

“This Is My Body; Given for You”: Reflections on William Blake’s Nonverbal Communication in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

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Abstract

This article sets out to probe into the nonverbal communication (kinesics and other body language) of Blake’s characters in his poetry. We ascertain that more than the poetic narratology, the body language of the characters in Blake’s poems and the visual images therein inform more and give greater meaning to his poetic discourse. In other words, Blake offers the bodies of his characters (*This is my body*) to the readers for a better understanding of his poetic semantics (*Given for you*). The bodies given up to the reader are, put differently, external manifestations of the characters’ internal dynamics. They express joy, sadness, states of mind and other emotions depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Keywords

William Blake, Songs, Kinesics, Experience, Innocence, Body, Nonverbal, Communication

1. Introduction

“This is my Body, given for you” is a biblical statement made by Jesus Christ. The statement is recorded at least four times in the Bible namely in Matthew 26: 26-28, Mark 14: 22-24, Luke 22: 19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11: 24-26. Aside diverse Christian interpretations, what this means is that during the Feast of the Passover Jesus is identifying his body with the bread that he shares with his disciples. By transubstantiation and according to The Catechism of the Catholic Church in Section 1376, by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ. Jesus says it himself thus:

“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.” (John 6: 53-57)

What is of interest to us here is not the drinking of the blood of the “Son of Man” but the eating of “the flesh (body) of the Son of Man”. Understanding the body of Jesus and eating of it gives eternal life to Christians. So Jesus offers his body to the disciples for them to have life but also for Jesus to live in them.

Put differently, therefore, the body of the characters in a poem is offered to the reader for him/her to have deeper insights into the poem, for the poem to have life and for the reader to have a commonality of language with the poem. By linguistic and thematic transposition, a poem can better be understood through the body language of its characters and personae. This is what gives life (meaning) to a poem and puts the reader in the frame of the poem and the poem in the frame of the reader beyond the poem’s corporal frame. The nonverbal elements in a poem, especially the kinesics elements (which language scientists call semiotics) are quintessential to a holistic poetic understanding.

One of the more accessible accounts of body language was developed by Ray Birdwhistell way back in the 1950s. According to Jolly (2000), Birdwhistell estimated that less than a third of our communications with others is purely verbal. Using ideas from the study of written and spoken language, he set out to map the other two thirds-calling his new field of analysis “kinesics”. Where previous theorists had worked from photos and drawings, Birdwhistell leaned heavily on video. He and his team filmed family, social and work situations, then painstakingly annotated every tiny eye flick, gesture and involuntary movement.

Ever since, studies in nonverbal communication (kinesics, body language or paralanguage) have been a burgeoning field of academic investigations. Noor Hanim Rahmat et al. (2019), Tarjani Sheth (2017), Fernando Poyato (2002b) have each examined some aspects of nonverbal communication from either a scientific, linguistics, sociological or journalistic perspective. Lewis (1985) for instance says that nonverbal behaviours have been shown to be learned, meaningful, systematic, and sometimes culture-bound. According to her Kinesics, the science of body behavioural communication has been a neglected factor in second language instruction and research, particularly in the important area of academic listening. Mary Ritchie Key (1975) on the other hand opines that nonverbal communication is an important and little-understood aspect of human communication”. She deals primarily with two aspects of nonverbal communication namely, paralanguage and kinesics. According to her, and rightly so, “Paralanguage” includes vocalizations such as hissing, shushing, and whistling, as well as speech modifications such as quality of voice (sepulchral, whiny, giggly) or hesitations and speed in talking. She also contends that the term “kinesics”

refers to all body movements. She provides discussions on a model for describing nonverbal behaviour in communication; paralanguage; kinesics; sensory communication; the function of silence; the effects upon nonverbal communication of the contexts in which the communication occurs; ways in which individuals' patterns of nonverbal behaviour are affected by such factors as their age, geographical location, historical era, and culture; sign language and other language substitutes; and methodology for research in nonverbal communication. In *Advances in Non-Verbal Communication in the 21st Century*, edited by Fernando Poyato (2002a) the authors do not specifically focus on English poetry. They, however, highlight recent developments in nonverbal communication research and discuss various aspects of nonverbal communication across different contexts and languages. Although not poetry-specific, work provides insights into the broader field of nonverbal communication.

One study that has come close to ours is that of Alma Vančura (2015). It focuses on “the presence of culturally referenced representations of nonverbal behaviour in poetry”. It specifically looks at the presence of culturally referenced nonverbal elements in war poems written during and after World War I. Written representations of such nonverbal elements are seen either as vocal nonverbal (paralanguage) or as nonvocal-nonverbal (kinesics).

