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BEHIND THE MASK:

A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM BOLCOM'S

SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE

A Thesis in

Music Theory

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to utilize semiotic analysis as a method to determine the intended musical meanings within William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. More specifically, this research will begin with biographical information about Bolcom and a brief glimpse into his compositional catalogue and style. I will continue with an exploration of the field of semiotics, or sign study, complete with a chronological evolution of the domain. This section of the research will also explore how the field can be applied to musical analysis following the models created by Leonard G. Ratner, V. Kofi Agawu, Robert S. Hatten, and Arthur B. Wenk. In order to gain a clearer perspective of Bolcom's possible intended musical meanings, this research will also delve into the biographical information of William Blake and explore the literary criticisms associated with his two-part collection of poetry *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Next, I will utilize semiotics to analyze Bolcom's composition for signs and topics, which will help to define the composer's musical "mask." In conclusion, the accepted meanings of Blake's poetry as discussed by the literary criticisms will be compared to the musical meanings of Bolcom's composition to determine if and how the composer has musically captured the literary intentions of the author. Specific attention will be paid to the three poems from *Songs of Innocence* and three from *Songs of Experience*, which illustrate dualities or contraries in both Blake's lyrics and Bolcom's music. These poems include "The Lamb" and "The Tyger," "The Chimney Sweeper" and "The Chimney Sweeper," and "Holy Thursday" and "London." These poems will most clearly demonstrate Blake's fascination with contraries, dualities, and ironies while also providing prime examples of Bolcom's musical masks and determine his intended musical meanings.
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CHAPTER 1 - WILLIAM BOLCOM

William Bolcom has been described as an unrepentant eclectic composer of contemporary music.¹ This description is supported by a perusal of his compositional catalogue,² which contains myriad works for orchestra, band, choir and voice, chamber ensemble, and keyboard instruments in every genre “from ragtime and theatre scores to chamber and symphonic works.”³ Additionally, Bolcom regularly performs an eclectic array of cabaret songs, show tunes, and popular songs with his wife and fellow Grammy winner, Joan Morris.⁴ The claim is also supported by Bolcom’s lengthy list of awards from a variety of organizations including two Guggenheim Fellowships, two Koussevitzky Foundation Awards, the Marc Blitzstein Award from the Academy of Arts and Letters, the Henry Russel Award (University of Michigan), a Pulitzer Prize (1998), the 2006 National Medal of Arts, and four Grammy Awards in 2008 for the recording of his setting of William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and of Experience.⁵ This collection of songs alone demonstrates Bolcom’s eclectic compositional style as it includes settings of nearly four dozen poems encompassing a similar number of musical genres performed by a full orchestra complete with saxophones, electric fiddles, vocal soloists, and mixed chorus. Steven Blier writes,

The Blake piece runs the gamut from country and western, rock, blues, and reggae numbers, to sections reminiscent of Mahler and Berg, neoclassicism, atonal music, and folk songs. Leonard Bernstein may have

been eclectic, but when it comes to mixing genres, no one has outdone
William Bolcom.⁶

Through their reviews, many critics have reinforced William Bolcom’s reputation as an eclectic. In a 1990 concert review of Bolcom’s Piano Concerto, performed by Emanuel Ax and the New York Philharmonic, Donal Henahan of the New York Times compares the composer to a minister presiding over the marriage of Classical and popular music in America.⁷ Just five years later, Bernard Holland declares, “Mr. Bolcom works hard to erase the lines between the elite and the vulgar, the intellectual and the visceral, the select and the popular.”⁸ Robert Karl describes Bolcom’s eclecticism more concretely, suggesting one of his compositions might include sections of atonality, expressionism, American popular music, and formal Classical elements, meaning the only constant in Bolcom’s music is its diversity.⁹ Very plainly, Daniel Webster writes in his review of Bolcom’s Symphony No. 5, “Eclecticism, rather than a post-modern philosophy appeared to guide Bolcom in his musical choices.”¹⁰

Bolcom received his formal compositional training from such diverse educators as George Frederick McKay and John Verrall (University of Washington), Darius Milhaud (Mills College, CA), Olivier Messiaen (Paris Conservatoire), and Leland Smith (Stanford University) while garnering pianistic inspiration from Madame Berthe Poncy Jacobson

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⁶ Steven Blier, program notes, New York Festival of Song, 23 and 25 September 2008.
¹⁰ Daniel Webster, “Philadelphia Orchestra: Bolcom Symphony No. 5 [premiere],” Musical America, 110/3 (May 1990), 64.
and Eubie Blake,\textsuperscript{11} all of whom Bolcom asserts have contributed to his eclectic writing style.\textsuperscript{12} Additionally, Bolcom writes, “I am in love with the many genres of music and have learned that it is important to respect the genre you are contributing to if you want its expressive potential in your music.”\textsuperscript{13}

In Bernard Holland’s \textit{New York Times} article, “Composing a Kinship Between Classical and Pop,” Bolcom expands upon his eclecticism claiming his music is an attempt to clarify the relationships between the genres of the past and the future. He believes there are similarities, which, if realized, could benefit the declining field of contemporary music composition.\textsuperscript{14} Bolcom also addresses his love for juxtaposing musical genres in his article “The End of the Mannerist Century.” Within this essay, Bolcom asserts that commonalities can be found within the music of all genres, and how an amalgamation of these elements can help to expand appreciation and understanding not only of these foreign styles, but also of ourselves and of others.\textsuperscript{15} Describing his setting of \textit{Songs of Innocence and of Experience}, Bolcom reflects,

\begin{quote}
The whole piece is about dualities or ‘contraries,’ as Blake called them. The whole set of poems is about how to deal with these incredibly surprising juxtapositions, and make some sense of them. But they’re all built out of this same principle of contraries, which turns out to also be a kind of overarching aesthetic in my own music.”\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{12} Wright, \textit{Unrepentant Eclectic}.
\textsuperscript{14} Holland, \textit{Composing a Kinship}, C14.
\textsuperscript{16} Anastasia Tsioulcas, “Bolcom’s Epic ‘Songs’ Finally Get Their Due,” \textit{Billboard}, 116/45 (6 November 2004), 12.
\end{footnotes}
Bolcom’s use of compositional dichotomies or “contraries” has continued to pervade his music in the years since *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* creating a style that goes beyond eclecticism.

William Bolcom completed his musical setting of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in 1983. Bolcom himself describes the piece as "a musical illumination of the poems of William Blake."\(^1\) The work was premiered in 1984 by the Stuggart Opera Orchestra under the direction on Dennis Russell Davies, and has since been performed by the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra and Choirs, the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, The Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and the Pacific Symphony Orchestra.\(^2\) A recording on the Naxos label of the U.S. Premiere by the University of Michigan was awarded four Grammy awards.

It is the belief of this researcher that *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* epitomizes the eclecticism of William Bolcom in a way no other compositions within his catalogue can. The work combines elements of the orchestra, band, choral, opera, solo voice, piano/keyboard, chamber music, and jazz genres in which Bolcom typically composes. Specifically, this epic composition involves the combined forces of a massive symphony orchestra (including saxophones and several chamber ensembles), a solo tenor, a solo baritone, solo sopranos, a solo boy singer, a solo contralto, a solo mezzo-soprano, a solo coloratura soprano, a solo country singer, a speaking actor, a solo rock singer, a solo folk singer, a six-voice madrigal group, a large symphonic choir, and a children's choir. Also necessary are a pipe organ, a piano, an electric piano, a melodeon, a celesta, a harp,

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2. Ibid.
a harmonica, an electric guitar, an acoustic guitar, an electric bass, two electric violins, a mandolin, and a fiddle tuned one half step sharp.\textsuperscript{19} Of his eight orchestral symphonies, only his \textit{Fourth Symphony} incorporates solo voice, and only his \textit{Eighth Symphony} includes choral forces. In the concert band genre, Bolcom has composed only eight pieces, a relatively small portion of his massive catalogue, many of which were written for special occasions such as the installation of a new university president (University of Michigan) or for a specific player or players such as saxophonist Donald Sinta and his quartet. Again, only one of these pieces includes a vocal component, and only the relatively recent \textit{First Symphony for Band} could even be considered eclectic. Bolcom's choral output is more extensive than his concert band catalogue, but relatively few of these compositions utilize all of the myriad forces with which Bolcom has experimented throughout his career. These same arguments can be applied to most of the remainder of Bolcom's compositional catalogue.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore, while the inclusion of Bolcom's entire catalogue may allow for a general overview of his compositional styles, a thorough examination of \textit{Songs of Innocence and of Experience} will lead more specifically to the compositional devices, musical topics, and multiple masks Bolcom utilizes within his music.

It is the goal of this researcher to complete a semiotic analysis of selected movements from Bolcom's setting of \textit{Songs of Innocence and of Experience}, identify his typical compositional techniques or "topics," combine those techniques into musical "masks," and determine how Bolcom's use of these masks assists with the musical

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, ii.
illumination of Blake's poetry, eliciting the intended audience response. In order to ensure that all readers are equally aware of the foundations upon which this research is based, I will begin with a brief history of semiotics followed by a discussion of musical topics and how they have been employed to analyze music of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Utilizing the lists of topics created by Leonard B. Ratner, V. Kofi Agawu, Janice Dickensheets, Márta Grabócz, Danuta Mirka, and Arthur B. Wenk, I will develop a set of characteristic topics and masks that inform Bolcom's compositional style as though it were a musical language. Additionally, I will research the poetry of William Blake, paying specific attention to the critical analyses of his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Mind*. With these analyses in mind, I intend to show how Bolcom's masks apply to the myriad of musical selections within *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and analyze the composer's use of semiotics as a method for paralleling the contextual meanings of William Blake.
CHAPTER 2 - SEMIOTICS

A Brief History

The idea of semiotics, or the analysis of signs and the functioning of sign systems, has existed since ancient Greeks such as Plato analyzed the origin of language itself in the fourth century B.C.E. In the following century, Aristotle studied the meaning of nouns and St. Augustine soon joined the field of study. Other precursor semioticians include William of Ockham in the 1300s and John Locke in the 1600s. Locke specifically composed his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1690 to shed brighter light upon the psychological workings of the human mind.  

