Brief Notes for Blake

A Poison Tree

Subject and theme: Wrath (anger) and desire to triumph over enemies; the dark side of human nature.

Key image: The tree which bears the poisonous fruit.

Technical features:

* Simple narrative in form of parable; "wrath" a powerful Biblical term for a deadly sin;
* tree suggests Biblical and mythical narratives;
* contrast between treatment of friend and of foe;
* repeated use of "And" or "I" to start lines;
* rhyme words in second stanza as metaphors of nurturing the desire to harm;
* conclusion shows how horrible wrath can be - this is not a literal killing but real spiritual and psychological harm are done.

The Tyger

Subject and theme: Tiger as a symbol of God's power in creation

Key images: The tiger as seen by Blake's poetic imagination: "fearful symmetry"; "burning bright...fire"; "hammer...chain...furnace...anvil".

Technical features:

* Repeated (rhetorical) questions; contrast with meekness of The Lamb;
* Tyger is addressed directly;
* simple metre and rhyme;
* incantatory rhythm (like casting a spell);

creation like an industrial process (fourth stanza).

The Lamb

Subject and theme: Lamb is symbol of suffering innocence and Jesus Christ.

Key image: The Lamb as seen through the eyes of a child.

Technical features:

* Repeated questions, directed to the lamb, but easier to answer than those addressed to the tiger;
* answers given in the second stanza;
* idyllic setting of "stream and mead"
* contrasts with "forests of night" (exotic and dangerous) in The Tyger;
* suggests Biblical book of Psalms especially the 23rd psalm, with its "green pastures";
* as well as making The Lamb, God becomes like The Lamb: Jesus is both the "Good shepherd" and "The Lamb of God". Like the Passover lamb, He is sacrificed to redeem others.