

Skinning “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”

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Abstract

William Blake for me is the most sublimely unique artist, for the simple fact that he is the one artist who carved out his poems together with exquisite paintings and insisted on getting them printed by dint of illuminated paintings with the help of copper plates etched out by him. His absolute dependence on the Bible as the Great Code of Art is well known. The present study is an in-depth analysis of the two poems “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” against the background of the Bible, and set in the context of his idea of Innocence and Experience and at the same time deeming the text of the poems together with the painting on his illuminated page of that poem. A better understanding of these two poems is purported at by having recourse to them in this three-fold way. The article tries to establish that the answer to Blake’s rhetorical question “Did he who make the Lamb make thee?” is in the positive.

Keywords: innocence, experience, lamb, meekness, tiger, wrath

1. Introduction

Even in this 222nd year since William Blake the revolutionarily mysterious and mystical artist meticulously or literally produced *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in 1794, carving them out in his own composite art of poetry and painting and printing them using his own invention of illuminated printing by means of copper-etched plates, the two poems “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”, still retain the charm and poignant beauty and could still be considered to be two of the most beautiful pieces of lyrical poetry in English. A simple and random ‘googling’ on your browser with these title names of the poems would render umpteen number readings, re-readings and interpretations of these two poems by the scholars, critics and lovers of lyrical songs.

Oxford English Dictionary refers to one meaning of the verbal word ‘skin’ as: “To strip or deprive of the skin; to flay; to peel” (See *OED.*, skin, v, II. 4. a. *trans*). The gerund in the title of this article is derived from this word and with this sense of peeling of these two poems and having a closer perusal and understanding of them. In no way at all, the title implicates any sort of violence or enmity to these two animals nor is anything against animal welfare sounded thereof.

1.1 Blake’s Uniqueness

Before starting the dissection of the two poems in question, a few more words about the uniqueness of William Blake’s composite art would be quite appropriate. In Blake one can find the conglomeration of all art forms moulded from the Eternal Imagination. To quote from Geoffrey Keynes (1985; all the lines from Blake’s text will be quoted from this book hereafter and cited as *K* following with the corresponding page number of this edition), Blake’s Visionary Art could:

See a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of [his] hand
And Eternity in an hour (“Auguries of Innocence”, K 431).

Blake wanted to communicate through the media of all the arts in a composite manner. Blake could take a poet’s images and effectively translate and transform them into their verbal-visual, and to a great extent to the vocal (musical) equivalents. The other followers of *ut pictura poesis* or of *ut musica poesis* take ideas and either illustrate them with pictures or express them through music. There is a world of difference, the difference

between an equivalent and a derivative. Blake should not be and cannot be hedged by the *ut pictura poesis* (pictorial tradition) or *ut musica poesis* or any other tradition, for that matter. In Blake the shift from a particular medium to the other is so natural that one cannot distinguish which predominates over the other. Moreover, as he has carved out in the *Laocoön* drawing, Blake asserted that “Both the New Testament and the Old Testament are the Great Code of Art”. On this plate he also admonished every true Christian to be an artist. And throughout his life Blake was intent on decoding this Great Code of Art through his poems and paintings. All these factors give ample testimony to the uniqueness of Blake.

1.2 The Method

Being unique in his ingenious way of publishing his works by dint of painfully etched illuminated copper plates, mixing up the lines of the poems intertwined with suitably well-defined designs on the background of the text of his poems, Blake’s art must be approached in a unique way treating the poetry and painting together. Moreover, highly eclectic though Blake might have been in his life, attitude and works, his consistent devotion and dedication as well as reliance on the Bible as the Great Code of Art must not be overlooked when his masterly pieces of art are approached. Similarly, Blake produced these two poems as mutually complimentary as they belong to his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. Bearing these three focal points in mind, delving deeper into the two poems of William Blake comes under the purview of the present study, with the threefold emphasis of poetry and painting deemed together, put against the background of the Bible and in its totality of belonging to the Innocence and Experience States. Therefore, the two poems will be discussed in detail following the threefold aspects mentioned above.