The brief survey done above indicates that the study of nonverbal communication in poetry remains a somewhat virgin field of academic investigation. Body parts can easily betray feelings in interpersonal communication and discernible in both the human and animal kingdoms. This, however, is not easily captured in poetic diction. Generally, poetry is defined as literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm. In the “Preface to the Lyrical Ballad”, Wordsworth (2013) defines poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility” (16). What this definition fails to highlight is that those powerful feelings are generally accompanied by some body language by somebody or some personae or lyrical voice in the poems. So in our day-to-day interactions and reactions or actions, it is not only our words that tell how we feel; Our body parts, our vocalic extensions or intonations and other paralinguistic elements generally do also betray such feelings and this also holds true for poetic diction.

Our goal in this study is to identify, analyze and bring to the fore the place of nonverbal communication in William Blake's poetry and how this informs the poetic meaning by capturing Blake's vision in nonverbal imagery.

2. Research Questions

In the study of nonverbal communication in the poetry of William Blake, a number of questions readily come to mind. What is communication? What is nonverbal communication? What is nonverbal in the poetry of William Blake in both his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*? What kind of nonverbal communication does Blake make use of (Kinesics, paralanguage, sensory com-

munication, silence)? Do the body movements described in the poem add meaning to the poetic discourse? What is the relationship between nonverbal communication and Blake's visionary insights?

3. Hypothesis

This article therefore sets out to probe into the nonverbal communication (kinesics and other body language) of Blake's characters in his poetry. We contend that more than the poetic narratology, the body language of the characters in Blake's poems and the captured imagery therein inform more and give greater meaning to his poetic discourse. In other words, Blake offers the bodies of his characters (*This is my body*) to the readers for a better understanding of his poetic semantics (... *Given for you*). The bodies given up to the reader are, put differently, external manifestations of the characters' internal dynamics. They express joy, sadness and other emotions depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves.

4. Definition of Terms

Owing to the plethora of words used above and cognisant of the different shades of meaning they might take, we find it necessary to define them within the context of this study. The key word to be defined here is first, communication, and second, verbal and nonverbal communications. We will also define the different kinds of nonverbal communication such as Kinesics, paralanguage, silence... etc.

The definition of the term "Communication" is very complex because of its broad spectrum. *Merriam-Webster* defines Communication as the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour. It includes both verbal and nonverbal forms of expression, that is, ranging from spoken language to body language and written messages. In several communication theories, Communication involves giving, receiving, or exchanging ideas, information, signals, or messages through appropriate media. This broad definition encompasses body language, speaking skills, and writing.

The term "Nonverbal communication" has been defined to mean several things. [Harrison \(1974\)](#) viewed it as "the exchange of information through non-linguistic signs" (25). [Reusch and Kees \(1971\)](#); [Friesen et al. \(1979\)](#) opined that nonverbal communication covered the spectrum of stimuli not belonging to spoken or written words and mostly focused on purposeful use of gestures, eye and body movements, and material things (Kinesics). [Poyatos \(1975\)](#) however held that nonverbal communication could not only be linked to nonvocal features and, like [Vančura \(2015\)](#) intimates, quoting Poyatos, "nonverbal cues should include not only the dichotomous distinction between verbal (lexical) and nonverbal (kinesic) features but also between vocal and nonvocal features.

[Laver and Hutcheson \(1972\)](#) proposed four distinguishable categories that can serve as means of communication: 1) vocal-verbal (words), 2) vocal-nonverbal

(intonation and paralanguage), 3) nonvocal-verbal (written or printed language), and 4) nonvocal-nonverbal (kinesics). The last category has been expanded to include “Total Body Communication [...], which includes acoustic, visual, olfactory, and tactile means of conveying cognitive (language replaceable) and indexical (speaker-identifying) information [...]” (Poyatos, 1975, 286-287).

Most authors (for instance, Brooks, 1978; McKerrow et al., 1999; Guerrero & Floyd, 2006; Lucas, 2009) now agree that nonverbal communication can be seen as “the emission of signs by all the nonlexical, artifactual and environmental sensible sign systems contained in the realm of culture, whether individually or in mutual co-structuration, and whether or not those emissions constitute behaviour or generate interaction” (Poyatos 2002a, xvii).

However, we consider Nonverbal Communication in this study to adhere to all definitions made above. Put differently, we consider nonverbal communication to mean essentially kinesics and paralanguage which is “the study of body motion as related to the nonverbal aspects of interpersonal communication”.

5. Scope and Methodology

In this work therefore and as earlier indicated, we first identify paralinguistic and kinesics items in some of Blake’s poems. Second, we analyze those items and see how they foster and inform the meaning of the poem against a background of Blake’s vision. The poems chosen for this exercise are “Introduction” (Innocence), “Introduction” (Experience), “Earth’s Answer”, “Holy Thursday” (Innocence), “Holy Thursday” (Experience), “Nurse’s Song” (Innocence), “Nurse’s Song” (Experience), “Chimney Sweeper” (Innocence), “Chimney Sweeper” (Experience), “The Little Girl Lost”, “The Little Girl Found”, “The Little Black Boy” and “London”. The choice of these poems is at once random and yet motivated by three main factors. First, these are thirteen of the most popular and repeatedly analyzed poems from the collection of Blake’s poems, making critiques readily available for review. Second, these poems are representative of what many critics call parallel or partner poems that work together to show the transition from innocence to experience through similar storylines. Finally, these poems serve as a microcosm of the entire set. They represent the main themes and topics that Blake covers throughout the collection entitled *Songs of Innocence and of Experience: Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*.

