

To An Infant

Ah cease thy tears and sobs, my little life!
I did but snatch away the unclasped knife:
Some safer toy will soon arrest thine eye,
And to quick laughter change this peevish cry!

Poor stumbler on the rocky coast of woe,
Tutored by pain each source of pain to know!

Alike the foodful fruit and scorching fire
Awake thy eager grasp and young desire:
Alike the good, the ill offend thy sight,
And rouse the stormy sense of shrill affright!

Untaught, yet wise! mid all thy brief alarms
Thou closely clingest to thy mother's arms,
Nestling thy little face in that fond breast
Whose anxious heavings lull thee to thy rest!

Man's breathing miniature! thou mak'st me sigh--
A babe art thou -- and such a thing am I!

To anger rapid and as soon appeased,
For trifles mourning and by trifles pleased;
Break friendship's mirror with a tetchy blow,
Yet snatch what coals of fire on pleasure's altar glow!

Oh thou that rearest with celestial aim
The future seraph in my mortal frame,
Thrice holy Faith! whatever thorns I meet
As on I totter with unpractised feet,
Still let me stretch my arms and cling to thee,
Meek nurse of souls through their long infancy!

Infant Sorrow

My mother groand! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud;
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my fathers hands:
Striving against my swaddling bands:
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mothers breast.

In *To an Infant*, the speaker describes actions and desires on the part of the parent to protect and aid their child's growth. This poem reflects the theme that babies are dependent and need to be cared for by a loving parent. The poem *Infant Sorrow* convey a very different view. The infant is described as "struggling" and "striving against [its] swaddling bands." The difference in these descriptions reveals the attitude toward infancy from both speakers. The first speaker has a much more nurturing and caring view towards infancy than the second speaker. The preference of care and love over contempt and sorrow is shown in the outcomes of the

poems. The first poem ends with a cheerful and upbeat note that reflects the goodness of the care that was put into the child, and the second poem ends with a longing and sad tone. The reader is not able to find out what the outcome of the second infant's life is.

Both poems contain imagery of sharpness and danger in the words, "knife," "fiend," "cry," and "struggling." However, the speaker in the first poem describes ways in which those sharp, harsh, dangers are resolved. The speaker snatches away the knife and changes the cry to laughter, but in the second poem, those dangers go unresolved. Instead of being saved from the pain of life by their parents, the second narrator's pain is exacerbated by their parents. The parents of the speaker in the second poem, "groaned" and "wept" when their child was born, and the child struggles against the care that the parents are trying to provide. The lack of care that is provided to the second child in contrast to the care and love provided to the first child shows the importance of love and care from a parent.

In the first poem, the infant is kept safe and is made to be happy, these acts result in an infant that grows to be the, "future seraph to [the speaker's] mortal frame" and continues the legacy of the parent. In Contrast, the infant from the second poem is not provided the care and love required to thrive. As a result of that, the infant does not have a described future. The lack of growth and passage of time in the second paragraph shows how important care is for the life of the infant to continue. It is implied that the future of the second infant is one of sorrow as the stanza ends with the babe "sulk[ing]" on their mother. Since this is the last line of the poem without any further explanation or description, the reader assumes that the infant continues to sulk throughout the rest of their infancy and presumably life.

A major juxtaposition between the first poem and the second poem is the point of view that is used. In the first stanza of the second poem, the speaker is the parent of the child and describes the way that they child is protected and cared for, but by the third stanza, the point of view shifted to the child. This shift in point of view shows the mutual care and respect between the infant and the parent. Care from the parent of the infant in their actions, and respect from the infant in wanting to "cling" to their parent. The second poem only has the perspective of the infant and the perceived dangers of the world. The second speaker describes being a newborn as being, "helpless" and "naked" in a dangerous world. The difference in the views of the speakers shows the importance of love and care for a child through the way that they describe the world. In the first poem where the child is cared for, the infant does not consider the dangers of the world, and instead clings to the safety that they already know. The second infant who is uncared for is immediately aware of the dangers of the world that surrounds them. This awareness of the second speaker contrasting with the naivety of the second speaker is the main place where the difference between the uncared for child and cared for child can be seen.

The theme of love and care for an infant is something that is most apparent when it is not there. In the first poem, the activities and practices of the parents are ones that any parent who cares for their child would take, and therefore seem to be ordinary. There is imagery of "cling[ing] to thy mother's arms", and of "anxious heavings lull[ing] to rest." However, when the reader sees the feelings and emotions of the second child in response to their lack of care in

love, the reader can realize why those aspects are so important for the child. The closest that the speaker in second poem gets to conform is “sulk[ing] upon my mother’s breast.” Although this is an act that should provide comfort and respite to the child, it does not. The infant is never transformed from the “bound and weary” state that they were in.