

English Romantic Poetry

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Please Silence Cell Phones

William Blake (1757-1827)

- Humble Origins
- Sent to apprentice at the workshop of a master-engraver
- At age of 22 entered the Royal Academy, but his art was too unconventional to be accepted
- Not fully recognized until the late 19th and 20th centuries
- <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/>

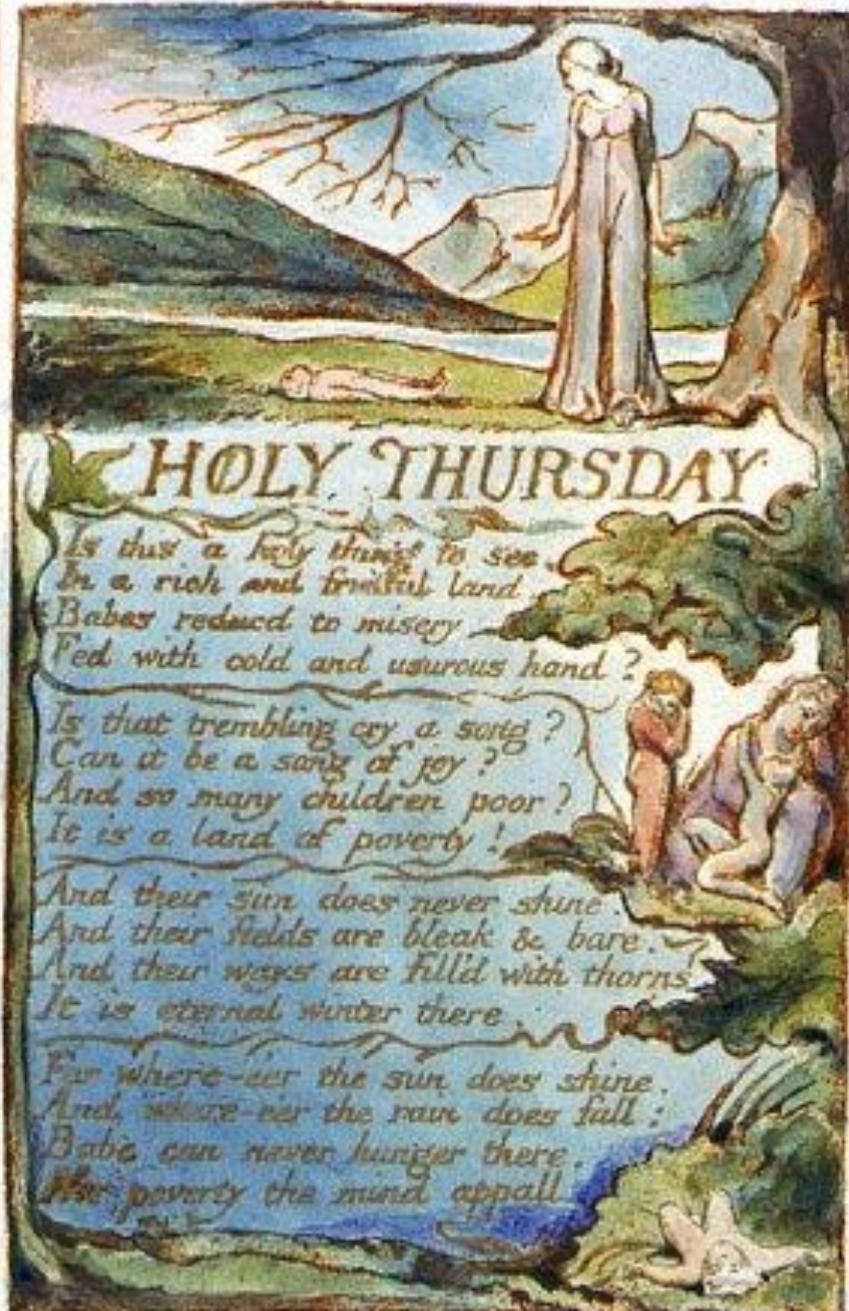
“Songs of Innocence and Experience”

- Mature reflection on the poems from Songs of Innocence
- Published both sets together as *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 1794
- Objective: to show the “two Contrary States of the Human Soul”
- Colored prints accompanied each poem.



Holy Thursday I

- Parade of children is orderly and colorful
- Children appear as a natural phenomena
- Their Voices in St. Paul’s Cathedral also are a natural simile: “like harmonious thunderings”
- The beadles, who supervise the orphans, are “wise guardians of the poor”
- The last line likens the orphans to angels



HOLY THURSDAY

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land
Babes reduced to misery
Fed with cold and usurous hand ?

Is that trembling cry a song ?
Can it be a song of joy ?
And so many children poor ?
It is a land of poverty !

