

A Study on
the Classic Poems of
British Romantic Poets

 **英国浪漫主义
经典诗歌研读**

● 牟宜武 编著

本书体现了英国浪漫主义文学的特点，
精选了英国浪漫主义诗人威廉·布莱克、
约翰·济慈等的代表诗歌，
配上赏析和译文。



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Preface

Romanticism was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement. Originated in Europe, romanticism reached its peak during the period from 1800 to 1840. It is often regarded as a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment as well as the scientific rationalization of nature. During romanticism movement, a large flood of visual arts, music works, and literary works were born. In addition, romanticism had also a great impact on education and the natural sciences.

During romanticism movement, a group of romantic poets came to the fore, some of whom made very large contribution to poetic development and spread. Among them, the best known romantic poets were William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. The publication in 1798 of *Lyrical Ballads*, with many of the finest poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge, is often held to mark the start of the movement. The majority of the poems were written by Wordsworth, many of which dealt with the lives of the poor in his native Lake District, or the poet's feelings about nature.

Given the contributions made by the British romantic poets, the current book will present their best known poems as well as the notes and appreciation to them, which will be a very good guide for those who appreciate and research the British romantic poems.

The majority of the poems presented in the current book are adapted from William Blake's works, which enable us to explore his

poems in a more detailed way. William Blake was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. He was born on November 28th, 1757, and died on August 12th, 1827. Though largely unrecognized during his lifetime and even considered insane by contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of both the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age, for his poetry and paintings have been characterized as part of the Romantic movement due to its large appearance in the 18th century. Blake's most known collections of poems are *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794). The former book, *Songs of Innocence*, contains poems either written from the perspective of children or written about them, while the latter book, *Songs of Experience*, deals with topics of corruption and social injustice. As to *Songs of Innocence*, some readers consider it primarily a children's book for its straightforward fashion, but others have found hints at parody or critique in its seemingly naive and simple lyrics. In the eye of Blake, innocence and experience were "the two contrary states of the human soul" because true innocence was impossible without experience.

In addition to the poems by William Blake, the current book also devotes a large space to exploring the masterpieces of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. Among them, George Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats were the main figures of the second generation of romantic poets. In this book, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *The Isles of Greece*, written by these romantic poets, are introduced and researched. Besides, *I wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, and *Kubla Khan*, are also appreciated



and explored. Since most poems of these poets enjoy great popularity in lots of poetic works, a limited number of their poems are introduced and researched in this book.

Meanwhile, the author of the present book is extremely grateful to Zhu Liping, who gives sound suggestion in collecting and selecting the masterpieces by the British romantic poets. In addition, the publication of the current book is financed by Funds for Youth Scholars of Lanzhou Jiaotong University. *

* 本书的出版获得了兰州交通大学青年研究基金项目(2011055)的资助。同时,本书作者在此感谢朱丽萍老师对本书给予的宝贵建议。



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Introduction

序 诗

Source Text

Introduction

By William Blake

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee^[1],
On a cloud I saw a child^[2],
And he laughing^[3] said to me:

“Pipe a song about a Lamb^[4]!”
So I piped with merry cheer.
“Piper, pipe that song again”—
So I piped, he wept to hear.

“Drop thy^[5] pipe, thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy cheer;”
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear.

“Piper, sit thee^[6] down and write
In a book^[7], that all may read” —
So he vanish’d^[8] from my sight,
And I pluck’d^[9] a hollow^[10] reed^[11],

And I made a rural^[12] pen,
And I stain’d^[13] the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

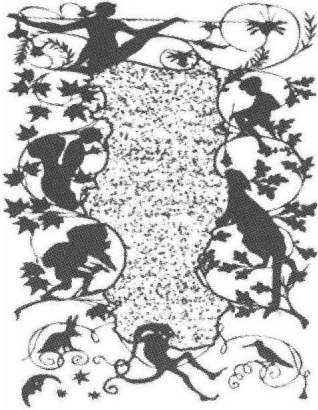
* * * * *

Notes:

- [1] glee: open delight or pleasure
- [2] In this line, “child” refers to angel.
- [3] laughing: laughingly
- [4] In this line, “Lamb” refers to Christ.
- [5] thy (old use): your
- [6] thee (old use): you
- [7] Seen from the whole poem, “book” refers to *Songs of Innocence* written by William Blake.
- [8] vanish’d: vanished
- [9] pluck’d: plucked
- [10] hollow: having a space or cavity inside
- [11] reed: the straight stalk of any of various tall grasses
- [12] rural: characteristic of country life
- [13] stain’d: stained



APPRECIATION



Introduction is an introductory poem to *Songs of Innocence*. In the poem, William Blake elaborates the main causes of his writing *Songs of Innocence*. In general, the introductory poem to *Songs of Innocence* displays Blake's dual image of the poet as both a "piper" and a "bard". The pleasant lyrical aspect of poetry is shown in the role of the "piper" while the more somber prophetic nature of poetry is displayed by the stern "bard". In addition, the introductory poem sets the tone for the *Songs of Innocence* as a whole, with its use of images of the child and the Lamb (Christ), together with the bright idyllic pastoral setting, establishing the tone of *Innocence*: guiltlessness, and freedom from harm and sin.

The introductory poem consists of five stanzas, with four lines in each stanza where the second line is rhymed with the fourth line. In the first stanza and the fourth stanza, the first line is rhymed with the third line, accompanied by the rhymed even lines. In the opening stanza, Blake presents the poet in the form of a simple shepherd who is "piping down the valleys wild" and "piping songs of pleasant glee". These two lines establish a pastoral world saturated with pure pleasure.

However, the shepherd's pleasure in an exclusive pastoral world is interrupted by a child on the cloud who asks the shepherd to "pipe a song about a Lamb". Here, the child is the embodiment of angel, with the Lamb being a traditional symbol for Christ. So, piping a

song about a Lamb means piping a song about the “Lamb of God”, Christ. Obviously, the child asks the shepherd to take his piping more seriously.

At the serious request of the child, the shepherd replays his songs. Upon hearing the shepherd’s piping, the child weeps in the first place, and then weeps with joy to hear it once again. The child vanishes after uttering, “Piper, sit thee down and write / In a book that all may read”. In this way the child is asking the shepherd to share his inspiration with a wider audience, an audience that would not depend on his presence to experience the happiness his imagination can bring.

Immediately after the child’s disappearance, the shepherd begins the actual physical composition of the poem. He plucks a reed, makes it a rural pen, and writes happy songs “In a book that all may read”. Here, book refers to *Songs of Innocence* which is designed in a form that “all may read”. By the book *Songs of Innocence*, the simple shepherd begins to assume the position of a true poet who does not play the songs for himself but shares them with his audience—“every child” of England.



Target Text

序 诗

我吹着牧笛走下山来，
吹着许多快乐的曲调，
忽见云端有一个小孩，



他笑嘻嘻地向我说道：

“你吹一支小羊的歌吧！”

我很高兴地吹了那支歌。

“吹笛人，这个歌你再吹一遍！”

我又吹着，他泪汪汪地听着我。

“放下你那只快乐的牧笛，
把那些快乐的歌儿唱一唱。”

我又把那些歌唱了一遍，

他听着高兴得眼泪汪汪。

“吹笛人，你坐下来把这些歌
写在书里，让大家都能念。”

说完这句话，他忽然不见了，

我于是拔了根空心的芦秆。

我做成一支简陋的笔，

并吸取清泉染成了墨水，

我写下我那些快乐的歌儿，

使每个孩子都听得津津有味。

(黄雨石译)*

* 选自《中学生中外名著导读（外国文学卷三）》，骆英主编，辽宁教育出版社，1992年，第53页。

Laughing Song

欢笑歌

Source Text

Laughing Song ^[1]

by William Blake

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy, ^[2]
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it; ^[3]

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths ^[4] sing “Ha ha he!” ^[5]

When the painted birds laugh ^[6] in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread:
Come live, and be merry, ^[7] and join with me,



To sing the sweet chorus ^[8] of “Ha ha he!”