Two centuries later, in the latter portion of the 1800s, the first true semiotician came into being in the person of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure whose teachings prompted a posthumous publication of his course notes titled *Course in General Linguistics.* Unlike previous researchers who studied the evolution of language over time, Saussure examined the inner-workings of language at a given point. In essence, Saussure studied language synchronically rather than diachronically. Within his research, Saussure defined language as a "system of signs that express ideas," but also as a network of elements that signify only in relation to each other. This research allowed Saussure to make comparisons and analyze the relationships between *parole* (actual spoken words) and *langue* (language as a whole).

Saussure's study of semiotics is based on the concept of a two-pronged model or *dyad.* The dyad consists of the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the meaningful

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22 Ibid, 9.
23 Ibid, 9.
form of the dyad, or what Freud would call a "sound-image" or "sound pattern." In other words, the signifier is the visual, aural, or tactile catalyst that provokes the mental sounds we hear when we think. The signified, in turn, is the concept the signifier evokes or the meaning the "sound-image" generates. Saussure's suggests the signified is a mental concept, and therefore, different for each person who experiences a given signifier. There is, therefore, no natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The relationship is entirely conventional, and will only transpire within a certain culture or linguistic system.

Kaja Silverman, in her book *The Subject of Semiotics*, states, "Semiotics involves the study of signification, but signification cannot be isolated from the human subject who uses it and is defined by means of it, or from the cultural system which generates it." Many future semioticians share this belief, including the first American researcher, Charles Peirce.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) built the research for his text *Collected Papers* on that of Saussure, but showed much greater flexibility in his beliefs. Peirce expanded Saussure's two-pronged dyad into a triadic theory composed of a representamen, an interpretant, and an object. Within this tripartate structure, the representamen is the sign itself, and the object is that which the sign stands for. This object can be direct (the exact object the sign represents), or indirect (an object that is independent of the sign, but leads to the production of the sign). The third, and most complex aspect of Peirce's structure is the interpretant. The interpretant can be thought of

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29 Ibid, 3.
as the mental image or effect created by the sign/representamen that leads to understanding the object. Peirce writes,

A sign is something which stands, to somebody, for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea.32

Silverman corroborates this claim saying,

In much the same way, a portrait both resembles and indicates its object, at least for the spectator who enjoys what Peirce calls "collaborated acquaintance" with that object (i.e. for the spectator who, as a consequence of some prior experience with the object has conceptual access to it.)33

Simply put, different images, sounds, and feelings hold different meanings depending on the person who experiences them.

In the twentieth century, Russian researcher Valentin Volosinov (1895-1936) focused on the concept of parole as the main area of study while Danish researcher Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965) studied langue as the principle topic. Hjelmslev followed the research of Saussure by studying language at a given point in time and analyzing signs within a society. Among his most influential proposals was the idea that a sign's denotation is not equal to its connotation. In other words, the literal meaning of a sign is not necessarily what the sign means to a specific society. However, these signs are often

32 Ibid, 29.
put in place with the intent of inciting a desired result based on conventional relationships within a society.\textsuperscript{34}

From 1954-1956, French semiotician Roland Barthes (1915-1980) expounded upon this belief in a series of satirical articles he published titled \textit{Mythologies}. In these writings, Barthes attempts to show how cultural beliefs are not necessarily based on truths or facts, but result from associations intended by the creators of signs. Specific "myths" Barthes discusses in his articles include the connotations of "striptease, the New Citroen, the foam that is a product of detergents, the face of Greta Garbo, steak and chips, and so on."\textsuperscript{35} In this way, Barthes builds upon the beliefs of Louis Hjelmslev showing that a sign's denotation, or literal meaning, is not necessarily parallel with its connotation, or the meaning it holds to a certain person, society, or culture. He calls this connotative meaning "ideology" or "myth," and uses his research to show how through the use of a medium such as text, photography, or music, an artist can elicit a desired response from an audience without literally stating this intention. Barthes goes one step further claiming the denotation of a sign is based on a first-order sign system (i.e. the literal sound or meaning of a word) while the connotation of a sign is a second-order system (i.e. spoken language) that depends on previous first-order systems to exist. Most importantly, Barthes brings to the forefront the idea of cultural codes, which assist with giving signs their connotative meaning.\textsuperscript{36} However, while Barthes held fast to this philosophical idea of an overall system of societal signs, even he could not necessarily account for the cultural diversity and constant change that semiotics encompasses.

\textsuperscript{34} Paul Cobley, \textit{Introducing Semiotics}, 43.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 44.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 48.
As a result of this shortcoming, twentieth century anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss (b.1908), Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), and Michael Foucault (1926-1984) continued the practice of studying language by analyzing the relationship between signs. This work gave rise to a movement known as structuralism. The basic tenet of structuralism deals with the value of signs rather than their literal meaning. By assigning value to a sign it allows that sign to be compared to other signs in the same society or culture and also to be exchanged for dissimilar signs with similar values. This idea of structuralism became nearly synonymous with the term semiotic analysis by the mid 1960s before the writings of Jacques Derrida began a revolution against structuralist views.37

Leading up to France's student uprisings in May of 1968, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), along with help from Lacan and Foulcault, challenged the beliefs of structuralism claiming they left too much to humanism. This post-structural research insists signs do not cause reactions, but that a person's beliefs and reactions are previously present and are a functional convenience of society. In essence, these philosophers claim we become predisposed to associate certain "signifiers" with certain "signifieds" so quickly in our minds that we cannot legitimately say we are consciously making a denotative association. Instead, it is a learned association that society instills as one garners life experience.38 However, despite this belief in the natural association between signifiers and signifieds, Derrida challenges Saussur's theory of the dyad, instead supporting Peirce's theory of unlimited semiotics. More specifically, Derrida

37 Ibid, 66,
38 Ibid, 71.
claims that though a sign has meaning, what it means is not isolated, but exists within a
greater collection of other signs and meanings.\textsuperscript{39}

French linguist Émile Benveniste (1902-1976) represents some of the most recent
beliefs regarding the study of semiotics. Benveniste's most important contributions to the
field are his views on the relationship between \textit{langue} and \textit{parole}, the separation of which
he vehemently opposes. He argues that signs, specifically linguistic signs, are ever
changing, and that issues related to human subjectivity serve to augment their erratic
nature. Benveniste proposes that language (\textit{langue}), discourse (\textit{parole}), and subjectivity
are forever entwined with each other and that signs will consistently have new meanings
due to differences in society and culture.\textsuperscript{40} Benveniste himself explains it most clearly:
"We are not able to say 'the same thing' in systems based on different units."\textsuperscript{41} Other
recent semioticians with similar philosophies include Jurij Lotman who hypothesizes that
culture defines the meaning of signs, Roman Jakobsen whose research suggests that
change in the meaning of signs is inevitable as societal beliefs are altered, and Umberto
Eco whose research represents the most current beliefs in the field of semiotics.\textsuperscript{42} Eco
believes the study of semiotics now applies to zoology, olfactory signs, tactile
communication, paralinguistics, medicine, kinesics and proxemics, musical codes,
formalized language, written languages, natural languages, visual communication,
systems of objects, plot structures, text theory, cultural codes, aesthetic texts, mass
communication and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Kaja Silverman, \textit{The Subject of Semiotics}, 32.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{41} Paul Cobley, \textit{Introducing Semiotics}, 71.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 155.
\textsuperscript{43} Kaja Silverman, \textit{The Subject of Semiotics}, 5.
Semiotics Applied to Musical Analysis

Throughout the 20th-century, the philosophical ideas of semiotics have begun to alter the way music historians and theorists understand music of the late 18th-century. This new interpretive approach has an historical basis as is evident in a letter written by Mozart to his father in 1781, within which he describes in detail the compositional processes at work in his opera Die Entführung, and how he expects those techniques to effectively communicate his intentions to his audiences. More recently, scholars such as Leonard G. Ratner, Elaine Sisman, V. Kofi Agawu, Harold Powers, Robert S. Hatten, Wye Jamison Allanbrook, and Arthur B. Wenk have utilized these semiotic techniques to analyze music of the eighteenth as well as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The following analyses of Bolcom's Songs of Innocence and of Experience will mimic the research model proposed and applied by this body of research.

Leonard G. Ratner was the first to explore the idea of musical signs used by Mozart and other eighteenth century composers, and organized these topics into a "thesaurus of characteristic figures," paving the way for topical analysis of Classical music. In his book, Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style, Ratner organizes topics into types and styles where types include compositional practices that encompass entire pieces and styles are characterized as figures within a piece. Moreover, these categories are flexible in that broad types such as marches or minuets can be considered styles when they appear as short figures within a larger selection.