6. Identification of Nonverbal Elements

To identify the Nonverbal elements in the poems, we have scooped the poems and brought out those elements of body language, movements (kinesics) or attitudes that inform the behaviour of the characters in Blake’s poems identified above. The following table indicates the elements thus identified.

Table 1 below shows nonverbal elements identified in the thirteen most representative poems of William Blake. The first column shows the number, column

Table 1. Kinesics elements identified in thirteen of Blake's poems.

No	TITLE OF POEM	KINESICS ITEMS	NUMBER OF ITEMS
1	Introduction (Innocence)	- And he laughing - He wept ... - He wept with joy... - Sit thee down.... - Vanished	5
2	Introduction (Experience)	- Arise from out the dewy grass - Turn away no more	2
3	Earth's Answer	- Earth rais'd up her head , - Her locks cover'd with grey despair - Break this heavy chain, - That does freeze my bones around - Their innocent faces clean - The children walking two & two in red & blue & green - Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own	4
4	Holy Thursday (Innocence)	- The hum of multitudes was there - Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands - They raise to heaven the voice of song - Beneath them sit the aged men wise	7
5	Holy Thursday (Experience)	- Fed with cold and usurous hand - Is that trembling cry a song...	2
6	Nurse's Song (Innocence)	- Voices of children are heard on the green - Laughing is heard on the hill - The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd ...	3
7	Nurse's Song (Experience)	- My face turns green and pale .	1
8	Chimney Sweepers (Innocence)	- Little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head - White hair - He was quiet , and that very night - Green plain , - Leaping, laughing , they run , - They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind; - We rose in the dark - Tom was happy and warm	8
9	Chimney Sweepers (Experience)	- A little black thing - Among the snow - Because I was happy - And taught me to sing the notes of woe. - And smil'd among the winter's snow - How can Lyca sleep - If her mother weep. - While I close my eyes . - Leopards, tygers play,	5
10	The Little Girl Lost	Round her as she lay ; - And her bosom lick , And upon her neck, From his eyes of flame, Ruby tears there came;	5

Continued

11	The Little Girl Found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arm in arm seven days. - They trac'd the desert ways - Famish'd, weeping, weak - With hollow piteous shriek - Rising from unrest, - The trembling woman prest - In his arms he bore. - Her arm'd with sorrow sore - When he licks their hands: - They look upon his eyes - Fill'd with deep surprise: 	
12	The Little Black Boy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am black, but oh - My soul is white! - Sitting down - She took me on her lap and kissed me - Sunburnt face - Cloud - Golden tent - Thus did my mother say, and kissed me; - To lean in joy upon our Father's knee; - And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair 	10
13	London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - And mark in every face I meet/Marks of weakness, - marks of woe. - Cry of every Man - Infants cry of fear - The Chimney-sweepers cry - The hapless Soldiers sigh - Youthful Harlots curse - New-born Infants tear 	7
TOTAL			

Source: Author.

two indicates the title of the poems, the third column identifies the nonverbal elements in the poems and the last shows the number of appearances in each of the poems.

Analysis shows that nonverbal elements are mostly represented via descriptions of spatial signs, body adaptors and bodily characteristics. Jones (1991) uses the following example to illustrate kinesics represented in written language – in a poem: “He sinks on one knee and now on the other; his upper body tilts in rigid inclination this way and back” (75). It is in line with Jones’ model of identification that we are able to identify the nonverbal elements in each of the poems. Instead of looking at just the movements of the physical body, verbal descriptions of such movements are considered as kinesics. In this perspective therefore, body adaptors are identified. These are movements or gestures that are used to manage or describe our feelings or control our responses. Peter A. Andersen (1999) asserts that body adaptors are behaviours and movements that in-

dicating internal states typically related to arousal or anxiety. They result from uneasiness, anxiety, or a general sense that we are not in control of our surroundings. Some of these adaptors (self-adaptors), he stresses, manifest internally, as coughs or throat-clearing sounds, weeping, crying, jumping, shouting, shrieks and others. (36). Also considered is bodily characteristics. These are defining traits or features about your body that are visible and described visually and verbally.

7. Analysis

A careful observation and study of the table above reveals that there are 60 non-verbal elements in the 13 representative poems under study that correspond to our description above. We also observe that the *Songs of Innocence* have more nonverbal elements than the *Songs of Experience*. The poems that deal with societal issues have more nonverbal elements because the poems are at the centre of Blake's concern for man. Man and his well-being in society are his prime motivation. Innocence is emotionally displayed with mercy, pity, peace and love. On the contrary, the *Songs of Experience* have fewer nonverbal elements than their contrary counterparts because they deal with hard facts and less emotions.