And their sun does never shine
And their fields are bleak & bare
And their ways are fill'd with thorns
It is eternal winter there

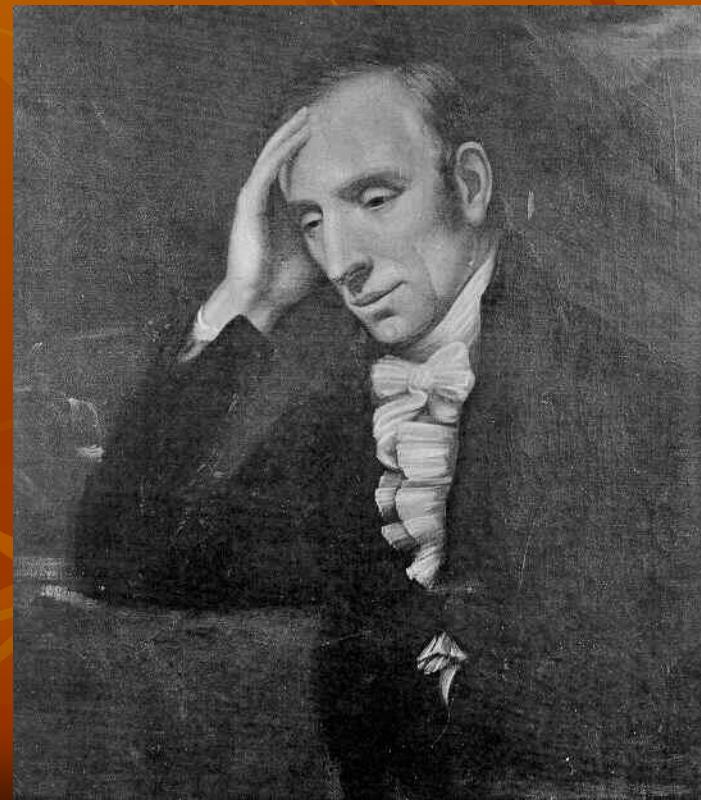
For where'er the sun does shine
And where'er the rain does fall
Babe can never hunger there
Nor poverty the mind appall

Holy Thursday II

- Poses a series of Rhetorical questions about the parade of orphans to St. Paul's
- Is it holy?
- The natural metaphors of the first poem are revealed to be false metaphors
- Sun doesn't shine; Fields are bleak and bare; Paths are full of thorns; Eternal Winter;
- Final Stanza: In a land with Sun and Rain, there should no babes in hunger and poverty
- Questions both the idealism of Religious Charity and the idealism of Romantic Naturalism

- Childhood in Lake District
- 1790s, visited France and sympathized with Revolutionaries
- After War between England and France, he was conflicted
- 1804, Rise of Napoleon and Wordsworth becomes a Royalist
- Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, with Samuel Coleridge

