

LECTURE 2: William Blake (1757-1827)

William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a famous figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age.

The Lamb

*Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee*

*Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,*

We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

Thee (Line 1, Line 2, Line 3, Line 9, Line 10, Line 11, Line 12, Line 19, Line 20) - An archaic form of "you."

Dost (Line 2, Line 10) - An archaic form of "do."

Thou (Line 2, Line 17) - An archaic form of "you."

O'er (Line 4) - O'er is a contraction of "over,"

Mead (Line 4) - A mead is a meadow or a small field.

Vale (Line 8) - Vale is another word for valley.

Meek (Line 15) - Meek means gentle.

Mild (Line 15) - Mild here means gentle and kind.

Summary of "The Lamb"

Blake directly addresses a lamb, asking it if it knows who created it, who gave it life and invited it to eat. The lamb is then described in its natural environment, living beside streams and running through fields. Whoever made the lamb also gave it its coat, which is made out of soft white wool. The lamb's gentle noises, according to Blake, make the surrounding valleys happy. Blake then asks again: Who made the lamb?

In the second stanza, Blake excitedly offers to tell the lamb the answer. The creator has the same name as the lamb, and indeed calls himself "Lamb." This creator is gentle and kind, and he was once a small child. The speaker, too, is a child, and both the speaker and the lamb share the name of their creator. Blake then asks God twice to bless the lamb.

Major Themes in The Lamb:

The lamb is one of the simplest poems of Blake. Here the symbols of child, lamb and Christ are assimilated each other. The poet addresses lamb itself. Lamb is pure, innocent and it is

associated with Christ. He describes the lamb as he sees it. The lamb has been blessed with life and with capacity to drink from the stream and feed from the meadow. It has been allotted with bright, soft and warm wool which serves as its clothing.

Literary Devices:

Literary devices are tools that enable the writers to present their ideas, emotions, and feelings with the use of these devices. Blake has also used some literary devices in this poem. The analysis of some of the literary devices used in this poem has been stated below:

1. **Assonance**: Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line such as the sound of /e/ in “By the stream & o’er the mead”.
2. **Enjambment**: It is defined as a thought or clause that does not come to an end at a line break and moves over the next line. For example,

*“Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.”*

3. **Allusion**: Allusion is a belief and an indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of a historical, cultural, political or literary significance. “The lamb” in the second stanza directly alludes to Jesus.
4. **Symbolism**: Symbolism means the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings different from their literal meanings. “Lamb” and “child” both are the symbols of chastity, innocence, and purity.

5. **Imagery**: Imagery is used to make the readers perceive things with their five senses. The poet has used images such as, “Softest clothing wooly bright”, “He became a little child:” and “By the stream & o’er the mead.”
6. **Alliteration**: Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as the sound of /l/ in “Little Lamb I’ll tell thee”; /h/ and /m/ sounds in “He is meek & he is mild”.