46 Ibid, 9.
In her analysis of Mozart's *The 'Jupiter' Symphony*, Elaine Sisman modifies Ratner's twofold concept by transforming his *types* category into *dance types* and adding *rhythms* and *genres* to the categories of topics. Additionally, Sisman retains Ratner's *styles* as a category. By including *dance types* and *rhythms*, Sisman shows topics are categorized by the way they are defined in the music. For example, *dance types* are defined by metric and gestural elements while *rhythms* are defined simply by rhythmic patterns. Sisman also delineates how *styles*, which both she and Ratner define as small portions of musical material, are not equivalent to *genres*, which both define as full compositions and categories of music.\(^47\)

V. Kofi Agawu further amends the categorization of musical topics in his text *Playing With Signs*. Agawu's theory assumes the existence of a topical universe that includes all possible musical ideas. This universe, writes Agawu, "like its parent world of the sign, is potentially open, so that one cannot -- and need not -- specify the total number of topics current in the eighteenth century."\(^48\)

In his article "Reading Mozart's Music: Text and Topic, Syntax and Sense," Harold Powers expands upon Ratner's "universe," creating a bipartate structure including *types* and *textures*. Within his *types*, Powers includes four subcategories (dance types, metric or rhythmic, genre, and style), which bear a striking resemblance to Sisman's four categories. Within the *textures* category, Powers includes those of Agawu's topics that do not fit into the four subcategories of *types*, basically serving as a "catch all" for the remaining topics.\(^49\)

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Within the foreword to Robert S. Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, topics are defined as "richly coded style types which carry features linked to affect, class, and social occasion such as church styles, learned styles, and dance styles." Hatten claims this collection of eighteenth century topics served to musically evoke feelings or emotions and even illustrate images in the minds of listeners based on cultural connotations of that time period. He continues the refinement of Ratner's original concept by producing a four-pronged, fairly general theory including categories such as pictoralism (word painting, imitation of nature), topics (dance types and shorter styles), style (regional, national, location specific pieces), and codes of feelings and passions (based on pace, movement, tempo, intervals, and motives for affect). It should be noted that Hatten is the first analyst since Ratner who utilizes the term "style" in two separate ways. He claims, these categories and terms may not help to clearly organize topics, but they are the terms utilized by eighteenth century composers and theorists, and we are, therefore, left to utilize them in our analyses. Powers also notes, "Topics and style were taken for granted by writers at the time, who advert to them just often enough to leave modern analysts and critics frustrated at the lack of any really systematic exposition."

Musicologist Wye Jamison Allanbrook, in her article "Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart," organizes Ratner's dance types into a metric hierarchy based on time signatures and division of beat. In essence, she creates a spectrum of metrical affects, which illustrates the relationships between stately and spirited music as well as low class and

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53 Harold Powers, "Reading Mozart's Music," 28
high class music. This organization specifically allows Allanbrook to analyze Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. She claims eighteenth-century composers were,

"in possession of something we can call an expressive vocabulary, a collection in music of what in the theory of rhetoric are called *topoi*, or topics for formal discourse. They held it in common with their audience, and used it...with the skill of a master craftsman. This vocabulary, when captured and categorized, provides a tool for analysis which can mediate between the [works] and our individual responses to them, supplying independent information about the expressive content of the arias and ensembles... [Each] musical *topos* has associations both natural and historical, which can be expressed in words, and which were tactically shared by the eighteenth century audience... An acquaintance with these *topoi* frees the writer from the dilemma he would otherwise face when trying to explicate a given passage: that he can at the one extreme do no more than detail the mere facts and figures of its tonal architecture, or at the other merely anatomize his private reactions to a work. By recognizing a characteristic style, he can identify a configuration of notes and rhythms as having a particular expressive stance, modified and clarified, of course, by its role in its movement and by the uses made of it earlier in the piece. In short, he can articulate within certain limits the shared response a particular passage will evoke."

As the concept of topical categorization continues to evolve, additional questions continue to arise as well. What is a topic? What is not a topic? Why should we organize topics? What do categories tell us about topics? Does a topic have meaning? Does the location of a topic within a piece of music change the meaning of the topic? Sisman writes,

What is a topic and what is not? Is every tremolo passage in a minor key a "reference" to *Sturm und Drang* or every

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imitative passage "learned style?" Is a "fanfare" the same at
the grand opening of the piece and in a calmer interior
context? Does the composer intend the audience simply to
recognize topics, or to understand more subtle meanings?\textsuperscript{55}

Agawu responds to these questions, highlighting what he calls "two crucial facets
of topical analysis."

Perhaps the most fundamental limitation of any topical
analysis is its lack of consequence...While topics can
provide clues to what is being "discussed" in a piece of
music - thus making them authentic semiotic objects - they
do not seem able to sustain an independent and self-
regulating account of a piece; they point to the expressive
domain, but they have no syntax. Nothing in Ratner's
scheme tells us \textit{why} the singing style [in the first movement
of Mozart's Prague Symphony] should come after the
outbursts of sensibility, or why fanfare is used toward the
conclusion of the [first] period.\textsuperscript{56}

Most importantly, this compositional tradition assumes the existence of a competent
audience, allowing the composer to communicate with them through understood musical
styles and dance forms. In his opinion, this ability to recognize a composer's intended
reaction can be garnered through experiences and education, but is not naturally inherent
within listeners. Also of importance is the ability of a composer to move in and out of
topics or combine topics into sequences, which may suggest an overall narrative or
programmatic nature of a given piece. With a nod to the influence of Lawrence Kramer,
Agawu nicknames this compositional technique \textit{structural rhythm}. Agawu suggests,
however, the existence of a narrative plot may only be present in the mind of the analyst.
He believes this existence remains optional rather than obligatory and should be
considered a "point of departure," but never a "total identity." Agawu further explains the

\textsuperscript{55} Elaine Sisman, \textit{Mozart: The 'Jupiter' Symphony}, 46.
\textsuperscript{56} V. Kofi Agawu, \textit{Playing With Sings}, 20.
semiotic approach to musical analysis claiming the recurring question throughout his text is not "what does this piece mean?" but, rather, "how does this piece mean?" 57 Music semiotician Jean-Jacque Nattiez summarizes this approach to musical analysis claiming, "the goal of a musical semiotics is to inventory the types and modalities of symbolic references to which the music gives rise, and to elaborate an appropriate methodology to describe their symbolic functioning." 58 Agawu continues,

In other words, it seems more useful, in the face of the multiplicity of potential meanings of any single work, to frame the analytical question in terms of the dimensions that make meaning possible; only then can we hope to reduce away the fanciful meanings that are likely to crop up in an unbridled discussion of the phenomenon, and to approach the preferred meanings dictated by both historical and theoretical limitations. This is one reason why I have borrowed certain concepts from semiotics, for semiotics provides a useful searchlight for understanding the nature and sources of meaning, even if it ultimately evades - or declares irrelevant - the "what" question. 59

Agawu firmly avers that "topics mirror certain expressive stances, but they never assume the role of fundamentally structuring Classic music." 60 However, he does describe how the semiotic approach to musical analysis brings into question the concept of musical structure with regard to topics. First, Agawu discusses the fact that topics need not be present in every measure of every piece claiming topics have no "teleological obligation." Ironically, the absence of a standard musical topic may, in fact, be a topic in itself. Secondly, however, when studying a selection for the presence of musical topics, the analyst must not limit himself to locating just one topic at any given point in the

59 V. Kofi Agawu, Playing With Sings, 5.
60 Ibid, 32.
music. Topics may exist concurrently and are organized hierarchically to determine the dominant element of reference. Lastly, Agawu suggests that many of the topical classes present in current analysis are quite broad and allow practically every note composed to be included. Both advantages and drawbacks exist due to the all-encompassing nature of these topical classes.61

In lieu of forcing structural meaning into topics, Agawu suggests that any musical analysis should include some aspect of tonal organization in order to be complete in the opinion of many analysts. He claims, however, that many topics suggest a specific tonal organization (i.e. a musette suggests harmonic stasis while *Sturm und Drang* suggests harmonic unrest). It is these structural tonal characteristics, in Agawu's opinion, that help to give topics their accepted cultural connotations.62 By including tonal organization in his analyses in this way, Agawu illustrates his belief that musical topics influence expressive but not structural analysis. Hatten, conversely, believes there to be a strong link between topics and expression as well as between topics and form. He specifically claims that obvious oppositions between topics clearly reveal structure even if there is no interaction between expression and form.63

Within a later chapter of *Playing With Signs*, Agawu puts into practice this concept of musical topics to analyze compositions by Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. The topics employed within the text include the following.64

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61 Ibid, 30.
62 Ibid, 32.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. alla breve</th>
<th>10. fantasy</th>
<th>19. ombra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. alla zoppa</td>
<td>11. French overture</td>
<td>20. opera buffa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. amoroso</td>
<td>12. gavotte</td>
<td>21. pastoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. aria</td>
<td>13. hunt style</td>
<td>22. recitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. bourrée</td>
<td>14. learned style</td>
<td>23. sarabande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. brilliant style</td>
<td>15. Mannheim rocket</td>
<td>24. sigh motif (Seufzer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. cadenza</td>
<td>16. march</td>
<td>25. singing style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. sensibility</td>
<td>17. minuet</td>
<td>26. Sturm und Drang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. fanfare</td>
<td>18. musette</td>
<td>27. Turkish music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Agawu's Topics I

Agawu maintains that even his extensive list is not exhaustive due to his selectivity and the fact that additional topics will arise as necessary to analyze future compositions. In a later publication, *Music as Discourse*, Agawu further develops his compendium to include sixty-one topics he titles *The Universe of Topics for Classic Music*.66

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65 Ibid, 30.
Music scholars have also developed a topical approach to account for a wide range of nineteenth and twentieth century musical styles. Agawu references several of these additional researchers whose writings have assisted with musical analysis. Within her article "Nineteenth-Century Topical Analysis," Janice Dickensheets introduces twenty-four topics, each of which references a specific compositional technique or style.⁶⁷