2. ‘The Lamb’

Now, let us start our discussion of Blake’s *Songs* with “The Lamb”. This is one of Blake’s simplest but one of the most beautiful lyrics of Innocence. In the illuminated plate of this song, the dialogue of the child and Lamb and the jubilation of embracing vines and sinuous trees are suggestive of real enough habitat for the Lamb (See Figure 1 of Plate 29—retrieved from <http://www.gailgastfield.com/innocence/soi29.jpg> below).



Figure 1. The Lamb

These “two trees with spreading branches intertwine around and between the stanzas to frame the entire pastoral scene of the Lamb and the child into a single unit” and reveals together with the lines that “the world of

Innocence includes all that one need know of man's relation to God" (Mellor, 1974, p. 4). The natural imagery seems to be generalized. Both in the text and in the design we can see "the stream", "the mead", and "the vales". But as R. B. Kennedy (1970) averred, it is the lamb's lamb-hood "that is significant, the nature of innocent creature of God. Innocence has a divine source". As if to indicate the guileless innocence of the child, the boy is usually pictured as naked (Erdman, 1975). But at least in the black and white reproduction of the plate by Erdman, it is not clear whether the boy is naked or not. It gives the impression that the child is wearing a shirt or closefitting garment upto the navels at least, or in A.K. Mellor's terminology, a "more form-revealing clothing".

The text of the poem is not very difficult to understand. Posing the question, who created such a gentle and mild creature, Blake is all praise for the sheer beauty and meekness of the lamb. The child here does not seem to realize that in Climes of happy Eternity "the lamb replies to the infant voice, & the lion to the man of years / Giving them sweet instructions" as Blake mentioned in one of his later works (William Blake, *Four Zoas*, Night the Sixth, ll. 135-38, K 315), and undertakes to give the answers to the lamb himself. Hence, the child's own answer and his prayer for God's blessing constitutes the second part of the poem.

The second part of the poem is definitely and directly influenced at least by three biblical passages. The lines 13 to 14,

He is called by thy name

For he calls himself a Lamb,

cannot be considered apart from Isaiah 53:7 where Jesus is referred to as being exactly like the lamb; "... like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." John the Baptist, while standing with two of his disciples, "looked at Jesus as he walked, and said. 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" (John, 1:36). In Revelation 14, we find the Lamb standing with a hundred and forty four thousand who had his name and his Father's name on their forehead. The clear allusion is to Christ and his chosen ones. Only these could hear the voice of the new song from heaven. And these men go wherever the Lamb goes, because they are spotless (Revelation, 14:1-5). All these passages have a direct bearing on the quoted lines 13 and 14 of the poem. That Blake was obsessed with the idea of the redeeming role of the Lamb of God can be seen from Los comforting Enitharmon in *The Four Zoas*, after they had both eaten from Urizen's tree of Mystery. Los consoled her and said;

... behold! take comfort!

Turn inwardly thine Eyes & there behold the Lamb of God,

Clothed in Luvah's robes of blood descending to redeem (Night the Seventh, ll. 414-16; K 330).

Or again Enitharmon sees "the Lamb of God upon Mount Zion" (Night the Eighth, l. 22; K 341).

Again the next line "He is meek and he is mild" is definitely parasitic upon Matthew 11:29 where Jesus exhorts his disciples to learn of him for he is "gentle and meek of heart." Both in this poem and in "A Cradle Song" Jesus Christ is credited with creating both the Lamb and the child. Compare the lines,

He is called by thy name

For he calls himself a lamb

He is meek and he is mild;

He became a little child (K 115).

with,

Sweet babe once like thee,

Thy maker lay and wept for me (K 120).

As A. K. Mellor (1974, p. 4) remarks, "both [the child and the lamb] can be seen as the creation of the God who became both child and lamb". This is not inconsistent with Blake's system. For as S Foster Damon (1973) affirms, "Urizen and later Los, but first and last Jesus, is the Creator, whether cruelly forcing law and matter upon existence, or giving to the Fallen a protective covering or shell while it is in the realm of Ulro; or mercifully giving Error a form, that it may be recognized and cast out" (p. 94).



