

The Chimney Sweeper (Innocence)

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 & in soot I sleep.

Comment [.1]: Persona has never experienced life without unhappiness before, it is an on-going sadness in his life which has started since he was born

Comment [.2]: Sense of betrayal (perhaps because he is an 'experienced'. Also emphasizes the on-going sadness in persona's life

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd: so I said
"Hush. Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

Comment [.3]: This is the child's attempt at saying "Sweep! Sweep!," which was the chimney sweeper's street cry.

Comment [.4]: Connotations of:
1. Children of god
2. Jesus- religious symbol of positivity
3. A lamb can imply- youth, innocence, purity

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

Comment [.5]: Contrast between the good and evil. Perhaps suggesting the point that industrialisation is taking over society and is indoctrinating the youth with 'blackening' experience-negative.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free,
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun.

Comment [.6]: Stressing on the point about so many children experience this throughout England, as well as their uniformity and absence of individuality

Comment [.7]: Each name has one syllabus, emphasizing their dull, monotonous, insignificant lives they lead

Then naked & 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 & never want joy.

Comment [.8]: Ambiguous:
1. can be a positive symbol- pure, innocent, holy figure
2. Or maybe undermining the fact that the angel has come as a form of bribery to convince children to 'believe' that if they complete their duties in reality, they will be honoured with the freedom of heaven when dead.

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

Comment [.9]: Positive connotations. Leaping and laughing suggests the continuous hope that the children carry.

Comment [.10]: Similar to baptizing, the river may represent the children washing away their sins and becoming pure. Joyful and innocent once again. The river can also differ from reality as the river is 'free' and 'flowing' whilst in reality the children are restricted and confined in a chimney.

Comment [.11]: A contrast to the darkness and dullness of reality.

Comment [.12]: The nakedness of the children represent freedom, independence, and free will. This contrasts to the constraints of clothing where children are restricted wearing them.

Comment [.13]: They rise to heaven. They are not insignificant anymore and are not being looked down at by their boss.

Comment [.14]: Can be a distinction between his father in reality that is 'experienced' and indoctrinated by society to god who is pure, caring and hopeful.

Comment [.15]: Bribery- perhaps what the owner is telling children. Placing hope in the children in order for them to work again but be happy doing it instead. Continuous cycle.