
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Background of William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper": A Marxist Analysis of the Impact of Industrial Revolution on Superstructure

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| ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of the Industrial Revolution on superstructure, analyzing the background of William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper". During the Industrial Revolution, people of Europe started migrating to industrial cities in search of work. As a result, crowded cities had affluent foundlings living on the streets. At a growing age, these children used to be captured and taken to the mills and factories to work. They used to have a cheap commercial use for sweeping the chimneys. William Blake expresses their abused lifestyle, ill health conditions, and inhumane exploited death in the chimneys. They represent the smoke of the industrial world and the lack of emotion, which are the results of the Industrial Revolution. The study is qualitative research based on a closed-textual reading method and content analysis methods. This paper analyzes the background of "The Chimney Sweeper" and brings out the impact of the Industrial Revolution on mankind and the superstructure.

| KEYWORDS

Superstructure, Production, "The Chimney Sweeper", Industrial revolution, Capitalism, Ideology

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Why did the children used to be captured from the streets, taken to the chimneys, and given the gift of an inhumane death? Where was justice, and what happened to the lawmakers? To get the point, we first need to understand the Marxist analysis of capitalist society and its ideology.

The economic aspect of a society is divided into two parts based on Marxism: 'base' and 'superstructure'. Base refers to the material resources of production and gross profit available in a society. Superstructure refers to the ideologies that dominate a society in a particular era. It is all that "men say, imagine, and conceive (believe)," including such things as "politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc," which are invisibly linked with the mode of production as well. (Marx and Engels, German Ideology 47). Base includes machines, factories, lands, raw materials, and production. Superstructure includes the ideologies of law, media, politics, economy, power, etc. For example, capitalism is an ideology and a part of the superstructure of a capitalist society. Now, who follows the ideology of capitalism? Is it the capitalists - the owners, the upper class, the bourgeoisie? It is not only the capitalists, but also the working class alienated people who accept, follow, maintain, and contribute to the capitalist system. Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the majority of the working class have thought it is better to work at factories in towns than to work on their own agricultural land in villages. With the support of both classes, capitalism flourishes and shapes the law, media, politics, and all pillars of the superstructure. When the codes of law are shaped by capitalist ideology, written by the hand of the upper class, the law inevitably cannot see the deaths of the street children.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, during the Industrial Revolution, England was in a massive rush towards increasing capital, growing monetary power, industrialization, colonialism, political enslavement, scientific inventions, skepticism, and newly grown religious faiths. People were applying all possible unfair and inhumane ways to climb up to the capitalist class. In "The Chimney Sweeper", William Blake expressed the dark imagery of the poor children's physical and psychological enslavement inside the concentrated walls of industrialization, organized faith, and the monarch. They were enslaved to believe that "the heaven of their misery" would not come until their death, and they were "taught to sing the note of woe" (Poetry Foundation, 2020). This paper analyses the harsh reality of the capitalist conditions on working-class people during the Industrial Revolution.

2. Discussion

Capitalism thrives when the working class ideologically works for capitalism. According to Marx, the workers are the four standing legs of the chair of capitalism. If the workers ever thought to leave the chair on their heads, capitalism would fall. A restrictive state apparatus (RSA) is not enough to rule; rather, the working class can easily be dominated by an ideological state apparatus (ISA). When a social ideology is in a grown-up form, both classes follow it, leaving emotion and basic rights. The capitalist class earns profit, and the working class gets exploited, but neither of them wishes to violate the ideology. William Blake portrays a picture of an industrial workhouse where children were prepared to serve the industry and accept immeasurable pain.

The workhouse was an indoor relief for the working people, but it was an extremely painful world accepted by them as a result of the poor condition of their lives. Children suffered the most in the 18th-century industrial world in England. 'The Chimney Sweeper' was Blake's exposed radical voice and social protest against the harsh child labor in factories and chimneys. The sweeps were not only the victims of exploitation, but also throughout their whole life, they were associated with the smoke of the industrial world and a lack of emotion. At a very early growing stage, they used to be thrown into the hard labor of the metallic industry, such as steel and iron, which were more premium than any other raw materials of the post-industrial revolution period in England. Blake showed how the decisive industry can have a harsh impact on heavenly nature and a fair childhood.