William Wordsworth



Controlling Ideas of Wordsworth's Preface

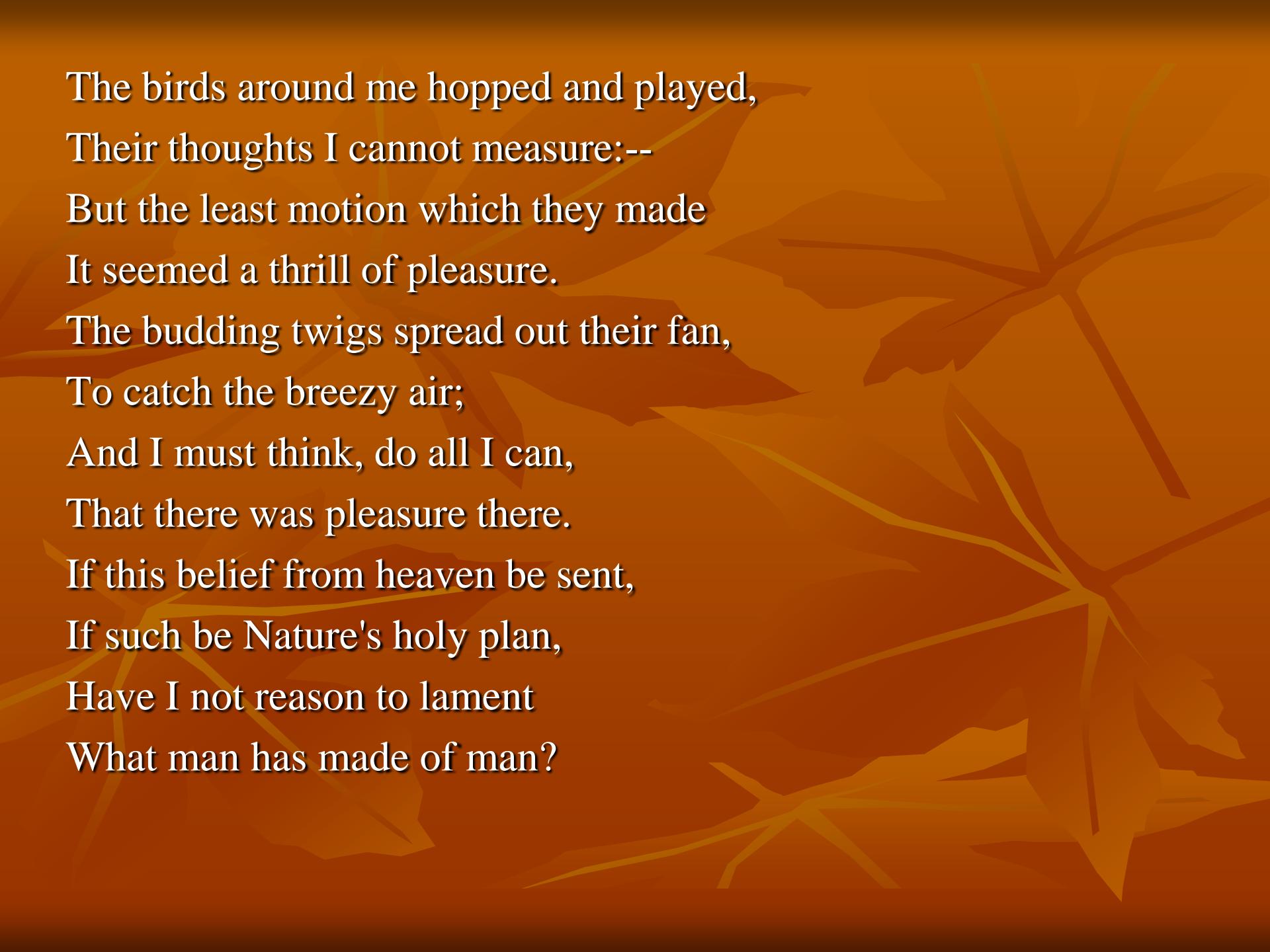
- Sympathy of Nature and Man
- Use of Natural Language of Men
- Focus on Simple Men, Farmers (Pastoral?)
- Passion over Reason: Interest in feelings
- Poet as a man who feels more intensely than most men.
- Imagination

Emotion in Poetry

- Poetry should evoke an emotional reaction, but it should not aim at “outrageous stimulation...” He comments on the “extraordinary incidents” of the time and the “increasing accumulation of men in cities” as a cause. The objective is to provide a counter stimulus, which is emotive, but not destructive or overwhelming. Other romantics will disagree with Wordsworth.

Lines Written in Early Spring, 1798

I HEARD a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.
To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.
Through primrose tufts, in that green bower
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.



The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:--
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

Intimations of Immortality:

<http://www.bartleby.com/101/536.html>

- Natural connection of Children with Nature: “Child is the Father of the Man”
- Loss of “Immediacy” with Nature as we Age
- From Grief to Joy in Apprehension of Nature
- Joyful Exuberance is purpose of existence
- Loss; Tree; Is it Tree of Knowledge? Fall of Man?
- We still get glimpses of immortal, transcendent world in Nature
- “Trailing clouds of glory do we come/From God”

Samuel Coleridge, Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 1798

- Poetic Narrative
- Harmony of Man and Nature and God is disrupted: the Albatross as a symbol
- Remorse: need for confession
- Mariner: the simple man with simple words
- <http://www.bartleby.com/41/415.html>

Kubla Khan, 1816

- <http://www.bartleby.com/41/416.html>
- Poetry as dreamlike experience
- Immediate relation of sensation: unlike Wordsworth idea of mediated reflection
- Poet was interrupted and result is fragmentary
- Poet is tapping into unconscious through dreams or drugs or some other transcendental connection
- Poet as Prophet

- Pleasure Dome represents sensuous Nature as Eden; womblike in shape; “fertile ground”; natural metaphors of fertility and sensuality: “gardens” and “sinuous rills” and “incense-bearing tree”
- “Romantic chasm”: opposing Dome; “savage”; “woman wailing for her demon-lover!”
- Out of the Chasm a fountain rises
- He embraces opposites: “sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!”
- Poet imagines that “with music loud and long” he will build the Dome, inducing people to cry “Beware!”
- Poet as Prophet

Summary

- English Romantic Poets believed in the power of the poet to shape the moral fiber of society
- Natural Sympathy of Man and Nature; the divide is transcended by the sheer Beauty upon our senses
- Natural sympathy of Man and Nature leads to Sympathy of Man and Man
- The power of Nature to influence and shape us
- Beginning of the idea of poet as prophet: poetry compensate for the Loss