affection from afar and who is now affected by her death.

Wordsworth's voice slowly disappears from the poems as they progress, and his voice is entirely absent from the fifth poem. His love operates on the subconscious level, and he relates to Lucy more as a spirit of nature than as a human being, or another

explanation can be that Lucy might be a substitute for Wordsworth's inspiration, or it is longing for his lost daughter Caroline, or it might be his secret love. The reader may assume that these explanations are true, each for some of the poems.

"Strange fits of passion have I known"

This poem is about two lovers. It is told from the male position and it tells us about a journey of a man – boy – to a cottage where his beloved Lucy lives, but he is stricken by a horrifying premonition that is fulfilled, because in last stanza we learn that

She *liv'd* unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceas'd to be;  
But she is in her Grave, and Oh!  
The difference to me.

Can we hear a fear of the lost of inspiration? Wordsworth in many of his poems wrote that his present emotions are "feeble and dim" against the one he had in youth. Or might this be a longing for a lost love?

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways"

The poem celebrates a beautiful girl or a young woman (a "Maid"), whose beauty is associated with nature. The speaker describes the life of the person who passed away. Again we see the theme of harmony with the unspoiled nature and of a girl. The girl's loss is represented as the loss of nature.

Here the motive of nature is quite clear. So is Lucy a substitute for nature, or for the lost love?

"I travelled among unknown men"

The poem was often perceived as a confession of Wordsworth's love for his native England and his determination not to live abroad again (Rowland, 2015).

The one poem which is the most captivating is "Three years she Grew in sun and shower". It depicts the relationship between Lucy and nature. Nature is personified and finds pleasure in Lucy, who is three years old. Than it decides that it will make Lucy a part of itself.

Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown;  
This Child I to myself will take,  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A Lady of my own.

It is perhaps because Lucy radiates natural energy, purity and innocence why Nature chose her. This is not unusual for other Wordsworth's poems. But what is striking about this particular one is a bit of diversion from the Wordsworth's perfect and pure Nature. This is the Nature that destroys and takes life. The Nature, which calmly decides to wait until the girl reaches maturity and then devours her, no matter who cares or grieves for her.

And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,  
Her virgin bosom swell,  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
While she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell.

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—  
How soon my Lucy's race was run!  
She died and left to me  
This heath, this calm and quiet scene,  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be.

Of course, the Nature promises that Lucy will become part of her and they will share all the secrets together, but still, here in this poem Wordsworth pointed at the huge power of Nature, which is not only positive and growing, but can be also negative and destructive.

Looking at this poem from other point of view we can say that Wordsworth sees the point of living in connecting to Nature. He thinks that this is what we should strive for, to become a part of Nature and the Nature sees the perfection in children.

For my conclusion I have chosen a citation: "In the first place he was a poet of nature who aimed at a simplicity and purity of language." (Oliveriusová, 1972, p. 100). His poems are full of natural images and connection between us and the Nature. He saw children as a single and the most important source of wisdom and truth and the Nature as the protector of the heart and the soul, the law of morality and the source of creativity which we should seek around us every day. "He celebrates the spirit of the man, living in harmony with his natural environment and away from the corrupt city" (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 205).

He strives for maximum clarity, but also for the understanding the mystery of life and the endless chain of crossing the border between life and death (Stříbrný, 1987). He tried to look at the world through direct and fresh vision, not affected by false deposition of an ancient philosophical and aesthetic learning. Therefore he sought an instinctive wisdom not only in villagers, but also in children, which were, in his opinion, standing closest to the elementary sources of life. Indeed, "The child is father of Life" (McCracken, 1990; Stříbrný, 1987; Wordsworth et. al., 1999).

With growing age Wordsworth abandoned his youthful revolutionary spirit and adapted to the conventions of the time, but what he believed in his youth and of what he drew his early virility remains a great original value to which we will always return (McCracken, 1990; Stříbrný, 1987).



## **4 LIFE AND WORK OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on 21<sup>st</sup> October in Ottery St. Mary as the son of a country clergyman. He was interested in philosophy and languages since his youth. While studying at Cambridge University, which he did not finish, he became a follower of the ideals of the French revolution (Coleridge & Beer, 2000; Stříbrný, 1987).

