



www.parafrasando.it

WILLIAM BLAKE

Blake the man

William Blake was born in London in 1757 and he died there in 1827. His origins were humble and he remained poor all his life.

Blake the artist

When he was child his father sent him to a drawing school. Then he became an apprentice (apprendista) to a famous engraver (presso un famoso incisore). He began to draw the monuments in the old churches of London from which derived his love of the Gothic style. Later he studied at the Royal Academy of Art.

Blake broke with the conventions to respect perspectives and proportions and the standards of realistic representation and created a new kind of art which emphasised the power of the imagination. He created his own method (un proprio metodo) for making prints (per fare stampe) that combine picture and poetic text called "illuminated printing". Much of Blake's painting dealt (riguardano/trattano) with religious subjects.

Blake the poet

His poetry is regarded as early Romantic because he rejected (rifiuta) neoclassical literary style and themes. He affirmed the importance of imagination over reason and believed that ideal forms should be created not from observations of nature but from inner visions (visioni interiori).

The most accessible of Blake's works are the short lyrical verses:

- Songs of innocence – The narrator is a shepherd (pastore) who receives inspirations from a child that plays his songs celebrating (che suona le sue canzoni che celebrano) the divine in all creation. Childhood is viewed as (l'infanzia è vista come) the symbol of innocence, a state of the soul connected (uno stato d'animo collegato) with happiness, freedom and imagination. These poems are written in a simple, musical language, rich in symbols drawn (presi) from the Bible and Christian pastorals. Songs of innocence were produced before the French Revolution when Blake's enthusiasm for the liberal ideas was high (era alto).
- Songs of experience – was produced when the period of the Terror was at its height (era al suo apice) and a more pessimistic view of life emerges in these poems. Experience, identified with adulthood, coexists with and completes Innocence, thus providing (fornendo così) another point of view on reality (sulla realtà).

Blake the prophet

Blake published also prophetic books (libri di profezie) in which he created a complex personal mythology and invented his own symbolic characters (propri personaggi simbolici). Blake's prophetic works are very difficult and obscure.

One of these was: The marriage of heaven and hell (il matrimonio tra il paradiso e l'inferno) that is a mixture of aphorisms, anecdotes, proverbs in which Hell (inferno) and Satan represent liberty and energy while Jehovah is a malevolent god (mentre Geova è un Dio malvagio).

In Vision of the Daughters of Albion Blake attacked the conventions of sexual morality, particularly those imposed on women.

Blake influenced British art through the Pre-Raphaelites and the Irish poet W.B. Yeats.

"Complementary opposites"

The dualism characterises man's life and he defines (definisce) this dualism "complementary opposites": good and evil, male and female, reason and imagination, love and hate, cruelty and kindness (gentilezza). Without contraries there is not progression, contraries are necessary to human existence. The two states coexist not only in the human being but also in the figure of the creator who can be at the same time the God of love and innocence and the God of energy and violence.

Imagination and the poet

The man knows the world through (attraverso) the imagination and not through the perception. Imagination or "the divine vision" means to see more into the life of things. God, the child and the poet have this power of vision. The Poet therefore becomes a sort of prophet (Il poeta diventa così una sorta di profeta).

Blake's interest in social problems

Blake was concerned (era coinvolto) with the political and social problems of his time (nei problemi politici e sociali del suo tempo): he supported (parteggiò) the abolition of slavery (schiavitù) and asserted (sostenne) the egalitarian principles of French Revolution. He sympathised with the victims of industrial society and condemned (condannò) the injustices consequent of the Industrial Revolution.

Style

His poems have a very simple structure, his verse is linear and rhythmical and is characterised by frequent use of repetition.

There is a highly use of symbols. For example the child, the father and Christ represent the states of innocence, experience, and a higher (maggiore) innocence.