8. Nonverbal Communication in the *Songs of Innocence*

In "Introduction" (Innocence) we have an encounter between a cherubic child from the cloud with an adult Piper in "the valleys wild". The child emanates from the clouds "laughing". The laugh of the child is an indication of its happy mood. It comes directly from the "clouds" (Heaven) where there is joy, laughter and harmony. It is the place of this child, who represents Christ, to contaminate the universe with this beautiful laugh. The channel used by the child is the Piper, a kind of apostle, who has to spread the good news from heaven to the rest of the world in a book that the Piper must write. The Piper's song is so sweet that the child "weeps" with joy. The beauty of the song makes the child ask the Piper to repeat same song. He does and the child "wept with joy to hear". The child then commands the Piper to "sit thee down" and write the song in "a book that all may read". Soon after the instructions which the Piper respects, the child "vanished".

Far beyond the poetic narratology, the kinesics in this poem informs more on the poem's thematic concerns and the relations between the Child and the Piper. The laughter of the child as it descends from the cloud is an indication of at least three things: one, the mystical appearance that signals the elevated status of the child vis-à-vis the Piper, two, the child's profound awareness of the world of innocence that makes it happy and joyous coming from there itself and finally, the child's awareness that humanity has turned its back against Christ and therefore a need to be educated through songs written in a book by the Piper. There is no doubt that because the Piper sings the songs even before the mystical appearance of the child is an indication that the Piper has some knowledge about the child

and where the child comes from. Again, the commanding tone of the child and the reverent execution of the instructions given to the Piper are proof of the fact that the child is a higher version of the Piper. He is ordered to “sit thee down” and this he does obediently. The Piper thus sits to write the songs. The sitting position does not only denote submission to the child but also denotes the seriousness of the subject, a song of “pleasant glee”. The poet signals that the child “wept to hear” the song of the Piper. He also “wept with joy” after having listened to the song again. The weeping here is one of joy. At least the child has found one man who has understood that beyond the corporal frame of existence and the vegetable universe, there is a sublime, Christ. Satisfied that the song will be written in a book “that all may read”, the child “Vanished”. In other words, the child disappeared, probably into the cloud from where he appeared. By vanishing, the child brings to the fore its spiritual dimension. Like Christ, it is both physical and spiritual, of a higher cosmic level.

“Holy Thursday” (Innocence), like “Introduction” (Innocence) also abounds in kinesics elements. On Holy Thursday (Ascension Day) orphans from charity schools, under the supervision of “Grey-headed beadies” are dressed in uniform and taken to church at the Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London to praise and thank God for the kindness shown to them by the society. They are compared to the flowers of London and their numbers compared to the Thames River. While in church they “sit with radiance all their own” and like a “mighty wind” or “harmonious thunderings” they raise “to heaven the voice of song”. David Fairer (2002) in “Experience Reading Innocence: Contextualizing Blake’s “Holy Thursday” ascertains that:

“Holy Thursday” is “a record” of an actual event; the children stroll and smile and wave. They have emotions of anticipation, holiday excitement, even a little pride and gratitude, in which the grown-ups share. (536)

Such a reading treats the scene almost photographically, filling out the detail with the responsiveness of an actual spectator. The strolling, smiling, waving and other kinesics elements sorted out in the poem display the mood of these poor orphan children.

The kinesics elements identified in the poem include “innocent faces clean”, “two & two in red & blue & green”, “Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own”, “hum of multitudes”, “raising their innocent hands”, “raise to heaven the voice of song”, “sit the aged wise men”. The “innocent faces” is a photographic picture of naivety and helplessness. The uniform they put on and the colours thereto are intended to portray the orphans as well taken care of by the society. While inside the cathedral, the children sit with the radiance of their uniform and their innocence, or somewhat religious hearts. This portrays their orderliness and the fact that they are conscious of the charity bestowed on them by the society. Their maturity is only betrayed by the hum that generally characterises children in a group. This paralinguistic element is fostered by the hand that they raise. They are raising their innocent hands as a sign of adoration and

thankfulness to God and to man. This public display of recognition is enhanced by the spiritual display of praises to the Almighty to whom they raise their voices in prayer and song. This again, confirms their innocence. The “aged wise men” who sit beneath them is Blake’s way of saying that the children are higher versions of the aged men because they (the children) are, in their displayed innocence and genuine behaviour, closest to God and to the sublime. Baden Ian Eunson (2012) ascertains that:

Body language involves the physical behaviour of our bodies—eye contact, posture, gesture, orientation and so forth—while nonverbal communication embraces all body language communication, and also includes clothing and adornment, environmental factors and even the manner in which we use time. (256)

From the standpoint of Eunson, clothing and adornment are also elements of nonverbal communication. The “flowers of London Town”, the “thousands of little boys and girls” in the poem are dressed in “red & blue & green”. These colours transmit a message and their interpretation helps in enhancing the meaning of the poem. A chromatics interpretation of red, blue and green gives us interesting insights into the general understanding of the poems. Although these colours are interpreted differently depending on cultures, the generally acceptable symbolic representations stand out clearly. Red is the colour of fire and blood, so it is associated with “energy, war, danger, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love”. Blue is the colour of the sky and sea. It is often associated with depth and stability. It symbolizes “trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth, and heaven” and Green is the colour of nature. It symbolizes “growth, harmony, freshness, and fertility”. Green has strong emotional correspondence with safety. By extrapolation therefore, the uniform of the orphan children symbolizes all what they are namely lovely, passionate, trustworthy, confidence, faith, truth, harmony, and freshness, etc. Little wonder then that the children sit with radiance and confidently, “like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song/OR like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among”.