With the friend, poet Robert Southey, he planned to establish utopian settlement called Pantisokracia in Pennsylvania. Their plan, unfortunately, failed.

Meeting with William Wordsworth, the leading figure of the so-called Lake School, was significant to his work. Several years of creative friendship were beneficial to both poets.

In the years 1798-1799 stayed Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Germany. He studied philosophy and German literature in Göttingen. The family lived in the countryside in the northern England near Wordsworth's. After solving the family's financial situation Coleridge could devote himself to his studies and literary work.

In 1800, Coleridge visited a doctor to seek relief from chronic rheumatic pain. The doctor prescribed him laudanum, the liquid form of opium. Laudanum was, unfortunately, a common and effective painkiller that was extremely addictive. His addiction resulted in breakup with his wife and the estrangement from Wordsworth.

Coleridge's bad health partially improved thanks to the care of Dr. Gillman. Coleridge found asylum in his house in Highgate and lived with him from about 1812 until the end of life on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1834.

The work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge was quite short, he wrote most of it in the years 1797–1802. An opium addiction made him feel worthless and ashamed. He never got some of his best ideas down on paper, leaving other, more diligent friends, like Wordsworth, to write the poems Coleridge only talked about (Carter et. al., 2001; Coleridge & Beer, 2000; Oliveriusová, 1972; Stříbrný, 1987; Thornley & Roberts, 1984).

#### 4.1 The View on Childhood in Coleridge's Poetry

"Wordsworth's friendship with Coleridge was the most important and most prolific friendships in the history of English and world literature" (Stříbrný, 1987, p. 370 – my translation). It developed partly from related opinions on life and poetry and also partly from the tensions between the two individualists, and in many ways different temperaments.

That is why it became a source of highly original poetic power but, after several years of intensive cooperation, this led to decreasing and cooling of relationship (Stříbrný, 1987, p. 370).

In the history of literature is Coleridge connected mainly with three ballad poems, which were created at the time of the collaboration with Wordsworth. His work significantly influenced the development of romantic poetry, although two of his main poems remained unfinished – "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel" (Carter et. al., 2001; Wordsworth et. al., 1999).

The most profound and completed is "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" (Coleridge & Beer, 2000, p. 235), a poem about the fate of a sailor, curse and penance. The penalty for malice (killing of the albatross) is that the sailor must tell his story and teach people to love all God's creatures. Ballad also bears many symbols and parables with Coleridge's present world (Thornley & Roberts, 1984, p. 91-93).

The ballad is a parable about the evil that descended on the world and overtakes a person to the incomprehensibly terrible deeds or the killing of the albatross. It reflects as a birth of the human will which can result in aggression and pride and subsequently salvation carries the resurrection of love to a man. In this we can see Coleridge's way of reflecting world (Stříbrný, 1987; Wordsworth et. al., 1999).

There are some of Coleridge's poems that mention childhood. He or the speaker of the poem reflects on childhood memories in, for example "Frost at Midnight" (Coleridge & Beer, 2000, p. 208), and "Sonnet: To the River Otter" (Coleridge & Beer, 2000, p. 141), or discusses and expresses hopes for his son in "The Nightingale" (Coleridge & Beer, 2000, p. 214). Coleridge's focus on childhood revolves around an idealization of the cheerful nature and innocence of childhood. His poems are based on everyday observations. They

reflect on universal issues such as the relationship between parents and children which are intimate and conversational in a tone (Carter et. al., 2001).

"Frost at Midnight" is addressed to his son Hartley. The setting of the poem is late at night, when Coleridge is the only one awake in the household. Coleridge sits next to his son's cradle and reflects on the frost falling outside his home. He takes this instance of solitude to allow his reflections on his love of nature and to relish the time spent with his son.

The Frost performs its secret ministry,  
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry  
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.  
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,  
Have left me to that solitude, which suits  
Abstruser musings: save that at my side  
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.