Figure 2. Our Lady with the Infant Jesus riding on a Lamb

In *Our Lady with the Infant Jesus riding on a Lamb* (1800. See Figure. 2, Retrieved from: <https://reproarte.com/en/paintings/our-lady-with-the-infant-jesus-riding-on-a-lamb-detail>), Blake depicted the Christ Child, with his arms extended referring to the Crucifixion, and riding on a Lamb, another symbol of his coming sacrifice. In *The Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, Blake wrote:

Assume the dark Satanic body in the virgin's womb,
O Lamb Divine! it cannot thee annoy O Pitying one
Thy pity is from the foundation of the world, and thy Redemption
Began already in Eternity. Come then, O Lamb of God,
Come Lord Jesus, come quickly (VIII: 241-45; K 349).

Blake's identification of the Lamb with Jesus or Jesus with the Lamb becomes absolute in this passage. E. Underhill (1930; rpt. 1958, p. 106) deemed this passage to be the doctrine of Incarnation put in verse, in a nutshell, where St. Thomas Aquinas himself would find little to correct.

3. 'The Tyger'

"The Tyger" is considered to be the masterpiece of William Blake's poems, just as his *Illustrations of the Book of Job* is definitely his masterpiece in paintings. Back in 1810 Henry Crabb Robinson wrote about this poem: "We cannot better set forth the many sided gifts of our poet than by following up his singularly delicate and simple poem with this truly inspired and original description of 'The Tyger'" (trans. from German by G.E. Bentley, Jr., 1975, p. 163). Standing at the heart of the *Songs of Experience*, it symbolizes the dreadful forces in the world just as "The Lamb" symbolized gentleness, vulnerability and innocence in the circle of Innocence. Blake himself had meticulously corrected and rearranged and rewritten this great poem. John Sampson (1905) gave the elaborate analysis of 'The Tyger', following each stage of its development, in his admirable edition of William Blake's Works (pp. 108-115). There he observes that even back in 1806 this poem was appreciated by Dr. Julius and translated into German. He reprints this German translation, "*Der Tiger*" with the commendatory words "This spirited and admirably literal rendering appeared . . . at a time when Blake's *Songs* were almost unknown to his own countrymen" (p. 115). From the time of Sampson there has been a steady outpour of critical studies on this great poem. Morton D. Paley in a very lengthy footnote gives a detailed enumeration of the stand taken by critics down through the years towards this poem in *Energy and the Imagination*. In the present study, however, I am not proposing a hair-splitting scrutiny of the poem; rather, an analysis of the poem with a special focus on the biblical themes involved in it, is purported in this study. Relying on the critical heritage I would like to make a few observations that are relevant to our present study.

Kathleen Raine (1968) suggests that Blake must have seen George Stubb's famous painting of Tiger which was exhibited at the Society of Artists of Great Britain, in Somerset Street, in 1769. Blake at this time was 12 years old, and in his second year as a student at Pars's drawing school, which was held in the same house where the Society was lodged. Stubbs used to exhibit there regularly. Raine (1968, II, p. 4) posed a question, "Is 'The tyger' a tribute to a boy's enthusiasm for Stubb's glorious beast, seen at this impressionable age?" Stubb's Tiger (See figure 3) referred to by K Raine is of course reproduced here and it is retrieved from: <http://www.easyart.com/prints/george-stubbs/portrait-of-the-royal-tiger-circa-1770-211992#211992-29-40-1>