Table 2. Agawu's Topics II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Alberti bass</th>
<th>21. fantasia style</th>
<th>43. musette</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. alla breve</td>
<td>22. French overture</td>
<td>44. ombra style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. alla zoppa</td>
<td>24. fugal style</td>
<td>45. passepied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. allemande</td>
<td>25. fugato</td>
<td>46. pastorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. amoroso style</td>
<td>26. galant style</td>
<td>47. pathetic style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. aria style</td>
<td>27. gavotte</td>
<td>48. polonaise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. arioso</td>
<td>28. gigue</td>
<td>49. popular style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. bound style or stile legato</td>
<td>29. high style</td>
<td>50. recitative (simple, accompanied, obligé)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. bourrée</td>
<td>30. horn call</td>
<td>51. romanza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. brilliant style</td>
<td>31. hunt style</td>
<td>52. sarabande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. buffa style</td>
<td>32. hunting fanfare</td>
<td>53. siciliano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. cadenza</td>
<td>33. Italian style</td>
<td>54. singing allegro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. chaconne bass</td>
<td>34. Landler</td>
<td>55. singing style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. chorale</td>
<td>35. Lebewohl (horn figure)</td>
<td>56. strict style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. commedia dell'arte</td>
<td>36. low style</td>
<td>57. Sturm und Drang (storm and stress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. concerto style</td>
<td>37. march</td>
<td>58. tragic style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. contredanse</td>
<td>38. middle style</td>
<td>59. Trommelbass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. ecclesiastical style</td>
<td>39. military figures</td>
<td>60. Turkish music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Empfindsamer style</td>
<td>40. minuet</td>
<td>61. waltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sensibility)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. fanfare</td>
<td>41. murky bass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. archaizing styles</th>
<th>9. demonic style</th>
<th>17. pastoral style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. aria style</td>
<td>10. fairy music</td>
<td>18. singing style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. bardic style</td>
<td>11. folk style</td>
<td>19. Spanish style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. bolero</td>
<td>12. gypsy music</td>
<td>20. style hongrois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Biedermeier style</td>
<td>13. heroic style</td>
<td>21. stile appassionata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. chivalric style</td>
<td>15. Italian style</td>
<td>23. virtuosic style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. declamatory style</td>
<td>16. lied style or song style</td>
<td>24. waltz (Ländler)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Dickensheets' Topics

In her study of the music of Franz Liszt, Mártá Grabócz utilizes sixteen more specific topics she calls "classemes," which have defined meanings in musical language.68

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1. appassionato, agitato
2. march
3. heroic
4. scherzo
5. pastoral
6. religioso
7. folkloric
8. bel canto, singing
9. bel canto, declamatory
10. recitativo
11. lamenting, elegiac
12. citations
13. the grandioso, triunfando
14. the lugubrious type deriving at the same time from apassionato and lamentoso
15. the pathetic, which is the exalted form of bel canto
16. the pantheistic, an amplified variant of either the pastoral theme or of the religious type

Table 4. Grabócz’ Topics

Researchers who study the music of Gustav Mahler have, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, often considered the notion of musical signs giving rise to a list of eighteen topics that Agawu includes in his text.⁶⁹

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1. nature theme  
2. fanfare  
3. horn call  
4. bird call  
5. chorale  
6. pastorale  
7. march (including funeral march)  
8. arioso  
9. aria  
10. minuet  
11. recitative  
12. scherzo  
13. bell motif  
14. Totentanz  
15. lament  
16. Ländler  
17. march  
18. folk song

Table 5. Agawu's Topics III

Lastly, Agawu references an unpublished categorized catalog by Danuta Mirka who separates her topics into three groups: music associated with dances (Group A), music associated with ethnicities (Group B), and music that does not fit either category (Group C).  

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Table 6. Mirka's Topics

These extensive and often vague lists signify exactly why Agawu cautioned musicologists against creating such broad topical classes so that any compositional technique (every note) might be included in a semiotic analysis. In an attempt to rein in this topical proliferation, Danuta Mirka has written a series of unpublished propositions defining musical topics as "musical styles and genres taken out of their proper context and used in another one." Under this definition, minuet, waltz, Gypsy music, and Ländler would be considered topics, but general compositions practices such as specific time signatures (3/4, 2/4, alla breve), effects such as sigh motif, amoroso, and Mannheim rocket, and accompanimental/melodic figures such as Alberti bass, murky bass, and Trommelbass should not be included. These techniques in combination with each other may lead to specific topics, but should not be considered topics on their own.

Due to these compositional techniques, Agawu's lists appear somewhat clouded, however, they consist mainly of musical styles and structures that could be considered
topics. Dickensheets' list consists mainly of nineteenth and twentieth century styles, thereby acting as an addendum to Agawu's topics, but unable to stand on its own as a complete list. Grabócz' list also serves a specific purpose having been created to analyze the music of Franz Liszt, and the list in Figure 5 was created solely for use in Mahlerian analysis. Not surprisingly, the list which best exemplifies the definition of topic put forth by Danuta Mirka is the list created by Mirka herself. Not only does she exclude simple compositional practices and effects, she further categorizes her list of musical topics into structural styles and nationalistic styles and also includes a group for topics that fit neither of these definitions. The previous five examples were clearly created for use in the analysis of specific pieces or composers, and may therefore include superfluous topics to assist with the researchers' assessment.

Arthur B. Wenk builds upon the method of utilizing topics to analyze music in his text *Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music*. Within, he develops five musical "masks" defining each one as specific combination of certain aspects within Debussy's style. By defining Debussy's musical style, Wenk is able to pass several of the Impressionist composer's pieces through a figurative sieve, "catching" and identifying specific compositional techniques and placing them into one of Debussy's five masks. These masks are significantly more complex than the topics utilized by Ratner and Agawu, sometimes combining two or more topics into a single "mask." In actuality, these masks fit more closely into the definition of topic presented by Mirka as they are, in essence, a combination of several compositional techniques utilized by the composer to create a musical style or genre removed from its proper context.

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It is the intention of this researcher to utilize a similar approach, identifying individual topics as well as fusions of multiple topics, or "masks" Bolcom uses in his settings of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. These topics and masks will be analyzed following the templates of Agawu, Ratner, Hatten, and Wenk to determine not merely what the individual movements mean, but *how* they mean. These possible denotations will be compared to the accepted literary analyses of Blake's original poems to determine if and how Bolcom's masks assist with painting the pictures Blake wished to create. Finally, it should be emphasized that the extroversive style of semiotic analysis present within this research intentionally does not include the idea of introversive semiotics associated with the Schenkerian "Beginning-Middle-End" paradigm. However, the researcher does recognize the importance and validity of this form of analysis. Through this semiotic analysis, the researcher hopes to bring to fruition the words of Robert Hatten,

> Interpretation is the beginning and the end of all musical understanding. Whether as performers, theorists, or historians, we are constantly interpreting sounds through time as meaningful - in other words, as music. The varieties of patterns (one clue to the intentionality behind a musical work) to the reconstruction of a style; from the processing of musical relationships to the adducing of their expressive correlates; from the kinetic energy transmitted by a performance to the abstract speculation occasioned by the contemplation of a work. Each of these approaches to meaning is relevant from a semiotic standpoint. As a performer and a listener I have experienced emotion and thoughts directly evoked by the music, and I have also known that aesthetic distance from which one recognizes and appreciates expressed states without an empathetic internalizing of actual emotions. Each of these responses is semiotically relevant.\(^\text{72}\)

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CHAPTER 3 - WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born on November 28, 1757 in the Soho district of London, England.\textsuperscript{73} His father, James, earned a living as a shop owner and hosier, (also known as a haberdasher) and supported the family in their home at 28 Broad Street.\textsuperscript{74} Blake’s mother, Catherine, shared James’ Protestant religious views, and the two raised their five children (William was the second) as devout Christians who opposed the Church of England.\textsuperscript{75} Early in his childhood, William Blake showed amazing vision and imagination. At age four he claims to have seen “God put his head to the window” of the young boy’s bedroom, and later to have seen the prophet Ezekiel under a tree in the fields. Additionally, Blake once witnessed a tree filled with angels and angels among the haymakers in a meadow.\textsuperscript{76}

As a child, Blake received no formal schooling, but learned to read and write at home.\textsuperscript{77} By age ten, he entered Pars’ Drawing School in “The Strand” where he spent four years studying the art of sketching.\textsuperscript{78} Following this educational experience, Blake entered into the service of Master Engraver James Basire who taught his apprentice the craft of copperplate engraving, after which Blake continued his service at the Royal Academy and as an illustrator for local publishers.\textsuperscript{79} Throughout his adolescent

\textsuperscript{75} Grevel Lindrop, "William Blake," 33.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Geoffrey Keynes, \textit{An Exhibition of the Illuminated Books of William Blake},” 11.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
education, Blake remained actively involved in political uprisings, supported small-scale revolutionary efforts, and helped to spread religious fervor throughout London.\(^{80}\)

In 1782, Blake married Catherine Boucher, a smart but uneducated daughter of a Battersea Market gardener. He taught her to read and write through lessons that made it easy for her to adopt his radical lifestyle, and, though they had no children, the two remained married for twenty-five years.\(^{81}\)

Early in their marriage, Blake supported his wife working as a designer and as an engraver of book illustrations. In 1784, partnered with a former fellow-apprentice named Parker, Blake opened a print shop in the house next door to his birthplace on Broad Street. During these years, Blake's younger brother, Robert, came to live with the couple and worked as an apprentice to Blake. However, in 1787 at the young age of 19, Robert became ill and died. Soon thereafter, Blake ended the partnership with Parker and relocated his family around the corner to Poland Street. It was in this home that Blake first began to create his Illuminated Books.\(^{82}\)

Throughout the final decade of the 1700s, Blake, along with his contemporaries Thomas Stothard, John Flaxman, Henry Fuseli, Thomas Butts, and George Cumberland corresponded regarding new techniques of printing from copper plates in order to save time, money, and materials. Many of these ideas were of no consequence to Blake, having spent many years in the engraving and printing business; however, their discussions, along with discussions Blake had held with his late brother Robert, did lead to the creation of a new technique in 1788.