Sometimes a film made of soot would form on the grate of the fireplace and stick there, fluttering. People called it a "stranger" and it was believed to predict the arrival of an unexpected guest (Wordsworth et. al., 1999; Philosophical Mindz, 2014). Coleridge plays with this idea in the poem, stating that when he was bored at school and saw that a "stranger" had formed on the classroom's fireplace, he would imagine that it was a signal of the arrival of one of his family members or friends. In the poem he uses this to suggest the arrival of a more heavenly visitor, probably the God.

Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame  
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not; Only that film,  
which fluttered on the grate,  
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.

How oft, at school, with most believing mind,  
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,  
To watch that fluttering *stranger!* and as oft  
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt

For Coleridge childhood and how we experience it is the foreshadow of an adult destiny. He finds that his own upbringing was influenced by a life in the city. He was of nine sons of a vicar and schoolmaster in Devon, because of his introspective nature, he was fond of solitude and the others soon began to look at him as at black sheep of the family. This might be the reason why he was longing for friendship and love so much and felt that his life was not as full as it at his opinion should be (Oliveriusová, 1972).

When his father died he was taken from his home in the nature and sent to school in a town. To his introvert character this was very unpleasant and he hoped to create a better connection between his son and the spirit of nature by raising his own child in the countryside.

Childhood innocence and free-spiritedness is, as he believes, inaccessible to Coleridge the adult, so he wishes to prolong and deepen this experience for his son.

My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart  
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,  
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,  
And in far other scenes! For I was reared  
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags

This poem also shows father's fascination by his child and worries if he can fulfil the fatherhood role.

"The Nightingale" is another meditation on infants which shows Coleridge's understanding of the inaccessible state of infancy as the origin of human language and culture (Rowland, 2015). In this poem the speaker is amused by the voice of nightingale but it is actually a father's tale as he calls it in the last stanza.

And now for our dear homes.—That strain again!  
Full fain it would delay me! My dear babe,  
Who, capable of no articulate sound,  
Mars all things with his imitative lisp,

How he would place his hand beside his ear,  
His little hand, the small forefinger up,  
And bid us listen! And I deem it wise  
To make him Nature's play-mate. He knows well  
The evening-star;

We do not know the speaker's name, age, or even gender. But it is mostly assumed that it is Coleridge himself. Though, we know that the speaker cares very deeply about nature. It is at the evening walk with his friend and friend's sister when they hear a voice of a nightingale.

This musing leads to a lengthier discussion on enjoying nature and youth. He reveals that he is raising his son to appreciate the night sky and hopes that others will learn to do so, too.

"A child's evening prayer" (Coleridge & Beer, 2000, p. 456),

Coleridge was the son of an Anglican vicar, and he had his objections and reservations to religions, on the other hand he remained supportive of prayers. Praising is repeatedly referenced in his poems. Once he told the novelist Thomas de Quincey that prayer demanded such a deep contemplation that it was the one of the hardest actions of which human hearts were capable (Bennett, 2006).

A child's evening prayer is just about a young innocent child praying for his beloved ones and for the God's favour.

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,  
God grant me grace my prayers to say:  
O God! preserve my mother dear  
In strength and health for many a year;  
And, O! preserve my father too,  
And may I pay him reverence due;  
And may I my best thoughts employ  
To be my parents' hope and joy;  
And O! preserve my brothers both  
From evil doings and from sloth,

And may we always love each other  
Our friends, our father, and our mother:  
And still, O Lord, to me impart  
An innocent and grateful heart,  
That after my great sleep I may  
Awake to thy eternal day! *Amen.*

Coleridge's poems are based on everyday observations. They reflect on universal issues such as the relationship between parents and children and are intimate and conversational in a tone (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 211). What fascinated Coleridge was "the mystery whereby every manifestation of life is at once united and diverse – always exciting in a separate identity, yet always linked inseparably to, and assimilating itself with, all other life-forms" (Coleridge & Beer, 2000, p. xxxvii). He became fascinated by the conception of the "child nature" after observing of his son and his showing the first signs of awakening intelligence (Coleridge & Beer, 2000).

In his poetry he wanted to remind people of their connection with each other and nature, reveal an individual in a different view of their own identity and to point at the separation from the natural world and how to use the inner spirit and imagination, so these differences would disappear in absolute unity (Coleridge & Beer, 2000).