In tandem with the poem above, “Nurse’s Song” (Innocence) shares in the same thematic punchline of children’s submissiveness to their caretakers but whose innocence makes them higher versions of their adult caretakers. The “Nurse’s Song” is a conversation between children and their nurse. The nurse of the title listens as the children under her care play on the green hills. As the day draws to a close, she urges the children to come home. The children plead that the sun has not yet set and they “cannot go to sleep”. They argue by analogy that “the little birds fly/And the hills are all covered with sheep,” and if nature has not put her children to bed, why should the nurse require that her charges go to sleep? It is the Nurse who introduces the argument from nature by claiming the darkening sky as a sign that bedtime drew near. The nurse, however, accedes to their request and tells them, “Well, well, go & play till the light fades away/And

then go home to bed". To this all-embracing response, "The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd/And all the hills echoed". The last line, "And all the hills echoed," implies that just as the children have expressed their desire to emulate nature and the birds and sheep still wandering about, nature in turn emulates the children in their joyous laughter.

Underneath the apparent simplicity of the poem lies a profound meaning fostered by the body language of the children and the characterisers related to paralanguage. The "voices of children are heard on the green", "laughing is heard on the hill", "The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd..." The vocal nonverbal (paralanguage) or nonvocal-nonverbal (kinesics) elements in the poem bring to the fore the joy expressed by the children, their connection with nature and aspects of nature like the green hills, the sheep, the little birds and the adult nurse who, her adult age notwithstanding, is in harmony with the children and the cosmos. The leaping of the "little ones" is mimetic of their joy. It is the external manifestation of their internal dynamics which is further expressed by the vocal shouting and laughing. A photographic display of the children, the nurse, the birds, the sheep, the greenery and the evening is a demonstration of a beautiful pastoral landscape where joy and happiness flow and where even the hills echo the gleeful atmosphere.

The same joyful atmosphere is brought out in the poem "Chimney Sweepers" (Innocence). As in the "Nurse's Song" the chimney sweepers are happy in spite of the torture and apparently sad state in which they find themselves, that of sweeping the chimneys in the early cold hours of the morning. The lyrical voice in the poem is a young chimney sweep, a boy who has been sold into labour by his father. The sweep meets a new recruit to the chimney-sweeping gang named Tom Dacre, who arrives terrified. After the speaker tries to reassure Tom, Tom dreams of an angel who sets the chimney sweeps free, allowing them to play in green fields and then ascend to heaven. This dream seems to suggest that if the boys are obedient workers and remain innocent, they get into heaven. The cry, the white hair, the quietness, the green plain, the leaping, laughing and running, the rising upon clouds, and sporting in the wind are strong nonverbal symbols that enhance the understanding of the state of mind of the chimney sweeps. Crying is an expression of sorrow and pain. This reflects Little Tom Dacre's first emotional state as a new chimney sweeper. His tears are, however, transformed into joy after a conversation with one of his colleagues and the liberation dream that Tom has. He is told reminded that if he remains innocent the soot will not "spoil his white hair". The colour white symbolizes purity and innocence. White is associated with light, goodness, innocence and virginity. It is considered to be the colour of perfection. White means safety, purity, and cleanliness. What the lyrical voice insinuates in the poem is that no matter the pain and suffering inflicted on Tom by the adults who sell him to work as a chimney sweeper, his purity, innocence and closeness to godliness cannot be affected. This reassures Tom and so he remains quiet. The liberation dream gives him and other sweeps renewed energy to set to work. In the dream they are set free and the first thing

they do is run down a “green plain”. The chromatics here is symbolic of a pastoral landscape that is a natural attraction for children. As the colour of nature, it symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness, and fertility. It is only in such an environment that they can leap, run and laugh. These symbolize joy, happiness and freedom. After bathing in the river, the children are said to “rise upon clouds and sport in the wind”. The cloud symbolizes a celestial realm. It also reflects freedom in the same way as the wind. The children thus freed, regain their childhood innocence and become, once again, the little angels that they are.

9. Nonverbal Communication in *Songs of Experience*

As opposed to the *Songs of Innocence* where the nonverbal cues generally reflect and symbolize peace, freedom, purity, harmony and innocence, the *Songs of Experience* reflect disharmony, impurity, lack of freedom and stressful relationships. Brief, they symbolize the adult world of corruption and repression.