2.1 Spoiled Innocence

This freedom, however, includes some significant pitfalls. The holy messenger who delivers the compasses with 'a brilliant key' tells little Tom that he'd be a decent kid/He'd have God for his dad and never need happiness'. This specification is rehashed in the sonnet's last line: the young men 'need not dread damage' if 'all carry out their responsibility'. Such accommodation appears to be a far-fetched remedy from a social pundit like Blake. While the facts demonstrate that the fantasy assists Tom with bearing his hopelessness (he feels 'cheerful and warm' when he awakens), it turns out to be certain that Blake isn't supporting inactive acknowledgment of natural wretchedness to pick up the delights of the realm of paradise in the afterlife.

Through the amusing utilization of the youngster-like anapestic cadence (two unaccented syllables followed by a complemented one) which uncovered such excessively oversimplified, foolish lecturing, Blake criticized the growth of chapel for sustaining this deceptive business which kept up the seized condition of what Marx later called a bogus awareness. Marx contended that to nullify religion as the fanciful satisfaction of individuals is to request their genuine joy. The interest in surrendering dreams about the existing situation is the interest in surrendering a situation that needs illusions. Although beginning from a different philosophical position (Blake was not a realist), he wrote on this decisive inhumanity because the children as slaves had only use value. Once you buy, you use it but cannot sell it in a second-hand condition till its death.

On the surface level, Tom's vision offers a concise look at expectation and salvation. A holy messenger visits him, bringing a message from God. This blessed messenger liberates the dead young men, and they are permitted to skip around unreservedly in nature before rising to paradise. This aspect of the fantasy appears to be authentic and sounds valid to Blake's thoughts regarding adolescence—that it ought to be free, creative, and upbeat. Up there, in paradise, the youngsters get the chance to play, to be kids once more—they "sport in the breeze." Religion, at that point, seems to give comfort in this life through the guarantee of happiness and opportunity.



Figure 1: The Circle of the Industrial Revolution

The use of children in emotionless job factories was regular until the late nineteenth century in England. According to the *British Census*, in agricultural work, Domestic and Cotton production, boys under 20 were employed, respectively. Similarly, girls were also in the three common occupations, including Cotton production."("Child Labor During The British Industrial Revolution"). This strict satisfaction is connected to being an "acceptable kid," and here it's conceivable to decipher the sonnet's message in two different ways. The sonnet could be fully trusted, as it has acceptable outcomes in admittance to paradise. However, the sonnet additionally verifiably thinks about how strict conviction is valuable for getting individuals to acknowledge the difficulties in everyday life. Maybe it is an acceptable method to move toward this work with a feeling of obligation and mindfulness that covers how shocking the work is. The sonnet implies that religion causes young men to acknowledge the hopeless states of their lives.

2.2 Difference between Urban and Rural Poverty

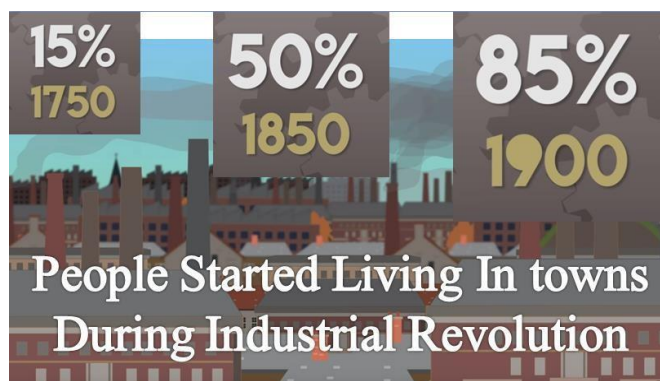


Figure 2: Increasing Population in Town (Pursuit of History, 2023)