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Essentially, Blake's process is a reversal of the standard method of printing from copper plates. Rather than etching text into the copper, filling the etchings with ink, and pressing the plates onto paper with enough force to transfer the ink to the paper, Blake pioneered a technique he referred to as "wood-cutting on copper." Through his methods, Blake would create a stereotype of the page he wished to print by writing the text and illustrations onto the plate with an acid-resistant chemical and then "biting" the plate with acid leaving the text and illustrations in relief. The process was, undoubtedly, more complex, but allowed Blake to print the desired number of copies with less energy and much less waste.\(^3\)

Using his new method, Blake continued to make a living though the commissions afforded him only a meager lifestyle. In 1800, with assistance from the poet William Hayley, Blake moved to a cottage at Felpham near Chichester on the Sussex coastline. Hayley had aspirations of guiding Blake into a lucrative life as a conventional artist. However, while living in Felpham, Blake engaged in an altercation with John Scholfield, a private in the Royal Dragoons who refused to leave Blake's property. When Blake forcefully removed the man by pushing him fifty yards down the street to the local inn, Scholfield claimed that Blake had made seditious remarks about King and country, an offence punishable by hanging during wartime.\(^4\) Though he was acquitted, the experience served to provide Blake with the belief that “ominous forces were at work in the contemporary world. This belief led him to complicate the symbolic obliquities by which he veiled the unorthodoxy of his political, religious, and moral opinions and the radicalism of the many allusions to contemporary affairs that he worked into his

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poems."\textsuperscript{85} Despite this unfortunate event, Blake calmed considerably during the final twenty years of his life, and when he died on August 12, 1827, he did so "singing the glories he saw in heaven"\textsuperscript{86} and leaving behind him a plethora of engravings, sketches, and poetry to be studied and enjoyed for centuries to follow.

While Blake spent a majority of his life as an engraver attempting to earn a living as a visual artist, much of what is studied and analyzed today is the poetry Blake so masterfully composed during his lifetime. According to Harold Bloom, "[Blake's] poems, which are always poems, are astonishingly ambitious, even for the Romantic Age, into which he survived. They propose nothing less than to teach us how to live, and to explain to us what has made it so hard to live as fully human rather than merely natural beings."\textsuperscript{87}

Blake authored one of his most famous collections of poems, \textit{Songs of Innocence}, in 1789. He later joined them with twenty-six contrasting poems labeling the complete works \textit{Songs of Innocence and of Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul}, creating a masterpiece of Romantic Era poetry. The epic combination is "an astonishingly rich work, at once simple and complex, contradictory and unified."\textsuperscript{88}

According to the \textit{Critical Survey of Poetry}, "Since these songs are from within these [opposing] states, [they] are not presented in their ideal forms. They are 'corrupted' and display disproportionate contraries. Theoretically, each contrary state acts as a corrective to the other, and contraries in \textit{Songs of Innocence and of Experience} are suggested either in the text of the poem or in the accompanying design."\textsuperscript{89} In \textit{Songs of Innocence}, Blake appears to be writing from an adolescent point of view; however, this text illustrates an

\begin{footnotes}
\item[85] Ibid.
\item[88] Grevel Lindop, \textit{William Blake}, 42.
\end{footnotes}
imperfect world as seen through inexperienced, harmless, naive eyes, which are guiltless and free from sin. These poems "celebrate the spontaneous joy, trust, and integrity of early childhood," but are laden with overtones and ironies that challenge readers to question their own beliefs. On the other hand, within *Songs of Experience*, Blake assumes an omniscient role, bringing to light the true meanings illustrated by the *Songs of Innocence*, often by directly pairing poems from each set in direct contrast with each other. These writings are paired due to their similar subject matter and similar storylines, but oppose each other due to their conflicting points of view. Within these parallel poems, Blake first illustrates the concepts of innocence with narratives and descriptions of purity or inexperience. These stories often include satire and irony as Blake utilizes phrases and stories within the *Songs of Innocence* that hint at and will eventually be seen as elements of experience. In this way, the author suggests there is always a hint of experience or even sin present within even the most innocent among us. Bloom claims,

the relation of the matched pairs of poems, where they exist, does not appear to be schematic, but varies from instance to instance. The matching of "The Divine Image" and "The Human Abstract" seems to be the crucial one, since it shows the widest possibilities of the relationship, and demonstrates vividly what readers are likely to forget, which is that Innocence satirizes Experience just as intensely as it itself is satirized by Experience, and also that any song of either state is also a kind of satire upon itself.

Speaking of the entire collection of poems, Alexander Gilchrist, the foremost scholar and first biographer of William Blake, writes

91 Harold Bloom, *The Best Poems of the English Language*, 308.
Blake's lyrics] tell us of that immemorial wisdom which Heaven gives to poetry. And the invocation to the Muses has the great melody accent and an assured classic note, though Blake had scarcely read a line of the Latin poets whose verse it half recalls. 'Tis hard to believe these poems were written in the author's teens. But, in fact, Blake, writing at the end of the century, did, in the innocence of his mind, the service of an inspired child to English lyric. It was the deliverance it most needed, after the high rhetoric and formal graces of the recognized masters a generation before him.

Over the past two centuries, the beauty of the poems within these two dichotomous texts has fascinated literary analysts and composers alike, leading to numerous musical settings of individual poems by Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Frandsen, Sven-David Sandström, and Benjamin Britten.94 Most recently, however, contemporary American composer William Bolcom composed a musical setting of the complete Songs of Innocence and of Experience.

Within the following chapter, the researcher will explore literary criticisms of several of the more popular poems from Songs of Innocence and of Experience in an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of Blake's intended meaning for these poems. These analyses will include "The Lamb," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "Holy Thursday" from Songs of Innocence, and "The Tyger," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "London" from Songs of Experience. Afterward, utilizing a semiotic approach, the researcher will analyze the musical settings, observing the similarities and differences between Bolcom's apparent intentions and the supposed meanings of the original Blake texts. These analyses will focus mainly on the individual poems and the musical settings Bolcom has

composed for them, but will also explore Blake's contraries and how Bolcom has musically paralleled those dualities within his composition.
CHAPTER 4 - LITERARY ANALYSIS

If we are to determine how the topics and signs within Bolcom's musical setting of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* illustrate similar meanings to those intended by Blake, the accepted literary meanings must first be determined. Under utopian circumstances, all forty-five of Blake's poems would be analyzed, critiqued, and compared to Bolcom's fifty-five compositions. However, in order to maintain a manageable amount of material, and to fit within the parameters of this thesis, six poems have been selected as a representation of Blake's entire collection. These poems, "The Lamb," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "Holy Thursday" from *Songs of Innocence*, and "The Tyger," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "London" from *Songs of Experience* were chosen for several reasons. First and foremost, these are six of the most popular and repeatedly analyzed poems from the collection, 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, representing the main themes and topics Blake covers throughout the collection.
The Lamb

This literary analysis of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* will begin with "The Lamb," which Edward Larrissy refers to as the "best-known of the Songs of Innocence."\(^95\) On the surface, a lamb is a soft, gentle, young animal, and while often preyed upon by those of a more fierce nature, is quite docile and harmless. Within the first verse of "The Lamb," Blake uses words such as delight, softest, wooly, bright, and tender to illustrate this "emblem of innocence"\(^96\) and gives the reader a tangible image of the naïveté these poems represent. According to Grevel Lindop, a Blake biographer, "Innocence is trustful, loving, and confident, and sees the world through the radiance of a divine vision in which there can be no ultimate wrong."\(^97\)

This entire verse is composed of a series of questions asking the lamb:

Little lamb, who make thee
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?\(^98\)

Within the second verse of "The Lamb," the questions posed by the first verse are answered suggesting God as the creator of the innocent animal.

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb

\(^{96}\) Ibid.
\(^{98}\) William Blake. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.*
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!\(^99\)

Within these lines, each noun and pronoun referring to God is capitalized, a practice common in The Bible, church hymns, and most other religious texts, verifying this assumption that the heavenly Father is the creator of the innocent lamb. Blake extends this creator-creation relationship even further asserting that God himself is referred to as an innocent lamb when pictured in human flesh as the meek, mild, little infant Christchild. The images of a child and a lamb, combined with the reference to the baby Jesus as the Lamb of God, illustrate the harmony between all creatures and the reciprocal warmth that marks all relationships.\(^{100}\) Lindop states plainly, "Humanity and nature are one in God."\(^{101}\)

According to the *Critical Survey of Poetry*,

The equation is formed thus: the lamb is Christ the lamb, the child is Christ as a child, and the lamb and the child are therefore joined by their mutual identity with Christ. In Innocence, all life is perceived as one and holy. Since there are two contrary states of the human soul and "The Lamb" is a product of only one, Innocence, it is not possible to conclude that this poem depicts Blake's paradisiacal state. The vines in the design are twisting about the sapling on both sides of the engraving, indicating in traditional symbolism the importance of going beyond childhood into Experience. If the child-speaker can see all life as one, can imaginatively perceive the whole, he cannot perceive the particularity, the diversity, which comprises that unity, which Experience's reason so meticulously numbers and analyses. Even as the adult speaker of "The Tyger" can see only a fragmented world, which his imagination is too weak to unify, so the child-speaker cannot see the fragments that comprise the world. The spontaneity and

\(^{101}\) Grevel Lindop. *British Writers*, 43.
carefree abandon of the lamb in Innocence can in Experience no longer be perceived in the form of a lamb. The perceiver in Experience fears the energy of Innocence and therefore shapes it into a form which his reason has deemed frightening, that of a tiger.\footnote{Philip K. Jason, \textit{Critical Survey of Poetry}, 210.}
The Tyger

If "The Lamb" is the best-known of the *Songs of Innocence*, its partner, "The Tyger," is the most famous and frequently interpreted of the *Songs of Experience*.\(^{103}\) In opposition to his own definition of Innocence, Grevel Lindop offers a definition for Experience writing,

Experience, on the other hand, is dominated by an awareness of pain and conflict, of problems that have no likely solution and of bitter feelings that cannot be resolved. Its vision is discontented and often political. Many of the most powerful *Songs of Experience* are mysterious poems even whose meanings readers have always argued. "The Tyger," for example, with its pounding rhythms and fiery visual imagery, is probably Blake's most widely known poem, yet it remains a challenge to interpretation.\(^{104}\)

A tiger is a fierce, ferocious, dangerous animal, which stands in direct contrast to the docile innocence of a lamb, and its forbidding appearance and menacing purpose oppose the lamb's softness and gentle existence. Within the first two verses of this six-stanza poem, Blake utilizes three written representations of fire to illustrate the power and ferocity of beast:

Tyger, tyger, burning bright  
In the forest of the night  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could Frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the fire?\(^{105}\)

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\(^{103}\) Martin Price. *To the Palace of Wisdom*, 400.