## CONCLUSION

Today's cult of the child could not have occurred without any historical continuity. Life of children has gradually changed from carefree into more and more time spent by working, which would serve the whole family. Child labour was moved from the fields into dark, crowded, dirty factories without fresh air, where they were treated as slaves. Thousands of children died each year from starvation, exhaustion or a variety of diseases (Bennett, 2006; Pešek, 2012).

For the change of position of children it was needed to draw attention to their desperate situation to the world. Point a finger on it and put it right in front of society's eyes. However this was not possible without the spread of literacy which helped to spread revolutionary thoughts too (Gray, n.d.; Pešek, 2012).

To change the children's position in the industrial world it was also necessary to change the way of thinking. Reformative thoughts spread thanks to wider literacy which helped to open peoples' minds and started a new movement, not only in approach towards children but even the approach of whole world itself.

Romantic child bears the idealised, nostalgic, sentimental figure of childhood characterised by innocence, imagination, nature and primitivism. Those are qualities associated with romanticism that survive until today in child being one of the most enduring.

Blake was convinced of the importance of childhood, the child was, for him, primarily an aspect of possibility of every human personality. He was deeply aware of the terror and hostility of conventional adult society in face of some features of the child's perspective (Ford, 1990).

"There are some similarities between Blake's poetry and the poetry of Wordsworth, particularly his emphasis on the value of childhood experience and its celebration of nature. Central to Wordsworth's visions is the importance of the impact and influence of nature on the human mind." (Carter et. al., 2001, p. 205).

Wordsworth's vision is that a childhood is a source of vitality and peace. He believes children come to this world with instinctive wisdom as they were standing closest

to the elementary sources of life. At the time of birth a child emerges from a state of glory that immediately starts to fade and a child begins to forget those splendid visions of his earlier existence. We can be the closest to this vision via our deepest connection to the Nature. Our perception of life, regarding to Wordsworth, is influenced by our childhood and that should be influenced by nature to merge emotion of fullness and happiness.

Coleridge's view of childhood is very similar to the perspective of both Blake and Wordsworth. With Blake he agrees that the power of imagination which, if supported, develops visions and fantasy and the child becomes wise and self confident adult with awareness of personal independency. With Wordsworth he corresponds on the nostalgic undertone and a desire to relive "happy" childhood moments. To experience them again he has to find harmony and connection with nature.

To Coleridge childhood constituted the period of visionary experience and the power of imagination which he consequently sought to restore.

Romantic poets saw childhood as a period of joy, peace and security, it was a state of mind rather than an ephemeral period in an individual's lifetime and they believed that it is desirable to carry the simplicity and capability of imagination of childhood into the powers of manhood.

The child did not exist as an important and continuous theme in English literature.

The idea of Romantic child developed over the course of the eighteenth century gestures ahead to the ideas of childhood that will dominate Western culture well into the twentieth century.

Writers of this period dramatically transformed the representation of childhood and the figure of the child in literature.



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## CZECH SUMMARY

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat postavení dítěte ve společnosti v období od konce 18. století do počátku 19. století a jeho odraz v poezii. Zabývám se názorem romantických básníků na dětství, jaké okolnosti vedly k jejich novým vizím a v co oni sami věřili.

Hlavní část této práce se skládá z podrobného studia některých básníků a jejich básní. To zahrnuje i to, jak tito básníci vnímali děti a dětství a jejich postavení ve světě. Poskytuji přehled informací ve vztahu k básníkům W. Blakeovi, W. Wordsworthovi a S. T. Coleridgeovi, který obsahuje základní údaje o jejich životě a práci. Především se zaměřuji na ty básně, v nichž básníci reflektovali svou vizi dítěte a dětství.

V závěru práce se snažím o definici vize Romantického dítěte, která v naší společnosti přetrvává až do dnešních dnů.

Klíčová slova: Romantismus, poezie, dítě, dětství, báseň, rozbor, příroda, nevinnost, společnost, nemluvně, ryzost.