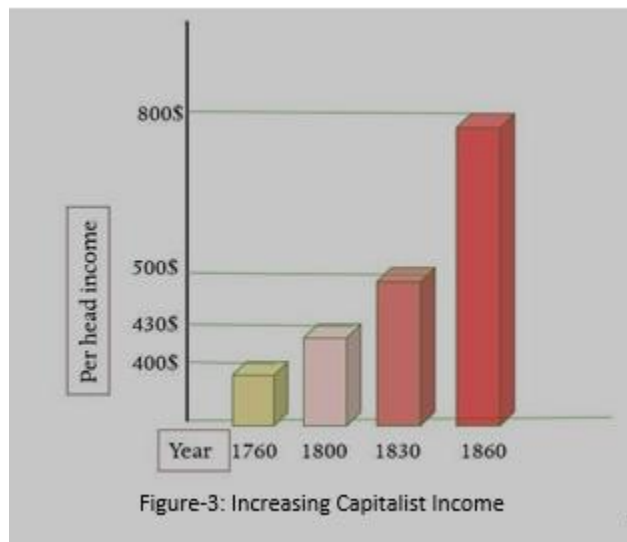
When people in England started shifting to industrialized towns and cities, both urban and rural areas faced poverty. Villages started to face a lack of agricultural production, and people in cities accepted slavery in industry. Gradually, the population in towns started to increase, and capitalist ideology gained massive acceptance in both upper and lower classes. During the Industrial Revolution, England had a sudden rush towards industry. In the middle of the 18th century, only a few people were living in towns and cities. Time passes, and people rush to different cities. The rapid growth of the population also started to create another major problem. In 'A Modest Proposal', Jonathan Swift

criticized the increasing rate of foundlings and their treatment in society. He claimed that it is the biggest melancholy to find foundlings in this great town, the streets, the roads, and cabin doors. These used to be crowded with beggars of the female sex, with three or four children or foundlings — Jonathan Swift (1729).

2.3 Industrial Revolution and Poverty

Development at such a moderate rate made weakening on the part of the common laborers conceivable. Ideologically, the industry laborers started to accept whatever they were paid. A straightforward mathematical representation will show why the village people were shifting towns to industry.

On the off chance that we take 0.3 percent every year as the yearly pace of development of genuine pay, normal genuine pay in 1830 would have been around 16 percent higher than in 1760 ("Industrial Revolution And The Standard Of Living - Econlib"). The portion of absolute salary heading off to the most reduced reduced 65 percent of the pay appropriation has fallen to 86 percent of its 1790 level to discredit the advantage of rising normal pay ("Industrial Revolution and The Standard Of Living - Econlib"). Most financial antiquarians concur that the dissemination of salary turned out to be more inconsistent somewhere in the range of 1790 and 1840. The growth of capitalist income means the growth of GDP. That means, GDP works as a mask of capitalism, hiding the sufferings of the working-class people. The more per head income grew, the more poverty England produced.



The gross surplus value or profit is consumed by the capitalists of the industries. They leave the working class in poverty and hunger. As a result, industrial slavery becomes a demanding position for the workers as they have nothing but mouths to feed and lives to exist. They accept the capitalist imposition of alienation inside factories. According to George Hegel, alienation is the capitalist notion of separating the workers into different partial responsibilities of a single production. For example, a worker does not produce an entire shirt. One prepares the collar, another attaches the buttons, and others add the shoulder. In this way, the whole shirt is prepared. A worker is neither associated with the total manufacture of the shirt, nor does he develop the knowledge or confidence of the production. Alienation does not allow the workers to develop any skill in the entire production, which makes the workers feel subordinate and dependent on the job under the capitalist command. The capitalists invest the earned profit in three sectors: industry, advertising, and government. The capitalists make their government in their own pursuit, which helps them. During the industrial revolution, there was no legislation passed in the pursuit of the working class. The capitalist hands used to make a capitalist government or monarch for the capitalist system. That left the innocence of the children on the street and in the factories untouched and disregarded. They had to remain as the silent subalterns with the false dreams and hopes till death.

3. Conclusion

The Industrial Revolution resulted from the mass economy's capitalist consumption. The bourgeoisie used to consume and govern the entire economy of all classes of people. The increasing GDP says that the profit of Europe grew through the colonial hunt throughout the world, which was never distributed to the working class. The capitalists

started to get cheap manual laborers, and the working-class people started to migrate to industrial cities, leaving their rural agricultural industry. Moreover, capitalist ideology also started to rule the working class. As a result, ideological state apparatus and capitalism easily boomed together. Therefore, the Industrial Revolution is the product of colonialism and the capitalist ideological state apparatus.

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