In “Introduction” (Experience) is an invocation to listen to the Bard, a prophetic poet “Who Present, Past, & Future sees/Whose ears have heard/The Holy Word”. The Bard is therefore beyond time. He has witnessed the Word of God (a reference to Christ) calling to, and weeping over, the soul of fallen humanity. With this in mind, the Bard, or possibly the Holy Word, addresses the Earth, encouraging it to stir and be renewed in light and/or return to God, or its innocent state, since the “morn”/“break of day” is imminent. “Arise from out the dewy grass” and “Turn away no more” are two powerful expressions used in the poem. “Arise” is an action verb. The Bard calls on Earth (Mankind) to stand up and leave its corrupt nature. As a vocalic nonverbal expression, the action requires a movement of the body. What this insinuates is that the Earth is on the floor. Being on the floor signifies failure, defeat, sin, and perhaps resignation to fate. The sins of the Earth have outweighed her. The bard, however, thinks that in spite of the corrupt nature of the Earth it can still change its ways and when it does, it should “turn away no more”. “Turn away” also necessitates action. The bard is therefore calling on earth to change its corrupt nature, rise to the word of God and stay with it without turning back to sin.

Earth’s answer to the call of the Bard in the accompanying poem “Earth’s Answer” is pathetic and signifies the profundity of Earth’s corrupt nature that has held it down in perpetual darkness. Earth replies to the bard’s call from the “Introduction” by stating that Reason and the “Selfish father of men” have imprisoned her. She is chained in cold and darkness on the “watery shore,” the bounds of the materialistic world, which is mentioned in the “Introduction.” She seeks daylight. She argues that the creative forces of life such as spring blossoms, the sower, and the plowman, can only bring life by daylight. She asks that the bard, or the reader, “break this heavy chain” that binds even free love. Blake echoes the Garden of Eden account in Genesis, where the sin of knowledge of good and evil, and disobedience of God’s command, led Adam and Eve to leave the noonday sun and hide themselves from their Creator’s likely wrath.

“Earth rais’d up her head” (line 1), her “locks cover’d with grey despair” (line 5) and her bones freeze. The kinesics movement of earth raising-up her head means that its head was down, or that she was lying with her face down which indicates shame or the fact that she is chained and in pain. The poem tells us that Earth did so “From the darkness dread & drear” (line 2). This movement supplements the fact that her position and situation are of pain and despair. Earth has developed “locks”, it is unkempt because it has been on a stagnant position. Even the colour of the locks is “grey”. The colour grey is an emotionless, moody colour that is typically associated with dull, dirty, and dingy, conservative, loss or depression. This therefore further enhances the poetic meaning. The colour of the locks tells of the depressed state of Earth and the dire need to return to its natural state of felicity before the original sin in the Garden of Eden.

“Holy Thursday” (Experience) and “Nurse’s Song” (Experience) are two other poems that speak volumes of the contrary state of the human soul. In “Holy Thursday” the lyrical voice begins with a series of questions: how holy is the sight of children living in misery in a prosperous country? Might the children’s “cry”, as they sit assembled in St. Paul’s Cathedral on Holy Thursday, really be a song? “Can it be a song of joy?” The speaker’s own answer is that the destitute existence of so many children can only impoverish the country no matter how prosperous it may be in other ways. For these children the sun does not shine, the fields do not bear, all paths are thorny, and it is always winter. The poem therefore debunks the values of innocence displayed in the Song of Innocence. Our interest, however, is on the nonverbal aspect of the poem, “that trembling cry”. In the poem of innocence, the children’s song is described as “harmonious thunderings” whose beauty keeps the congregation spellbound. Here it is considered as a trembling cry. A trembling cry is caused by stress, depression and trauma. Dr Kathryn Watson (2018) opines that trembling cries are caused by psychogenic tremors which are generally the result of anxiety. She states that:

When your body is subjected to stress, it goes into fight-or-flight mode. Stress hormones flood your body and speed up your heart rate, blood pressure, and your breathing. Your body prepares to deal with the stressor, interpreting the anxiousness as a signal that you’ll need to stand your ground or escape from danger. Your muscles become primed to act, leading to a trembling sensation, twitching, or shaking.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety-shaking#shaking-and-tremors>

From the above explanation, it is evident that the cry of the children from the orphanages is synonymous with their stress and traumatic situations. The trembling cry is a clarion call for change in the way society treats them. They have no voice and badly need to be heard. It is the same voiceless situation with the children in “Nurse’s Song” (Experience). The nurse is representative of all other nurses and adults in society who do not care about the freedom and independence of children. The nurse gets angry when the children play in the green. We are told that her “face turns green and pale”. From a kinesics interpretation her face undergoes a transformation that denotes hate and jealousy. From a chro-

matics analysis, a green face is a face that displays open jealousy. It is sharply contrasted with the green field that denotes fertility and liberty. Set against this background the freedom and liberty of the children in the green field make the nurse jealous and angry with a green face. The jealousy is fostered by the paleness of the face. A pale face is a reflection of regret. So by linguistic extrapolation, the nurse's green and pale face show that she is both and jealous of the children and regrets that she cannot now enjoy the freedom that the children enjoy. Consequently, she has to chastise them and forcefully send them back home without letting them express their own opinion as seen in the same poem of innocence.