* * * * *

Notes:

[1] In an early manuscript version of this song, written between 1783 and 1784, with the title *Song by a Young Shepherd*, the first two stanzas run as follows, the third being identical with that of the current version:

*When the trees do laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;
When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;*

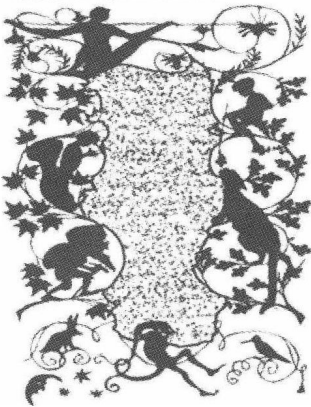
*When the greenwood laughs with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When Edessa and Lyca and Emilie
With their sweet round mouths sing ‘Ha, Ha, He!’*

- [2] Throughout the poem, aspects of the natural world are personified, as if they are capable of identifying with the emotions expressed by the children.
- [3] Blake’s use of rhyming couplets and longer lines stresses the delight in nature and the harmony between nature and man.
- [4] The diction of “sweet, round mouths” of the girls represents their innocence and purity.
- [5] The onomatopoeic words “Ha, ha, he” amplify the joy in

the laughter of the girls.

- [6] The repetition of “laugh” amplifies that the poem *Laughing Song* is an overt celebration of the joys in various forms.
- [7] The imperative to “live and be merry” suggests a desire to seize the day have a joyful life.
- [8] The diction of “the sweet chorus” conjures an idyllic scene.

APPRECIATION



The poem *Laughing Song* is a three-stanza lyric poem, each stanza in turn composed of two rhyming couplets, following the AABB rhyme scheme. This pattern of rhyme scheme is often used by Blake in *Songs of Innocence* to evoke a sing-song quality of children’s songs as well as their innocence and unquestioning joy at life. Likewise, the present poem expresses the simple pleasures that anyone can see in the world around him at any time. Paying no attention to the pain and mortality which is the corollary of life and growth, the poem *Laughing Song* celebrates merriment exhibited by the creation and children at the fecundity of nature in summertime. Such merriment is celebrated in various forms.

In the first stanza, the joy in nature is presented. The green woods, the dimpling stream, the air, and the green hills are said to laugh simply by existing. By humanizing the joy in nature, Blake is trying to spread his belief that “Joyful innocence is here shared equally by man and by nature in its broad diversity and particularity”. In the second stanza, the joy in childhood is evidently beaming:



Mary, Susan, Emily, and so like, are said to sing “Ha, ha, he!” The onomatopoeic words “Ha, ha, he” highlight the joy in the laughter of the girls. Meanwhile, “the meadows laugh with lively green” and “the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene”. Therefore, in the eyes of Blake, the natural world is capable of identifying with the joy expressed by the children. Then, the third stanza addresses the laughter of birds which are lingering near the “table” set by the speaker and his listeners. Since life is brief and everyone should cherish the present, the stanza closes with an invitation to listeners and readers to join in the laughter of the world around them.

In general, in *Laughing Song*, Blake is celebrating nature and the beauty of creation. He is also praising God for enabling man and creation to live in harmony in this “merry scene”. Innocence is presented in *Laughing Song* as a life of harmonious simplicity in nature free from a constrained, self-conscious and sophisticated life.



Target Text

欢笑歌

青青的树林笑出了欢乐的声音，
汨汨的流水笑出了酒窝的细纹；
清风就用了我们的说笑来欢笑，
青青的山头就用它满山的鸟叫；

青草地一片青翠，笑得真清脆，
欢笑的蝈蝈儿不会在热闹里打瞌睡，

我们的小玛丽、小苏珊，还有艾米莉，
张开了可爱的小嘴儿歌唱着“哈、哈、嘻！”

枝头上穿插着欢笑、欢跳的彩鸟，
树荫里我们摆一桌子核桃和樱桃，
快来吧，来生活，来作乐，来跟我在一起，
一块儿歌唱可爱的合唱调“哈、哈、嘻！”

(卞之琳 译) *

* 选自《英语世界》，1998年第3期，第9页。