Dickinson Vs. Blake Essay, Research Paper

For my analysis, I chose to compare the poems of Emily Dickinson and William Blake. Dickinson s poem is entitled My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun and Blake s poem is entitled The Tyger. In both poems, nature plays an important part and it is obvious to the reader that both Dickinson and Blake feel a fondness, yet a slight fear towards nature.

In My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun, Dickinson gives the reader the feeling that nature is her source of guidance and inspiration. Like Blake, Dickinson believed that people needed to understand nature before they could begin to comprehend humanity because humanity was just a part of nature. Unlike many others, she felt that nature was beautiful and must be understood (Microsoft Encarta).

The poems chosen for this analysis deal with nature on multiple levels of tone and emotion. Both poems approach the topic with a distinct sense of intimacy and comfort, but express it in a dark and somber manner. Emily Dickinson s poem, “My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun,” was published in 1929. William Blake s poem “The Tyger,” is believed to have been written between 1790 and 1792. Both poems have common elements, yet it is apparent that about 140 years separate them.

An initial distinction can be made between the two poems sense of perspective. The speaker in Dickinson s poem is noticeably within the main action of the poem an insider. The title makes that clear: My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun.” The first line in Blake s poem, however, makes it clear that the speaker is somehow an outside element of what is being described in the poem- an observer. This is in distinct contrast to Dickinson s poem in that the reader and speaker create through Blake s poem, based on clues and speculation.

A similarity that is noticeable is in the tone of the two poems. Dickinson s and Blake s poems are fairly somber and express feelings towards death in the context of nature. The somber tone comes through in some of the word choices: in Loaded Gun, Dickinson states For I have but the power to kill, without-the power to die. She sees the frightful part of nature, death, as it is an extension of the natural order. Death is probably the most prominent theme in the poem and she saw it as the next logical step in life. She appears to be fascinated by both nature and death and she attempts to explain both in her writing. What is consistent in the tone of both poems is the idea of death as a looming figure.

The main question that I feel that Blake is asking in the The Tyger is that how can the same God make such a vicious animal and also make such an innocent animal. The choice of words conveys a relaxed sensibility: What immortal hand or eye dare frame thy fear symmetry?

Blake uses a lot of visual imagery in the poem to convey his message to the people. In The Tyger the nobles fought back against the French republic in the French Revolution. In my opinion, this is a reference to the battle between good and evil. The next quotation shows this when the stars threw down their spears and water d heaven with their tears. At the time when Blake wrote his poem, the industrial revolution was going on, and because of his imagery you could almost hear the banging and clanging of the machines and the battles of the French Revolution. The next quotation shows this: What the hammer what the anvil. This reminds us of a blacksmith, banging on the anvil with the hammer, like the noise of the machines was making in the Industrial Revolution. The Tyger brings the mood of power, dark and dangerous. The next quotation shows this: Burnt the fire of thine eyes This sentence has fire in it like it is hot and sweaty. India is also hot and sweaty, where the tigers come from.

The rhythm of The Tyger to me feels like the rapid beating of the heart, suggesting the reader is scared. I think that the message Blake is trying to convey is that life is very unfair. He was very angry about social injustice and that is why there are so many references to the Industrial and French Revolution. He does this because he wanted to express something the readers of his time could relate to, and also to show how he felt about the Revolutions. The Tyger is fifteen questions, and no answers. Maybe he is trying to say that the world is a very confused place, and no one knows any answers.

The overall mood of the poems, as I said, are consistent- somber and looming. This continues until the final lines of the poems: in My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun, Dickinson states For I have but the power to kill, Without -the power to die. In The Tyger, Blake finishes with What immortal hand or eye dare frame thy fear symmetry. These endings, in my opinion, do not lend themselves to a reading of comfort and familiarity. They conjure up dark thoughts as the final thoughts of the speaker are negative.

Despite their somber mood, both of theses poems are worthwhile reading, and both capture an element that is now absent from American culture. Both poems have a sense of multiple emotion, but Blake s poem is much more realized, the emotions much more original, which in the end makes his much more memorable than Dickinson s.