## APPENDIX



Figure 1: Songs of Innocence – The Spring

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1099980>



Figure 2: Songs of Innocence – Infant Joy

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1100114>

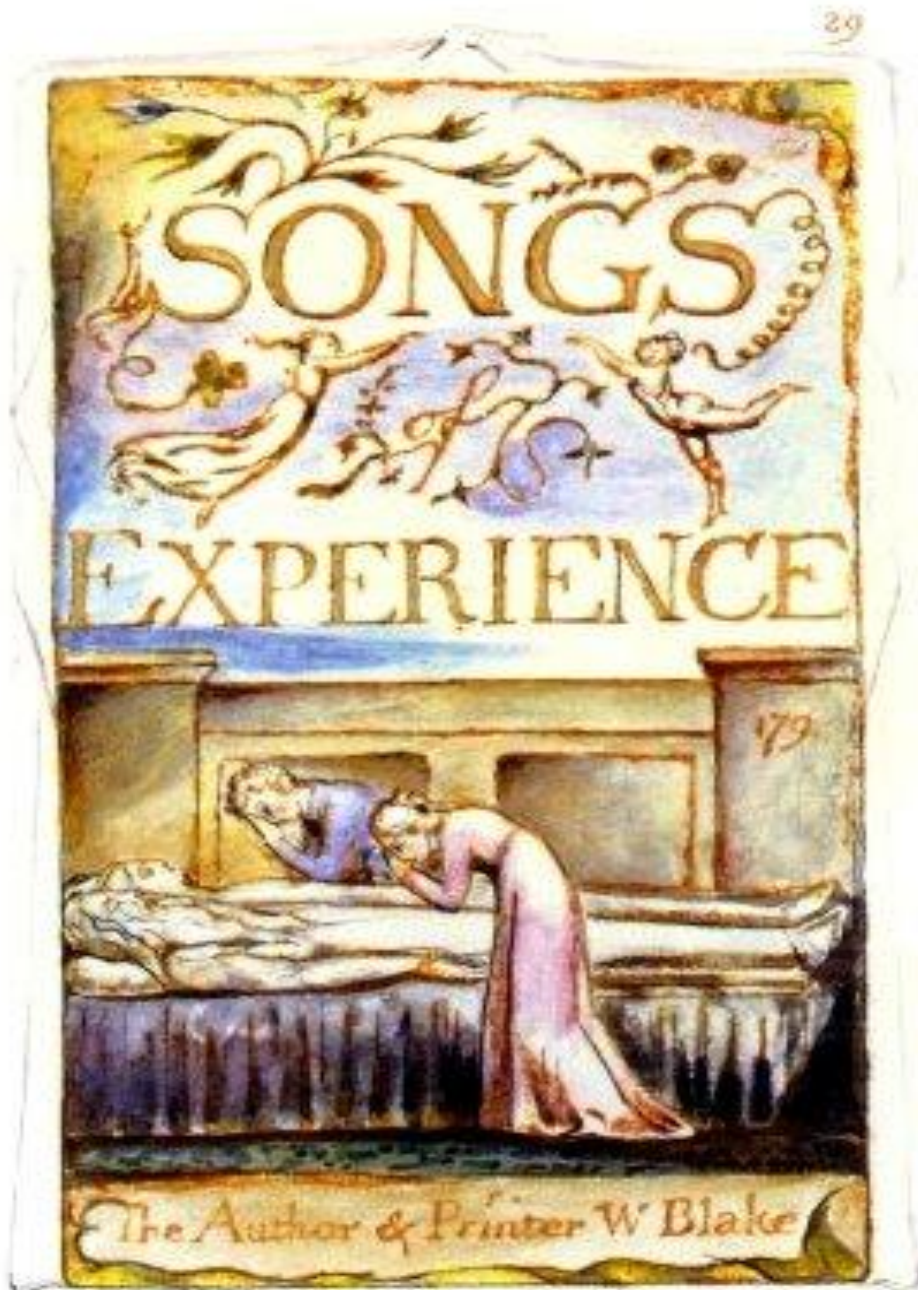


Figure 3: Songs of Experience – Title

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1102661>



Figure 4: Songs of Experience – The Chimney Sweeper

