**Contraries in William Blake's Poetry**

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Romanticism is a literary movement that refers to the changes which took place towards the end of the eighteenth century both in literature and in thought. Historians of English and German literature believe that the Romantic period began 1798, the year of the first edition of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge. These poets and other Romantic poets stood against the literary trends of the first part of the 18th century, the Age of Reason, which is also known as The Age of Enlightenment that advocated the philosophy of reasoning whereby sentiments such as emotion, nature, and the imagination took a backseat to science and logic. Five poets who are now believed to be the 'canonical' poets of the Romantic period were singled out by scholars of the twentieth century. These poets include Wordsworth, Coleridge Byron, Percy Shelley and Keats - Blake was added later to make the sixth (Abrams 1). Blake belongs to the first generation of Romantic poets alongside Wordsworth and Coleridge. His poetry reflects many of the topics of that period as he incorporates in his poems a vision of the apocalyptic French Revolution from which will come forth a new humanity on a new earth equivalent to a restored Paradise. He addresses the ills of urbanization and industry; and in his symbolic language, he tackles many paradoxes of his age. This 'Romantic Revolution' reflects, in the main, the apocalyptic expectations that the French Revolution was going to create a better world. The 'evil' King of France, King Louis XVI, was going to be replaced by the power of the people led by General Napoleon Bonaparte' The power of the individual came to inspire poets to write poetry for the common man using the ,unadorned, language of Contraries in William Blake's Poetry 214 daily life. The industrial revolution, which had started in England around175, also affected Englishliterature with its social and economic implications. Romantic poets advocated the return to nature and the use of the imagination in which many poets found a remedy to some sort of spiritual crisis. 2. William Blake’s Poetry William Blake's first book of poems, Poetic Sketches, was printed when he was just twenty four years old and included poems which were written between the ages of twelve and twenty (Abrams 39).These were followed by Songs of Innocence (1789), and in 1794 were combined with Songs of Experience to produce a collection entitled Songs of Innocence and Experience. Blake wrote his book of "minor prophecies" in (1795), but his "major prophetic" "cryptic" poems, which include the much celebrated and debated Milton and Jerusalem, were not published until 1820 (Abrams 37). It is important to understand that Blake was an artist before he became a poet and that he combined art with poetry. He had devised a way to translate his own vision of the poem into copper etchings which he then printed. It is also important to understand that Blake depended heavily on the bible for his symbo1s and imagery. Blake had declared that ''' all he knew was in the bible” and that "the Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of, Art” (37). Critics believe that this might be exaggerated, but the truth is that all his prophetic writings deal, in various formulations, with some aspects of the overall biblical plot of the creation and Fall, the history of the generations of humanity in the fallen world, redemption, and promise of recovery of Eden and of a New Jerusalem. These events, however, Blake interprets in what h calls, “the spiritual sense.”(Abrams 37) Still, knowledge of biblical symbolic imagery and biblical references are often deemed valuable in attempting Blake's poetry as it often allows for another level of interpretation. For example, Blake's poem "The Sick Rose" (Songs of Experience 1794) can be dealt with in a variety of ways.

O Rose, thou art sick!

That flies in the night,

In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed

Of crimson joy;

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy. (Abrams 52)

The rose can denote love, nature, humanity and innocence, but can also refer to the church in its

Being the Garden of Eden unaware that it is being sickened by the serpent-like worm.

The Industrial Revolution was a period from 1750 to 1850 where changes in agriculture,

manufacturing, mining, transportation, and technology had an overwhelming effect on the social,

economic and cultural conditions of the times. It began in the United Kingdom, and then spread

throughout Europe and the United States (Wikipedia The Industrial Revolution).