Figure 3. Portrait of the Royal Tiger

Having seen this Stubbs' picture which might have influenced William Blake and then having a look at the picture of Tiger drawn by William Blake, who was an exquisitely skilled artist in England, raises a lot of questions and it will bring out the contrast of George Stubbs' tiger with Blake's own painted tiger below the text of his master-piece and mysterious poem *The Tyger* (See Figure 4 below). William Blake's illuminated plate of *The Tyger* is retrieved from: www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/object.xq?objectid=songsie.b.illbk.35 The tiger of Blake is painted or drawn differently in different copies. David Erdman suggests that the expression of the tiger varies in different copies, from smiling to worried, or to supercilious or to patient. Considering all these Geoffrey Keynes had said that it ranged from "a ferocious carnivore painted in lurid colours" to a "tame cat." But David Erdman (1975) does not agree with Keynes's recognition of a ferocious carnivore in some of the copies (p. 84). It can be seen that the painted tiger is nowhere near Stubb's tiger, nor his own depiction of the tiger in and through the words of the poem. The most ardent admirer may be able to find, at best, a paper tiger. Erdman points out that "this picture, like the poem it illuminates, remains one of Blake's contrived enigmas—a contrivance forced upon him by the truth, one feels" (Ibid). But Erdman does not explore this enigma. J. Bronowski (1978) in an attempt to salvage the apparently mysterious weakness of the artist, said: "You must not look closely on the tiger because Blake and his contemporaries had never seen real tigers; they had only seen stuffed animals. And this one had been very badly stuffed" (p. 106).

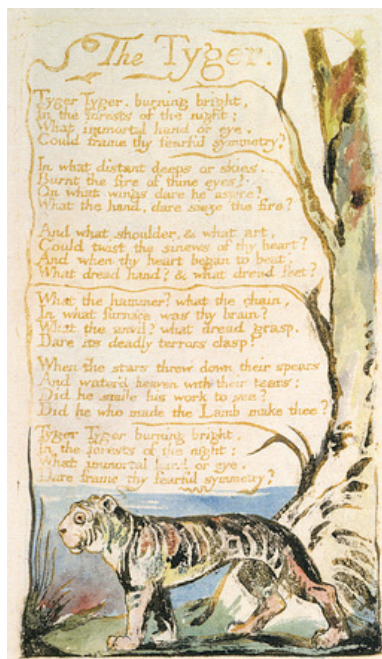


Figure 4. The Tyger

A.K. Mellor's position seems to be the most acceptable one. Mellor (1974) observes:

The Creator of the tyger possesses, as all men do potentially, the daring imagination and the sublime wrath necessary to dominate the forces of reason. Man's expanding Energy can be channeled into an awe-inspiring, bounded artistic image, the fearful symmetry of this tyger. But the energy of this tyger is a development of the Innocence of the Lamb, as the controversial illustration indicates. The tyger is pictured as a gentle, striped, and peaceful beast (in Copies B [M.M.] and Z [T.P.]), a creature that fuses the loving gentleness of the Lamb with the quiet power of Energy at rest. When the murdering dissections of reason are annihilated, the tyger and the Lamb will lie down together (p. 65).

All the same, Mellor's observation that "Even the intentionally innocent tyger in some copies looks too much like a stuffed toy to be a wholly persuasive Lamb. In several of these designs Blake's line is so weak and his colouring so haphazard that details of the designs are obscured; . . ." (p. 110) should not be overlooked.

A. K. Mellor is right in pointing out that it is "not the most open of visual designs" (p. 65 n 25). Only when we have finished reading the text of the poem, we can fully resolve the enigma of the tiger-picture by Blake, which we reserve to the last part of our discussion of this poem. To be sure this tiger is located by Blake in the desert of Experience, and this is represented by a barren tree on the right side of the text and a colorless clump of vegetation at the left. Kathleen Raine gives a detailed analysis of the poem against the background of Boehme, Paracelsus and Gnostic and Cabbalistic traditions (*Blake & Tradition*, II, pp. 3-31). Deeming the line "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" as crucial to the resolving of the mystery of this poem she analyses the pros and cons for a possible answer. But at the end she leaves the question unanswered. She observes:

Instead of seeking to find a yes or a no, we will be nearest to the truth if we see the poem rather as an utterance of Blake's delight not in the solution but in the presentation of the problem of evil as he found it in the Hermetic and Gnostic tradition (II, p. 31).