\(^{104}\) Grevel Lindop. *British Writers*, 42.

Later, in verses three and four, Blake turns to images of the actual creation of "The Tyger," utilizing words and phrases that bring to mind pain, discomfort, and punishment, making the beast even more menacing to the reader:

And what shoulder, and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?\(^{106}\)

Larrissy explains,

The fire in the Tyger's eyes is treated as the essence of Tyger, to be given body in the manufacturing-process which follows. It is a natural fire, but one which seems to remember its heavenly home. The manufacture is violent and harsh. And that violence and harshness are mirrored in the creation, which seems to be inhuman and pitiless - it is as if a monster were being created: 'And when thy heart began to beat,/ what dread hand & what dread feet?' An effect as of Frankenstein is achieved by a gradual progression: from the sense of natural forces as raw material (the fire in the eyes) to specific organs being manipulated ('twisting' the 'sinews of the heart') to the image of manufacture ('hammer', 'chain', 'furnace', and 'anvil').\(^{107}\)

Within the *Critical Survey of Poetry*, the "fearful symmetry" of the tyger is described as a metaphor for the negative energy being created by those who have prejudices regarding their view of reality ('Tyger, tyger, buring bright'). While these sinners are able to suppress their immorality and passion in the back of their minds ('the forest of the night'), the tyger is too strong to be contained or accepted and therefore burns brightly in the unconscious mind. When the tyger inevitably causes a negative

\(^{106}\) Ibid, 39.
impact, the perceiver refuses to question himself, but instead questions the tyger's creator ("What immortal hand or eye/ Could Frame thy fearful symmetry?"). It is determined that the creation cannot be greater than its creator, and therefore the creator must hold the same fearful and sinful qualities of the tyger. Borrowing a vivid visual image from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the perceiver questions who this creator might be. (When the stars threw down their spears,/ And watered heaven with their tears,/ Did he smile his work to see?/ Did he who made the lamb make thee?)¹⁰⁸ Not wanting to admit that his own creator, and the creator of the lamb, could have ever created such a beast, the perceiver places the blame on Satan and the fires of Hell for creating the tyger. In reality, these two contrasting poems show two sides of the same God, one who is visible to those in who have their innocence, and one who is visible to those who have achieved experience.¹⁰⁹ In the end, the reader must face the fact that the tyger represents the evil that exists within everyone, and will forever be in conflict with the lamb, which represents everything within us that is good.¹¹⁰ This poem "haunts its readers partly because its 'meaning' can never be resolved. As so often, Blake's evident purpose is to challenge thought and stimulate mental vision, thereby sharing something of his own dauntingly beautiful imaginative world."¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Grevel Lindop, *British Writers*, 43.
The Chimney Sweeper (Songs of Innocence)

If "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" illustrate Blake's use of religious satire, both poems titled "The Chimney Sweeper" are prime examples of Blake's political angst and desire to bring to light the horrors of a life of poverty. "The Chimney Sweeper" found in Songs of Innocence tells the story of the orphan living a life of anguish in the streets of London. These children find themselves working for the middle and upper crust as chimney sweepers, an uncomfortable and unsafe occupation for children of any age, but one that inevitably helps them survive. Simply put, the orphans are lost in their innocence, attempting to make the best of a bad situation.

The poem is narrated by one of the chimney sweepers who was sold into servitude at a very young age:

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry "Weep! weep! weep! weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.112

He tells the story of Tom Dacre, another orphan, who first wept over having his curly hair shaved, before having a haunting nightmare involving their friends:

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so, I said,
"Hush, Tom!" never mind it, for, when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight! --
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

Thankfully, the nightmare is resolved by divine intervention, complete with a moral suggested by Blake's hand:

112 William Blake. Songs of Innocence and of Experience, 11.
And by came and Angel, who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins, and let them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

However, the line of this poem most often discussed and analyzed comes at the close of
the final stanza where Blake calls out those in a position to make a change:

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and out brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm:
So, if all do their duty, they need not feel harm.

While these final words may be comforting for the orphan chimney sweeper, most
literary critics believe the line to be a veiled threat to adults. Plainly, what Blake is
suggesting with this statement is that it is every citizen's sacred duty to prevent the
exploitation of children and press for change. Their plight is horrific, and they deserve the
freedom to dream and love.113 This shameless use of his literary popularity to advance his
political beliefs is not uncommon for Blake. "Many of Blake's poems are criticisms of
oppressive uses of power on many levels, and they imply that there is a link between the
use of power when one individual belittle another and the use of power on a large
political and economic scale."114

Blake pairs this poem with "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence* as two points of view on a similar subject. While the former is a story told by one of the orphans himself, this parallel poem allows the reader to look at the same issue of poverty and class inequity through the eyes of the experienced to see the true horrors faced by the children. Specifically, Blake is attempting to expound upon his opinions of child labor in eighteenth-century London.\(^{115}\) Once again, the author relies on sarcasm and irony to highlight the prevalence of these issues as the child responds to the question regarding the whereabouts of his parents:

A little black thing in the snow,  
Crying "weep! weep!" in notes of woe!  
"Where are thy father and mother? Say!" --  
"They are both gone up to the church to pray.

"Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smiled among the winter's snow,  
They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

"And because I am happy and dance and sing,  
They think they have done me no injury,  
And are gone to praise God and his priest and king,  
Who make up a heaven of our misery."\(^{116}\)

At the end of the first verse, the child chimney sweeper claims that his parents have "gone up to the church to pray." According to *The Critical Survey of Poetry*, there are several accepted actual meanings for this statement, all of which might assist Blake in communicating his main theme for this poem. First, and most simply, the line may be a euphemism for saying the young boy's parents have died. The words "up to the church to pray" may stand for having gone to Heaven to speak directly with God. This possibility

\(^{115}\) Ibid, 22.  
would allow Blake to speak candidly regarding the prevalence of child poverty and the lack of support these children receive from society. Secondly, the line may be the honest truth, suggesting the parents have actually gone to church leaving their child crying in the snow, covered in the soot of dirty chimneys. If this is the case, Blake is clearly communicating the hypocrisy of parents who would leave their young child in such a state while they visit the church to pray as practicing Christians. Lastly, if the reader is permitted to assume that these parents are the same parents who sold their young child into the labor force in the first "Chimney Sweeper" poem, the line could be Blake's attempt to satirize the high level of greed that pervades London's society. Not only did this couple sell their child into indentured servitude in exchange for financial gain, but they attend church to also receive spiritual gain.

Contrary to "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence*, which is filled with veiled threats and other passive-aggressive speech, this poem from *Songs of Experience* is plainly Blake's straightforward attempt at an anti-child labor statement, however, written in a satirical and ironic fashion. Blake may be approaching this issue from either the political or religious standpoint, but in either case, this poem shows that the two parallel "Chimney Sweepers" are definitely satirical and do not illustrate pure joy on the part of the young boys, even in the seemingly light-hearted version from *Songs of Innocence*. What Blake is illustrating instead is a sense of phony innocence and joy, a characteristic of nearly all of the poems in this collection.
Combining both his political and religious agendas, Blake composed the poem "Holy Thursday" for *Songs of Innocence*, illustrating the image of young, innocent children attending church on the title holiday. These children, who enter the church like lambs in a very organized two by two fashion, are dressed in bold, untainted spring colors, and led by their wise (grey-headed) disciplinarians who carry "wands as white as snow." After entering the church's imposing structure, the children sing songs of praise to heaven, representing London's sinless population.

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
Came children walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green:
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands and white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like the Thames waters flow.

Oh what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wild they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among:
Beneath them sit the aged man, wise guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.\(^\text{117}\)

Unlike the other poems that have been analyzed through this research, these verses illustrate a very clear, albeit symbolic meaning. Larrissy agrees within his analytical text *Songs of Experience* claiming "[Blake's] language is not always figurative. But when it is, it is straight forward...shows the innocent speaker as impressionable."\(^\text{118}\)

The sentiment is also shared by John Gielgud, who writes in his text *Six Centuries of Verse*, "[\'Holy Thursday' is] so clear and transparent that often [it feels] like an anonymous children's song, lyrics that have been there from the beginning.

\(^{117}\) Ibid, 17.
\(^{118}\) Grevel Lindop. *British Writers*, 42.
The text is filled with religious connotations such as the lamb as a satirical victim, and numerous similes and metaphors comparing the young children to the flowing waters of the Thames, flowers of London, multitudes of lambs, a mighty wind, and harmonious thunderings from heaven.

