Little Girl Lost Essay, Research Paper

"A Little GIRL Lost" from Songs of Experience is one of Blake?s most important poems. Though judging the aesthetic value of a poem is nearly impossible, I would contend that "A Little Girl Lost" is "better" than "The Little Girl Lost" found in Songs of Innocence. Perhaps because "A Little Girl Lost" was composed as an afterthought to its original counterpart, having been first written in "Innocence," it acts as a conclusion to the original poem. The two poems both observe a young girl as she encounters a world filled with innocence (in "The Little Girl Lost") and a world of experience ("A Little Girl Lost"). In first poem, a young seven-year-old girl named Lyca falls asleep in the wilderness under a tree. While her parents worry about her, she sleeps innocently in the woods with a lion prancing around her while she slumbers. The poetic vision seems to be a portrayal of young love–of innocence unprotected in the passion-haunted forest. In the second poem, found in "Experience," the feeling shifts from innocence to suggest a subversive course of love exploration. The young girl, Ona, discovers passion only to find that her father has a negative view on the very love she has just been introduced to. "A Little Girl Lost" seems to be much deeper in thought than "The Little Girl Lost." This depth in content begins with the title, which gives the poem an aura of uneasiness. A feeling that it is dangerous or sinful stems from word "Little" in the title, which implies that the girl addressed in the poem is quite young. Other signs such as the fact that the prologue is addressed to "children" and that the "maiden" is still clearly under parental guardianship create contradicting feelings about innocence. All this could be slightly misleading. Perhaps Blake, like Shakespeare, believed in very young brides. While the boy and the girl in the "Nurse?s Song" and the little lost boys, both in "Innocence" and "Experience," are clearly children, the illustration shows Lyca (The Little Girl Lost) and her lover as fully mature. The "youth and maiden" in "A Little Girl Lost" are not actually shown in the illustration, but the poem itself suggests that they are more than children. The first thing to notice about "A Little Girl Lost" is that notwithstanding the beautiful lyrical mood of the first part, it is a tragedy. It is closely related with "A Little Boy Lost," because the two poems both contain themes centering on the destruction of youthful innocence. Blake is commenting on the unfortunate reality where youth is not tolerated, with the consequence that the soul of youth is systematically excluded, and innocence destroyed. "A Little Girl Lost" simply substitutes "Love" where "Thought" was the innocent action destroyed in "A Little Boy Lost." The poem is intensely dramatic in form and character. Unlike "The Little Girl Lost", which employs a repeated trochaic trimater prosody throughout all 10 stanzas, "A Little Girl Lost" adds variation to the rhythm and meter. The number of stanzas is limited to a prologue and six five-line verses. The rhyming pattern helps create rhythm in the poem, following a model of AA, BBB/ CC, DDD /EE, FFF, etc. This allows each stanza its own little narrative and separates them, in turn preparing the reader for a slightly different theme with each new verse. First the prologue or Chorus tells the reader the meaning of the poem. Then the curtain lifts on a scene of pastoral beauty, transporting us to an ancient world that is no more. In the nest scene the story begins. It is a story of this "Age of Gold," continuing through three scenes representative of dawn, day, and night. There the first ?act? ends. The second act shows us the destruction of innocence. Ona, the fair maiden, if shattered to find that her discovery of love is nothing but a terrible desecration of white and sacred memories for her old father. Upon this scene, where love becomes taboo, an image of the Garden of Eden and the Fall becomes evident. The Fall is due to the entrance of "the Law" (of God), much like the parental laws Ona is restricted by under her father. The Garden of Eden abolishes all innocence and creates a world of loneliness for its inhabitants. Much like Lyca sleeps alone in "The Little Girl Lost," Ona is left alone at the end. Her name could be an anglicized version of Una; she is "one" girl in a world of utter loneliness. The illustration plate corresponds to this feeling because the actors in the poem do not appear in the picture. We see nothing but the tree and the grass and the birds: all natural and symbolical, but a concealment rather than a picture of the poem. The reader is not invited to pry upon the sacred moment of love: "Strangers come not near:/ And the maiden soon forgot her fear." The two illustrations from "Innocence" and "Experience" are quite mismatched. The scene with the "youth" and "maiden" from the "Innocence" illustration would much better capture the essence of "A Little Girl Lost," whereas the natural scene of serenity would be better emphasized by the dreamy scene of the natural world in "Experience." Either Blake mixed up the plates, (which is very doubtful) or he wanted to demonstrate the feeling of uneasiness previously discussed. The sentiments for these poems are rather somber, even the poems about innocence because from the "Experience" poems we learn that innocence is almost always lost. "A Little Girl Lost" is a step above its predecessor because it flows better and simply tells a more complicated and beautiful story. The intensity is heightened by the careless joy suddenly cut short by dismal reality. It is this intensity and emotional demonstration of love and loss that sets this poem apart from Blake?s others.