After browsing through many a criticism of this poem one is inclined to consider Morton D. Paley's essay "Tyger of Wrath" as the best solution to the mystery of this poem. This essay first appeared in *P.M.L.A.*, 83 (1966). Later it was reprinted in Morton D. Paley's (1970), *Energy and the Imagination*, pp. 30-61. In this exhaustive study Paley invites us to recognize, "'The Tyger' as an apostrophe to the wrath of God as a sublime phenomenon; to the wrath which Boehme calls the First principle, which the Prophets (of the Old Testament) saw released in history, and which Blake perceived in the tremendous energies of the French Revolution" (p. 41). Stewart Crehan (1984) has tried to explain that Tyger is a symbol used by Blake for the 'Tygerish Multitude' of French Revolution, or for the 'Democratic Revolution' itself. But when it comes to the crucial question of lines 19 & 20 he seems to evade it (See "Blake's Tyger and the Tygerish Multitude", in *Blake in Context*, pp. 123-137; see especially p. 135).

In both the Old and the New Testaments this Wrath of God is eschatological and brings about the destruction of the wicked and the building of New Jerusalem. Throughout the Bible this eschatological Wrath of God is manifested in the images of fire and beasts of prey (e.g., Genesis 19:24; Exodus 14:24; Isaiah 66:15; Malachi 3:2; Isaiah 13:21-22; Ezekiel 15:6-7; Jeremiah 21:14). Sometimes both the fire and wild beasts are associated with the day of Wrath (Amos 3:4& 8; Amos 5:6). If we read the poem against this Biblical back-ground, 'The Tyger' becomes more poignant. Commenting on the first two lines,

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night (K 214)

Morton Paley (1970) observes that "the allusion is to the wrath of the Lord burning through the forests of a corrupt social order" (p. 42). The same idea had been hinted at by Foster Damon (1924), when he spoke of these lines:

Blake intends to suggest that the great power of Wrath is to consume Error, to annihilate those stubborn beliefs which cannot be removed by the tame horses of instruction (p. 278).

Blake seems to be astonished at this sublime mystery, Tyger. The second line should also be compared to a passage in *The Four Zoas*, where Urizen's "tygers roam in the redounding smoke / In forests of affliction" in the Caves of Orc (Night the Seventh, ll. 9-10; K 320).

An interesting connection with the Book of Job will not be out of place here. For the eighteenth century people, The Book of Job was the most sublime book of the Bible which voiced the manifestation of the sublime through descriptions of divine wrath and power. The Book of Job was considered to be the masterpiece of World Literature of all times. In Blake's old age he produced his masterpiece as an artist in the illustrations of the Book

of Job. And it is not a mere coincidence that Blake's poem "The Tyger" is an astonishment at the sublime from the whirlwind, out of which God manifests his power through a number of questions to Job about the symbolic beasts Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40 & 41). Blake depicts these beasts in his illustrations of Book of Job, plate 15 (See figure 5 below, retrieved from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-behemoth-and-leviathan-a00026>). M. D. Paley implicitly suggests that Blake was probably inspired to write "The Tyger" under the influence of the biblical descriptions of "Behemoth and Leviathan, symbolic beasts of which the Tyger is related as an embodiment of sublime power" (p. 47). Again, more emphatically he says: "The Tyger is the Leviathan of Job in that both are fiery images of divine energy" (p. 48).



Figure 5. Behemoth and Leviathan

Coming to the most difficult fifth stanza of the poem this position will be further clarified. The whole argument of the poem stems from the mystery of creation. The poet's wonder at this sublime mystery of creation is expressed by the questions: "Did he smile his work to see? / Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (K 214). Before analysing these questions, it is necessary to pay attention to the evolution of the pattern of questions in the poem. At first they are almost normal questions up to line 8. Then all on a sudden it explodes in a way, and the questions are in a broken pattern. As Anne K Mellor (1974) observes, the implication is that "Energy should always exist in tension with its form, in a 'fearful symmetry' that threatens to explode into an infinitely expanding force at any moment, just as the pressure of Blake's vision against the syntax breaks the full line questions of lines 7 and 8 into the half line questions of lines 13 and 15" (p. 66). Then as if the tension is released the syntax of questions is retrieved in the fifth stanza. Just as Job was coming to terms with God after God's answering from the Whirlwind, Blake seems to have resolved this mystery of sublime power, towards the fifth stanza.