In essence, the intended meaning of this poem is to show the importance of youth, innocence, and childlike faith in the face of a society, which attempts to suppress and stifle that energy. Larrissy writes,

Holy Thursday is here Ascension Day, when six thousand or so children from London charity schools would go to St. Paul's to listen to a sermon and sing hymns in front of their benefactors, who were presumably pleased to be thanked so ostentatiously in the presence of the Almighty. Blake's irony is plain in the sly platitude of the last line. And one os alerted on reading this, if not before, to the regimentation of the children by the hoary discipline of 'grey headed beadles' with 'wands as white as snow', ready to freeze the energies of youth.119

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One of the darkest, most depressing of the *Songs of Experience* is Blake's satirical *London*, which depicts the most horrific aspects of the capital city.

I wandered through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
A mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appalls,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace-walls.

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse.

The speaker of this poem is clearly experienced. He sees the truth and the darkness in everything our minds create that shackle us to the negative. The city, the river, the people, the chimney-sweeper, the church, the soldier, and the prostitute are all characterized by these negative aspects, and the combination of them creates a chaotic, wild, and uncontrolled atmosphere. Specifically, the impoverished adolescent chimney-sweeper reflects poorly on the church (and religion in general), which shows little regard for preventing child labor; the spilled blood of the soldier reflects poorly on the ruling class who sent him to war; and the corrupt prostitute who infects the entire city with her disease, passing it to her illegitimate child and the married men who enjoy her company. This anarchic environment stands in direct contrast to the order and discipline of "Holy
Thursday," which conversely illustrates innocent lives praising heaven. "The clearest way for the reader to interpret Songs of Experience is as an unveiling of the horrors hidden from the eye of Innocence. The system of parallels, where an Experience song has the same title as an Innocence one with which it is contrasted, makes this a natural reading." Larrissy continues later in his text with an extended quote from Johnathan Culler who attempts to explain whether this poem is a critique of a social system or an ironic satire about the speaker:

> it is important to stress that if we want to understand the nature of literature and of our adventures in language we will have to recognize that the 'openness' and 'ambiguity' of literary works result not from vagueness nor from each reader's desire to project himself into the work, but from the potential reversibility of every figure. Any figure can be read referentially or rhetorically. 'My love is a red, red rose' tells us, referentially, of desirable qualities that the beloved possesses. Read rhetorically, in its figularity, it indicates a desire to see her as she is not: as a rose. 'Charter'd street' in the first stanza of 'London' tells us, referentially, of an ordered city its streets full of chartered institutions. Rhetorically, it is hyperbole: to speak as if even the streets had royal charters is excessive, ironic. One can, of course, go on to read this irony referentially, as a suggestion that too many characters enslave: London is so restrictive the even streets and charters need to exist. But one can also in turn reverse this figure, and, reading the irony in its figurality, say that the act of seeing streets as if they were chartered as an example of another kind of enslavement: enslavement to one's own fiction. These four readings are generated by two elementary operations which, as a a pair, constitute the possibility of figural reading.

121 Ibid, 47.
CHAPTER 5 - MUSICAL ANALYSIS

With these literary analyses and critiques of Blake's poems in mind, their corresponding musical arrangements can now be examined to determine if and how Bolcom attempts to convey Blake's intended meanings through musical signs and topics. It should be noted that though Blake authored only forty-five poems (Appendix A), Bolcom's complete musical setting contains fifty-five movements (Appendix B), the extra ten resulting from added interludes, additional poems, an introduction, a nocturne, and a coda. Bolcom also altered the order in which the Blake poems are presented. This reorganization of material may be Bolcom's attempt to group similar topics together, to assist with maintaining the overall narrative of the collection, or simply to make possible the various staging and ensemble changes that occur throughout the composition.

In an effort to help recognize and understand the topics and signs at work within "The Lamb," "The Chimney Sweeper (Innocence)," "Holy Thursday (Innocence)," "The Tyger," "The Chimney Sweeper (Experience)," and "London," certain compositional aspects typical of Bolcom's style have been chosen for analysis. These compositional techniques include, but are not limited to: instrumentation choices, use of silence, utilization of different types of choir, use of vocal solos, tonal organizations, dark versus bright keys, dissonance versus consonance, homophony versus polyphony, and choice of musical style. Furthermore, these aspects of Bolcom's compositional style have been organized into four musical categories: orchestration (including treatment of the text and treatment of the accompaniment), harmonic language, rhythmic characteristics, and overall style. Bolcom's musical representation of Blake's ironies and dualities must also be taken into account. The composer achieves this literary concept by accompanying
ironic lines with dissonant harmonies, humorous sarcasm, and direct contrast between the
lyrics and the music itself. Basically, Bolcom does not allow for true innocence
suggesting that nobody is truly devoid of sin or able to avoid experience. With all of
these compositional techniques in mind, each of the six poems will be passed through the
figurative sieve in the style of Wenk in order to garner a more complete understanding of
both Bolcom's and Blake's intended meanings.
Within "The Lamb," Bolcom employs a string quartet along with a celeste, a harp, and woodwinds to elicit the folk sounds and smooth articulations typical of the pastoral genre. Additionally, the lyrics are performed by a solo female voice, suggesting feminine and innocent characteristics. Furthermore, Bolcom composes moments of silence for the accompaniment during the most poignant lines within "The Lamb," serving to highlight their importance to the overall meaning of the poem. Harmonically, Bolcom utilizes dissonant sonorities created by tritones, seconds, sevenths, and ninths throughout the setting. These harmonies are paralleled by the angular melody complete with melodic seconds, sevenths, ninths, and tritones within the vocal solo, and work together with the Andante Misterioso tempo marking to parallel the mysterious nature of the poem and its incessant questions regarding the creator of the lamb. Rhythmically, Bolcom exhibits contrast pitting the intricate, flowing accompaniment from measures 6 through 16 and measures 29 through 41 against the homophonic block chords in measures 17 through 23 and measures 42 through 53. This contrast parallels the contrasting 5/8 and 3/4 meters Bolcom also exhibits throughout this setting. Stylistically, "The Lamb" is characterized by a relaxed, smooth, pastoral quality throughout. However, due to the absence of a tonal center, the constant dissonance, the lack of formal phrase structure and cadences, the unpredictable rhythms, and the shifting meter, the overall mood of the movement is one of unsettling calmness, relaxed intensity, and uncertain truth. These ironic descriptions perfectly parallel Blake's contraries between innocence and experience and the ironies he employs throughout the poem.
The Chimney Sweeper (Innocence)

The orchestration of the instrumental accompaniment for "The Chimney Sweeper" takes a back seat to the treatment of the meaningful Blake text. While nearly every other poem within Bolcom's setting employs a choir or vocal soloist to sing the text, this particular poem is presented by a male narrator freely speaking Blake's words in a way that assists with telling the story of the poem. Meanwhile, the accompaniment includes standard triadic harmonies and lyric melodies played by solo euphonium, saxophone, cornet, trombone, and cello. These melodies are reminiscent of the "Sunday in the Park" solos played by Herbert L. Clarke with The Goldman Band in New York City during the "Golden Age" of the American concert band. Additionally, the accompaniment includes a female choir creating an ethereal, heavenly atmosphere during the lyrics that mention angels. Once again, Bolcom composes silence under the words "Weep, Weep," some of the most important, meaningful words of the poem.

Harmonically, Bolcom utilizes three techniques to illuminate the meaning of Blake's text. First, to illustrate the dark mood of the subject matter, Bolcom chooses A Flat Major, the darkest major key, to accompany the first half of the poem. Second, at measure thirty-two, Bolcom modulates into F Sharp Major, a much brighter key, to accompany the verse that mentions an angel with a bright key. Last, after harmonizing the entire poem with consonant, tertian harmonies, Bolcom chooses to utilize dissonance to set the line "So, if all do their duty, they need not fear harm," signifying the more significant, unfortunate meaning of the line. Rhythmically, Bolcom also treats the third verse of this poem as a separate entity, a barcarolle, accompanying it with a slow, lilting 6/8, typified by the eighth note-sixteenth rest-sixteenth note-eighth note dance rhythm. Stylistically, "The
Chimney Sweep" is characterized by a relaxed, freely spoken narration, accompanied by the lyric, flowing eighth note melodies of the accompaniment. The barcarolle introduces rhythmic interest and intensity, but at a slow tempo, keeping the style relaxed and calm. Once again, Bolcom's use of contrary compositional techniques parallels Blake's ironies and dualities throughout the poem.
In "Holy Thursday" (Innocence), Bolcom utilizes several different types of choir, the dancelike madrigal genre, and specific tonal harmonies as musical topics to assist with conveying his compositional meanings. The setting begins with a female madrigal choir, singing a cappella in homophonic texture and compound-duple meter. Rhythmically, Bolcom employs the quarter-eighth-quarter-eighth rhythm typical of the English madrigal almost exclusively throughout the setting. After just two lines, a full female choir enters to sing the remainder of the first verse, which ends as a trio of Janissary percussion ushers in the parade of children to St. Paul's cathedral. A men's choir begins verse two, and from then on, Bolcom combines the voices of the choir in seemingly random fashion. The second half of the setting also includes accompaniment from the orchestra. Bolcom utilizes consonant, tertian harmonies throughout the setting, and also employs a falling fourth sequence and a falling fifth sequence during the middle portion of the poem. The notated key changes frequently, but Bolcom often explores other keys through chromaticism and tonicization. One of these tonicizations cadences at measure thirty-seven in the bright key of E Major, where the choir sings of raising their song to heaven. The accompanimental rhythm is also very repetitive and includes bass voices playing on both macro beats, tenor voices on micro beats two through six, and treble voices on beats two, three, and four. Stylistically, Bolcom maintains the madrigal style throughout the piece, bringing in the Janissary percussion to elicit the feeling of being in a parade as well.
The Tyger