In a similar manner, the "Chimney Sweeper" children in the poem of experience go through the same traumatic experiences. Unlike the children in the "Nurse's Song" (Experience) who have no voice, the chimney sweeps identify their torturers. They know that the "weep, weep, weep" sound made by the brushing of the chimney with their brooms under a freezing weather is not a song of joy. They use irony to describe their drastic and pathetic situation. Mockingly they say they are "happy" and "And smil'd" among the winter snow. The colours used in the poem further enhance the pathos. "A little black thing among the snow" (line 1) is an indication of two contrasting colours. The colour "black" is arguably synonymous with the unknown or the negative. The colour black represents grief, strength, seriousness, power, and authority. "Snow" is an inherently positive colour. It is associated with purity, virginity, innocence, light, goodness, heaven, safety, brilliance, illumination, understanding, cleanliness, faith, beginnings, sterility, spirituality, possibility, humility, sincerity, protection, softness, and perfection. The two colours pitted against each other reveal the purity of the chimney sweepers' original background darkened by adult hatred and cruelty. The contrast between black and white furthers the wickedness of parents and their hypocrisy because after selling their children to work as chimney sweepers in industries hurry "to praise God and his Priest and King/Who make up a heaven of our misery". (lines 11-12).

"The Little Girl Found" (Innocence) and "The Little Girl Lost" (Experience) are two poems that should be read alongside each other. We note here that "The Little Girl Found" was first listed among the poems of Innocence but when William Blake published his collection of poems, he placed the poem under "Songs of Experience" due to its eschatological themes. In "The Little Girl Found" the parents of Lyca are searching for Lyca in great sorrow that seems to be shared by the land. For seven days they search and for seven nights have dreadful dreams about her fate. Finally, the mother feels at the end of her strength. Her husband carries her. They then come across a crouching lion who overpowers them. But he proves benevolent. They look into his eyes and see he is not a lion but a regal spirit. He tells them not to be afraid but to follow him to his palace where Lyca sleeps. They follow him and find their daughter sleeping amongst tigers. They now live in a lonely dale without fear of the wild beasts. However, the story is told, it is incomplete without a study of the nonverbal communication in the

poem. In the search for Lyca the parents are “Arm in arm” (line 7). In their tireless search for Lyca the parents are worn out and look “pale” (line 13) and “shriek” (line 16). Both parents are tired and the woman trembles (“trembling woman”) with fatigue but the husband bears her “in his arms” (line 19). The lion they meet on their way “licks their hands” (line 29). As “They look upon his (the lion’s) eyes” (line 31) they are “Fill’d with deep surprise” (line 32). All these elements of nonverbal communication denote love, affection and mutual understanding. Being arm in arm, licking one’s hands, carrying a tired wife in one’s arms denote love. The poetic meaning is thus enhanced through these gestures that show that there is a perfect harmony between the parents of Lyca and the Lion in an environment far removed from human habitation. What this means is that both the animate and inanimate, the flora and the fauna, the material and the immaterial, the finite and the infinite all share a commonality of language—that of mutual affection. This mutual affection makes them find the lost child sleeping quietly “Among tygers wild”. The parents of Lyca thus make the wild their habitation. They have gone full cycle from the wild to the human kingdom and back to the wild. What this means is that there is peace, mercy, pity and love in the wild as opposed to the human society where these values are conspicuously absent. Put differently, Lyca and her parents have gone back to their natural state of felicity, the Edenic society.

On the contrary, “The Little Girl Lost” tells the story of a young girl who finds herself wandering into the jungle where she is lost. She is later picked up by a lion who ends up taking good care of her and at the same time, protecting her from all the other animals of the forest. Blake returns to his prophetic voice from the first two poems, envisioning a future in which the Earth has been unbound from the chains of Reason and seeks her creator. In that day, the wild desert in which the little girl will wander later in the poem becomes “a garden mild”. The seven-year-old girl, Lyca, represents the human soul, lost and wandering “in desert wild” as she searches for meaning or solace. Unlike the “Little Boy” poems, Lyca’s parents seek after her with desperate hearts. In her wandering, Lyca cannot rest as long as her mother weeps for her. Eventually her mother stops weeping long enough for the girl to go to sleep, and it is here that she finds the beginning of her own paradise. The wild animals, most notably a lion and lioness, surround Lyca’s sleeping form but cannot or will not harm her because she is a virgin.

The lion again represents Jesus Christ, as both the image of the lion of the tribe of Judah and his own reference to a palace indicate. The innocent child is taken from her earthly suffering by death and given comfort and rest for eternity. The parents, dedicated to finding their lost daughter, are similarly rewarded, although the poem is reticent on the details: do they cease from fears because they are in paradise, or simply because they are dead? Either way, their suffering is ended by a more dangerous vision of God than that often presented in the Christianity of Blake’s day. Lyca closes her “eyes” while “Leopards, tygers play” as she “lays” in quietude. The eyes closed and laying comfortably while wild

animals play around her are elements of nonverbal communication that once again denote harmony in the Garden of Eden.