Blake probably realized that, "when the stars threw down their spears/And water'd heaven with their tears," the Creator must have been delighted to see the work of his hand and smiled. That is why he again changes the

syntax and formulates two full rhetorical questions both of which must be answered in the affirmative. But before going to those rhetorical questions the above quoted lines 17 and 18 are to be scrutinized. As Morton Paley (1970) explains, it has several related meanings. The literal image is that of starlight and dew. On the historical level, the stars represent the armies of the monarchy. From the time of his *Poetical Sketches* (1769-1778) to the time of *Jerusalem* (1804-1820) Blake associated stars with tyranny, war and oppression. Paley points out that the failure of the counter-revolutionary armies at York-town and Valmy, is implied in these lines, and as well in the similar line in *The Four Zoas*, V: 222. There the unfallen and wholeman, Albion's Zoas represented by Urizen, Luvah, Urthona and Tharmas on the unfallen state, and by Satan, Orc, Los as the fallen states of the first three Zoas, are falling down before the supreme power of Albion and with Urizen "The stars threw down their spears and fled naked away". The unfallen Man's freedom seems to be winning over all the strifes of the four zoas in their fallen state.

Similarly in "The Tyger" Blake is giving high praise to the apocalyptic role of the French Revolution. The defeat of the stars throwing down their spears signified the casting off of both the cosmic and internal constraints, freeing man to realize his potentially divine nature. The stars of tyranny are falling down or losing the battle and they are shedding the tears of hypocrisy and self-pity and frustration. For William Blake, Jesus was the God-Man or the Perfect Man. And the creation of Tiger is an answer to the corrupt world. Blake realizes that meekness, pity, mercy and love alone are not enough. There must be tigers of wrath as well. Innocence alone is not sufficient. Experience also must be joined with Innocence into a harmonious whole. The hypocritical tears of the tyranny and jealousy which is described in "The Human Abstract" - "cruelty waters the ground with tears" in order to make the Tree of Mystery grow - can no more mislead and harass the redeemed man. The creation of tiger is not to be seen as creation of evil but as the creation of a weapon to fight out evil. In the matter of fighting the evil of any sort, the Lamb-like meekness will not always suffice. Rather, such a meekness might be mistaken to be a weakness and exploited. The picture of Jesus Christ letting loose the tigers of wrath in him against the temple-centred injustices in the "Cleansing of Temple Scene" in the Gospels confirms our interpretation of The tyger. All the four gospels recorded this incident unlike many other events in the life of Jesus Christ (See Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-16. The most vivid description is given in John 2:13-16 where Jesus uses a whip of cords). Just as Jesus is the Word of God, so also at the temple scene He becomes manifest as the Wrath of God. One is inclined to aver, that just as the Lamb is symbol of Christ, so also is the Tyger. Just as the Christ it was who made the Lamb, so also He was the One who made the tyger too. As Christine Gallant (1978) has affirmed "indeed, the Creator made the Lamb and equally made the Tyger - both at the same time and in the same place" (p. 45) Christ did smile to see his work, 'The Tyger'.

Blake has elsewhere in the *Four Zoas* mentioned about the adaptability of rage to mercy. In Night the Third, answering Enion's pleading for pardon and pity, Tharmas answered:

Image of grief, thy fading lineaments make my eye
lids fail.
What have I done? both rage & mercy are alike to me;
Looking upon thee, Image of faint waters, I recoil
From fierce rage into thy semblance (Lines 195-98; K 297).

Here rage and mercy are identified. Understanding the lamb and tigers as aspects of the same creator, one is exonerated of the temptation to exclaim in view of the seemingly inept picture of the tiger,

Did he who write the poem make thee?
Did he smile his work to see?