Within his setting of "The Tyger," Bolcom employs a men's choir performing a spoken, chant-like text along with percussion and pizzicato strings to illustrate the strong, driving, rhythmic pulse associated with the poem. This orchestration pervades the setting until measure twenty-seven when altos and sopranos begin to join the texture. The women of the choir take sole responsibility for the text beginning at measure forty-four - "when the stars threw down the spears..." They continue with the text "Did He who made the lamb make thee?" harkening back to the soprano soloist who sang about the lamb in Songs of Innocence. Harmonically, Bolcom uses a minor flair and polytonal clusters throughout to accompany the chant-like text of the men's choir. Bolcom adds the most interest to the setting with rhythmic intensity. The beginning of the movement is characterized by driving, accented, sixteenth note subdivisions of the beat performed by four timpani. Tom drums and cymbals soon introduce a triplet pattern simultaneous with the timpani, creating a four against three composite rhythm, and the bass drum interjects individual segments of sound. Additionally, the rhythm of the text is composed of quarter notes and eighth notes which fall typically on strong beats, but which are occasionally syncopated and include accents on weak beats and upbeats contrary to the percussive accompaniment. Stylistically, "The Tyger" is the most intense of the Songs of Experience. This intensity is a result of the percussive, accented, and articulate text and accompaniment Bolcom composed, and is in direct contrast to the relaxed, lyrical, flowing, smooth, and flowing style of "The Lamb." According to the literary analysis discussed in Chapter 4, "The Tyger" is essentially static in nature, demonstrating a
complete absence of evolution within the work. Musically, Bolcom parallels this stasis by maintaining a consistent mood, style, and genre throughout the setting.
In his orchestration of "The Chimney Sweeper (Experience)," Bolcom includes percussion, horns, woodwinds, and a xylophone for a brief introduction before employing a homophonic a cappella choral passage separated into women's choir, men's choir, and full mixed choir sections. The accompaniment returns quickly and serves mainly to support the choral sounds with homophonic block chords. This homophony continues accompanied by tambourines as a conclusion to the movement once the text has ended. Harmonically, Bolcom utilizes mainly consonant, triadic harmonies throughout the poem. Rhythmically, Bolcom utilizes, once again, the characteristic sounds of a dance-like madrigal, notated in 3/4 time rather than 6/8. The rhythms are homophonic throughout, purposefully reminiscent of those from "Holy Thursday" in Songs of Innocence. This setting also directly parallels the madrigal choir setting of "Holy Thursday (Innocence)" stylistically. Bolcom's use of dance-like rhythms and a homophonic choral texture serve as the basis for this comparison.
London

For "London," Bolcom employs his eclectic, 20th-Century style by composing two contrasting sections in an AB (Binary) structure. The entire poem is scored for full orchestra complete with strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion. The setting even includes electric violin, electric guitar, and a male rock singer. Harmonically, Bolcom begins the movement with clusters of dissonance, which are built one tone at a time in pyramid style. Nine of these clusters are presented, each one increasing in tempo, thickness of scoring, range/tessitura, and intensity. These declamatory statements evoke the aural image of London's Elizabeth Tower, also known as "Big Ben," ringing in the streets, their dissonant clashing a symbol of the chaotic unrest of the heathen city. These nine chimes also signify an English tradition known as the Silent Minute of Prayer, which began during World War II. Each evening, at the beginning of the nine o'clock news, the television network would broadcast the familiar chimes of Big Ben throughout the country, uniting the entire nation in a silent prayer for peace. The practice has survived and is still in use today.

The intense introduction gives way quickly to the tertian harmonies of a driving, apocalyptic rock structure in E Flat Minor. Other than a handful of chromatic passing harmonies, this portion of the movement remains static and tonal throughout, ending in the same E Flat Minor key area. Rhythmically, the dissonant introduction is altered for each chime through the addition of new pitches, which serve to intensify each pyramid's composite rhythm within the rock section. The rhythm is fairly homophonic and repetitive throughout, characterized by simple syncopated patterns and an incessant sixteenth note descant. Stylistically, the movement is consistently intense throughout.
Dynamics are loud, articulations are accented and clear, and the rock tempo is constant. Specifically, Bolcom refers to it as an apocalyptic rock tempo. In many ways, this musical illustration of Blake's chaotic *London* contrasts the meticulous order orchestrated in "Holy Thursday," serving to demonstrate the vast difference between the two parallel poems.
CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS

According to Harold Bloom's *The Best Poems of the English Language*,

The *Songs of Innocence* are indeed 'of' and not 'about' the state if innocence. There is much critical debate about Blake's Innocence, and little that is definitive can be said about it. The root meaning of 'innocence' is 'harmlessness'; the derived meanings, 'guiltlessness' and 'freedom from sin.' But Blake uses the work to mean 'inexperience' as well, which is a very different matter. As the contrary of Experience, Innocence cannot be reconciled with it within the context of natural existence.\(^{122}\)

Furthermore, within *Unsteady States: Songs of Innocence and of Experience*,

We have seen that both *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* contain poems that are ironic about the limitations of the represented speaker, and about their own means of expression. One way in which they suggest this irony is by implying the perspective of the opposing state. Thus "The Chimney Sweeper" hints at the perspective of *Experience*. It's easy to see this stratagem at work in some of the songs. The *Innocence* "Holy Thursday" provides a case almost exactly parallel with that of "The Chimney Sweeper": one reading is usually sufficient to disturb our confidence in *Innocence*.\(^{123}\)

Bolcom illustrates the innocence within "The Lamb" through the use of the pastoral genre and the female vocal soloist in his musical setting. He also includes satirical references to Blake's ironies and dualities with his dissonant harmonies and uneven, alternating meters. The silence Bolcom employs highlights the most poignant lyrics of the poem, typically assisting with presenting the true meaning of the poem.

Within "The Chimney Sweeper" (Innocence), Bolcom highlights the innocence of the poem with tonal, consonant, and lyric solos, and the use of a bright key for the lyric that mentions an angel. This innocence is satirized by the use of a dark key for the

\(^{122}\) Harold Bloom, *The Best Poems of the English Language*, 308.
remainder of the setting and the use of dissonant harmonies to accompany the lyric "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm." This lyric may, in fact, be the most poignant, satirical lyric of the entire poem, and Bolcom's harmonic treatment is clearly meant to draw attention to it.

"Holy Thursday" tells the story of young children marching into St. Paul's cathedral in an orderly, organized fashion. On the surface, Bolcom's musical setting illustrates the innocence of these children through his utilization of a girls choir, dance-like rhythms, bright major keys, and Janissary percussion to accompany the text. However, digging deeper, the listener notices ironies or contraries within the setting. First, Bolcom employs a madrigal (secular) choir to tell the story of children going to church, a sacred event. Second, he utilizes the ordered, rhythmic homophony to mock the organized parade of children.

Moving to the Songs of Experience, Bolcom sets "The Tyger" to some of the most intense music of the work. He uses a men's choir to illustrate the strength of the tiger, a minor tonality to signify the foreboding nature of the beast, an intense chanted text to demonstrate the primal force at work within the tiger, and hard accents to show intensity. Bolcom loosely contrasts some of these compositional techniques by incorporating the women of the choir for the lyric "Did He who make the lamb make thee?" Overall, while this one compositional decision links the two parallel poems as similar, the orchestration, dynamic, harmonic, and stylistic differences between the two set them in opposition musically just as Blake had intended to set them apart originally.

Later, in "The Chimney Sweeper" (Experience), Bolcom employs mostly ironic compositional techniques to illustrate Blake's intended meanings. To accompany the
heartbreaking text, Bolcom utilizes compositionally pleasant ideas such as the dance-like rhythms, the madrigal choir, and the rhythmic homophony from "Holy Thursday" (Innocence). Not only do these musical characteristics contrast with the text of this poem, they also serve to set this poem in contrast with "The Chimney Sweeper" (Innocence) and "Holy Thursday" (Innocence), texts that Blake would agree are in complete opposition.

Lastly, within "London," Bolcom uses dissonant chord clusters and the minor rock structure to give life to the poem. With these musical ideas, Bolcom illustrates the jaded, cynical, experience pervading the chaotic streets of London in Blake's text. Most importantly, this musical chaos stands in direct contrast to the meticulous order and innocence of "London's" parallel poem "Holy Thursday."

Overall, Bolcom clearly utilizes musical topics and signs to assist with communicating both his and Blake's intended meanings for the Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Many of these signs serve to illustrate the simplest intentions of the author, while others delve deeper into Blake's contraries, dualities, and ironies to bring to light his more complex ideas. Through this research, it has become clear to the author that both Blake and Bolcom share many of the same philosophical ideals with regard to contrast. The similarities between their writing and compositional styles have allowed this partnership to be immensely successful, and have resulted in one of the most poignant musical settings of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Utilizing the techniques of Arthur Wenk, V. Kofi Agawu, Robert Hatten, Leonard Ratner and other semioticians who have applied their philosophies to musical analysis, this research has illustrated how both the author and the composer have created such meaningful works of art. It is the
author's hope this research will spark a complete analysis of the collection, detailing how
the musical genius of William Bolcom has given new life to the poetry of William Blake.
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APPENDIX B

William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

*Songs of Innocence*

Part I

Introduction
The Echoing Green
The Lamb
The Shepherd
Infant Joy
The Little Black Boy

Part II

Laughing Song
Spring
A Cradle Song
The Nurse's Song
Holy Thursday
The Blossom
Interlude
The Chimney Sweeper
The Divine Image

Part III

Nocturne
Night
A Dream
On Another's Sorrow
The Little Boy Lost
The Little Boy Found
Coda

Vol. 1 - Part IV

Introduction to Part V
The Garden of Love
A Little Boy Lost
A Little Girl Lost
Infant Sorrow
Vocalise

*Songs of Experience*

Volume 1 - Part I

Introduction
Hear the Voice of the Bard
Interlude
Earth's Answer

Volume 2 - Part IV

London
The School-Boy
The Chimney Sweeper
The Human Abstract
Interlude: Voces Clamandae
A Divine Image
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