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1110309>



Figure 5: Songs of Experience – London

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=532573>



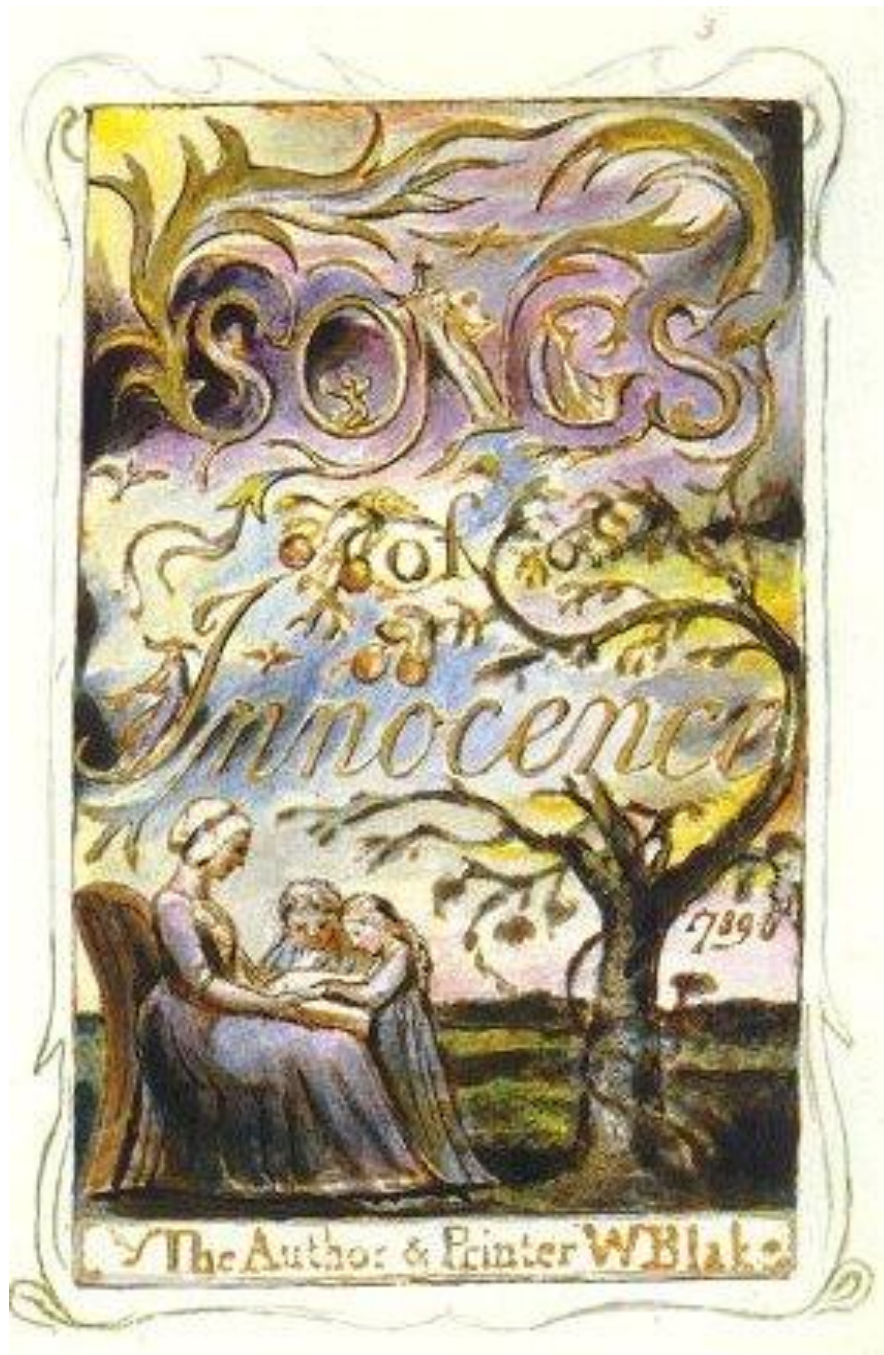


Figure 6: Songs of Innocence – Front page

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1107439>



Figure 7: Songs of Innocence – The Chimney Sweeper

Available from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1090489>