Blake definitely smiled to see his work. Blake meant his tiger to be capable of lying down with the lamb. With all its terribly fearful symmetry, the tiger when understood as having a definitive purpose, acquires a certain amount of tameness and amiable nature.

Commenting on those two questions, Martin K. Nurmi (1975) says: "If 'The Tyger' is considered in the context of Blake's work alone, it seems to me that he could be regarded as a providential creation for—not of or by—the fallen world of Experience. If we take the stars in this crucial stanza as having a meaning near to that which they had in words closely contemporary with the poem, as symbolizing oppression, and also take their throwing down their spears in this context as indicating some kind of defeat, then the answers to both the questions are probably yes" (p. 66).

According to Isaiah 61:1-2 and its reenactment in Luke 4:18-19, the mission of Jesus Christ was “to set at liberty all those who are being oppressed,” the most important among other tasks. In the vision of William Blake, as he asserted in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, (Plate 9:5) “the tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction” and as Christ too deemed the same, He must have been happy and smiled to see the tiger. This is perfectly in tune with Blake’s attitude toward human experience which, as suggested by Margaret L. Wiley (1969), resulted in “the conviction that only by the clash of contraries which an outrageous statement generates can truth be adequately expressed” (p. 116).

If we are reading the poem in the above sense, the last stanza poses a problem to be answered. If Blake had resolved the mystery, then why should he reiterate the first stanza? In this repeated stanza the fourth line’s ‘could’ is changed to ‘Dare’ in the present tense. Thus the last line “Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” seems to be a hard nut to crack. In the whole poem Blake is using the word ‘dare’ in the present tense (Ll. 7, 8, 16 and 24) whereas all other finite verbs are in the past tense. Normally these lines should have been evoking the sense of “might dare” or “will dare” by the word “dare”. If that be the case, in order to accommodate this stanza in the framework of the aforementioned analysis and interpretation, I am inclined to think that the creation of the ‘tygers of wrath’ is not to be seen as a ‘once-for-all-finished’ act. It must be an ongoing process, and men of Imagination are invited to create “tygers of Wrath” in order to liberate and lead the oppressed to the higher Innocence, the third stage. Blake is probably asking the men of Imagination, “who will dare to frame the tiger’s symmetry constantly and keep it burning in the forests of night, i.e., in this corrupt world?”.

4. Conclusion

Nelson Hilton (1980) has highlighted that just as the lamb and the tiger have one common creator, so also, William Blake is the maker of “The Lamb” and that of “The Tyger.” “The lines present - as does the poem - a scene of writing: of framing: of creation which is the passage from imagination to text, from Blake’s ‘Eternity’ into time, and so *practically* done that through its thirteen ‘words’ we assume that creation” (p. 529). If the meek and mild Jesus Christ, whom John the Baptist described as ‘the Lamb of God’ (John 1:36), could transform himself and lash the whips of divine wrath upon the merchants, money changers and tax-collectors at the temple scene (John 2: 13-17), can’t the Creator God make the Lamb and the Tiger? The present study has been an attempt to show that Blake really put the rhetorical question in his poem ‘The Tyger’ with the clear presupposition of the answer to be in the positive. Considering the poems ‘The Lamb’ and ‘The Tyger’ as complimentary and explaining the two contrary states of human soul, and analyzing the lines and pictures together in the context of the Bible, no better solution can be rendered for understanding these two poems, and through that reach to the core of the mystery of God’s creation.

To conclude this study, no better words can be found than Blake’s own remark in *Jerusalem* about his poetry which is equally true about his paintings:

Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place; the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild and gentle for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic for inferior parts; all are necessary to each other. Poetry Fetter’d Fetters the Human Race. Nations are Destroy’d or Flourish in proportion as Their Poetry, Painting and Music are Destroy’d or Flourish! The Primeval State of Man was Wisdom, Art and Science (K 621).

In fine, with regard to such an exquisite artist like William Blake, his poetry should not be treated merely as the words in different print fonts alone, but must be considered in the totality of Blake’s illuminated painterly writings combined with the background of the Bible and set in the context of Innocence and Experience constituting the two essential contrary states of the human soul.

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