In “The Little Black Boy” A black child tells the story of how he came to know his own identity and to know God. The boy, who was born in “the southern wild” of Africa, first explains that though his skin is black his soul is as white as that of an English child. He relates how his loving mother taught him about God who lives in the East, who gives light and life to all creation and comfort and joy to men. “We are put on earth,” his mother says, to learn to accept God’s love. He is told that his black skin “is but a cloud” that will be dissipated when his soul meets God in heaven. The black boy passes on this lesson to an English child. He explains to the English child that his white skin is likewise a cloud. He vows that when they are both free of their bodies and delighting in the presence of God, he will shade his white friend until he learns to bear the heat of God’s love. Then, the black boy says, he will be like the English boy, and the English boy will love him. That is the surface meaning of the poem.

In this poem, the elements of nonverbal communication undoubtedly enhance the poetic meaning. The colours “Black” and “White” are contrasting colours that represent opposite values by Western definitions. Manlio Brusatin (1991) in *A History of Colour* holds that Black is universally a symbol of death, separation, and slavery or submission. According to Paulin Ryan (1976) the Hausa culture of Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire and Chad, black denotes negative and socially undesirable qualities and things that harm. Other interpretations of black, we have earlier said, are given by different people as related to different cultures. The most propagated interpretations are, however, that black is evil and devilish while white is angelic, pure, subtle and heavenly. Whatever the interpretations, the little black boy is conscious that colour is just a shade because all children, their colour notwithstanding have the same blood colour and should love each other once that shady cloud is unveiled. The poem thus centres on a spiritual awakening to a divine love that transcends race and colour.

The action where the black child’s mother “sitting down” takes him “on her lap and kissed me” are nonverbal elements that connote love and affection, almost a selfless dedication to the education of the child to make love a priority, colour or race notwithstanding. According to the Black child’s mother, only the “Cloud” veils the human form divine. The “cloud” therefore becomes an obstacle, a veil, which once taken away fosters love among the different races. Skin colour, which is a factor only in this earthly life, becomes irrelevant from the perspective of heaven. Body and soul, black and white, and earth and heaven are all aligned in a rhetorical gesture whereby both Black and White children will lean upon the “Father’s knee”. The father’s knee here is the all-embracing love of God to all its children, colour or no colour. This basically confirms the stance of Christian resignation. The theology of the poem is one that counsels forbearance in the present and promises a recompense for suffering in the hereafter.

Finally, "London", unlike the other poems is an earthly poem and a scathing revelation of the ill effects of industrialization. It describes a walk through London. The speaker paints the city as a pained, oppressive, and impoverished city in which all he finds is misery. The poem places particular emphasis on the sounds of London. All he meets in the streets of London are "Marks of weakness, marks of woe" (4), "Chimney-sweepers cry" (9), "hapless Soldiers sigh" (11), "youthful Harlots curse" (14) etc. The poem is, more than anything, a fierce critique of humankind's failure to build a society based on love, joy, freedom, and communion with God. The nonverbal elements in the poem, as in other poems above, enhance the poetic meaning. Unlike in the poems of innocence where love is the centrality, "London" has only images of pain, stress and sorrow. The nonverbal elements of "marks" on faces, "cry" of men, chimney sweepers and infants, the "curse" of "youthful harlots" and soldiers "sigh". Crying, cursing, sighing and marks on faces as vocalic nonverbal elements foster the lugubrious and dismal atmosphere in the poem and provoke a call for change of the drastic human condition in industrial London.

10. Conclusion

Blake's nonverbal elements, as described above, therefore foster his poetic meaning. The visual images and the symbolism of his nonverbal language bring out the essential contrast between the poetic process and the nature of discursive or assertive thought. His poetry is thus mythopoeic and not mythological precisely because it is pegged on images, symbols and metaphors which contain conceptual implications and incorporate a point of view which is not a secretive cabala or a mystery open only to the initiates. Blake conceives of himself, and of poets in general, as prophets who reveal, but do not clothe in mystery, the truth that is reality. Blake is not a sorcerer or mystic, Neoplatonist or gnostic. Blake's poetry illustrates the principle that the universal must be dealt with, not by huge general premises, but by the revelation of the particular object in the poetic image. Thus, his poetry employs ideas without being committed to a thesis. Blake is an artist, not a propagandist. The work of imagination is not based ultimately on any kind of statement, because both the statement and its opposite may be consistently contained in the poetic unit. The nonverbal aspects of Blake's poetry are therefore enhancers to his call for a peaceful and sane society where humans are humane, loving and caring. In decrying the ills of society and provoking a change of mindset, behaviours and attitudes, he uses verbal paintings and non-verbal aspects of communication with telling finality which this study has unveiled with near clinical precision.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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