

The tyger and the lamb



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“ The Tyger” , one of William Blake(1759-1827)’s most famous poem published in a collection of poems called Songs of Experience , Blake wrote “ The Tyger” during his more radical period. He wrote most of his major works during this time railing against oppressive institutions like the church or the monarchy, or any and all cultural traditions which stifled imagination or passion. “ The Lamb” wrote into his another poetry collection Songs of Innocence, in which contains idyllic poems. Many of those idyllic poems deal with childhood and innocence.

Idyllic poems have pretty specific qualities: they’re usually positive, sometimes extremely happy or optimistic and innocent. They also often take place in pastoral settings and many times praise one or more of these things as subjects. Those two masterpieces reflected poet’s meditation about the nature of humanity. “ Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence” . Addressing the contrasts of different states of the human mind is the main concern of William Blake.

As a British Romantic poet of the 18th century, William Blake addresses the contrasts of different states of the human mind in his works Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. The main poem from this collection, “ The Lamb,” epitomizes innocence and the relationship between the young and the divine. In singsong verse, a curious child questions the nature of a gentle lamb, and he learns what he already knows: God created the lamb. World events and life itself greatly affected Blake.

In *Songs of Experience* (1794), the sequel to *Songs of Innocence*, he addresses his loss of “faith in the goodness mankind” caused by the fall of the French Revolution. The outstanding poem from this collection, “The Tyger,” seeks the answer to the unknown: how can the god who created the peaceful lamb also be the creator of the fierce, destructive tiger? The speaker asks many questions, but receives no answer. That same year, Blake combined the two contrasting works into *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. “The Tyger” just might be William Blake’s most famous poem.

Published in a collection of poems : *Songs of Experience* in 1794, Blake wrote “The Tyger” during his more radical period. He wrote most of his major works during this time, often railing against oppressive institutions like the church or the monarchy, or any and all cultural traditions – sexist, racist, or classist – which stifled imagination or passion. Blake published an earlier collection of poetry: the *Songs of Innocence* in 1789. Once *Songs of Experience* came out five years later, the two were always published together. In general, *Songs of Innocence* contains idyllic poems, many of which deal with childhood and innocence.

Idyllic poems have pretty specific qualities: they’re usually positive, sometimes extremely happy or optimistic and innocent. They also often take place in pastoral settings : think countryside; springtime; harmless, cute wildlife; sunsets; babbling brooks; wandering bards; fair maidens, and many times praise one or more of these things as subjects. The poems in *Songs of Experience*, on the other hand, wrestle with issues of what happens when that innocence is lost. “The Tyger” is often paired with the poem called “The Lamb” from *Songs of Innocence*.

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The former references the latter and reexamines the themes of “ The Lamb” through the lens of experience. “ The Lamb” is one of those idyllic poems which asks the Lamb who made “ thee” , just like “ The Tyger”, praises how soft and cute it is, then tells it that God made it and how wonderful that is. Blake’s tone almost seems ironic , he actually means something very different than what he seems to be saying. Many scholars have argued just that, especially when paired next to his poems about the dangers of religious dogma. The content of these two poem as following shows: The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests 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 sieze the fire?
And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & 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?
When the stars threw down their spears,
And water’d heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger! Tyger!
burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
The Lamb
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & 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
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek &

he is mild, He became a little child: I a child & thou a lamb, We are called by his name. Little Lamb God bless thee. Little Lamb God bless thee.

The former poem, tiger is associated with fire in color: the burning fire is in the color between red and orange, similar to the color of the tiger; secondly, the tiger's eyes are like flames, and made of flames. This poem is not so much about the tiger as it really is, or as a zoologist might present it to us; it is the Tyger, as it appears to the eye of the beholder. Blake imagines the tiger as the embodiment of God's power in creation: the animal is terrifying in its beauty, strength, complexity and vitality.

Meanwhile, concerning to the social background of those poems, the tiger is symbolic of the revolutionary forces: the French people in the French Revolution to which Blake was a supporter. It could destroy the old system and establish a new one. But compare the former with the latter poem, Blake enhanced the meaning of both. These poems focus on evil and the importance of understanding the evil around in hope of attaining a state of innocence. In The Songs of Innocence Blake suggests that by recapturing the imagination and wonderment of childhood, we could achieve the goal of self-awareness.

The poems thus present views of the world as filtered through the eyes and mind of a child. We can also infer that evil can bring forth the loss of innocence. Therefore, one existing similarity is that they both concern the loss of innocence. Many poems from each set are companion pieces to each other. The Lamb is an symbol of innocence, corresponding to The Tiger as the symbol of experience. Blake seeks for balance and harmony in this

unbalanced world. Thus to express the dialectic unity of the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the evil, the white and the black in the world.

The dialectic ideas are fully shown. Another shared theme between the two works, *The Tiger and The Lamb*, is the theme of creation and divine intervention. In both poems Blake questions multiple times about how each was created. In *The Lamb*, Blake suggests that the lamb was created by a godlike being. In *The Tiger* Blake questions if the tiger was created by the same being that created the lamb. Such curiosity is a common theme to both poems. Thus, through the information discussed, it can be seen that there exists a common comparison in two separate works by William Blake.

The themes of both poems are in conjunction with each other. Therefore, according to theme it can be proven that there exists significant similarities in these works by William Blake. It is said that human souls have two sides: a good side, and an evil side. "The Lamb" and "The Tyger," by William Blake, are both poems of deep meaning. They seem to explain both sides of human nature: the light and the dark, the yin and the yang, the good and the evil. They can also represent the transition from a child to an adult or even Heaven and Hell.

"The Lamb" is a poem that is referring to the good side of the human soul, while "The Tyger" is referring to the dark side. The lamb brings to mind innocence, purity, children, or Jesus; the tiger brings to mind viciousness, cunning, danger, or death. Human beings are capable of malicious things, as well as loving things. It seems like Blake believed that this was part of God's

grand design. He seems in awe of the fact that he who created the lamb, also created the tiger.

There is also references to the “ twisted sinews of the heart ” and how that heartbeat leads the Tiger to raise his “ dread hands” and “ dread feet” to spread his terror, much like how the evil side of a human leads him to commit wrongs. Those who marvel at the creation of tigers beside lambs are those questioned in this poem. God has created the meekness of the lamb, in addition to the ferocity of the tyger. So, Blake is dismissing this “ reasonable” contradiction, highlighting the fact that the simple religious expalnation can not constantly constitutes the reality of things.

With his collections Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, William Blake analyzes the relationship between conflicting states of the human soul to show how each relies upon the other to benefit the progression of humanity. “ The Lamb” recreates the innocence well known to infancy and originates the hope and morals that blueprint the basis of an individual. “ The Tyger” then rectifies the assumed simplemindedness of its counterpart,” The Lamb,” by asserting the importance of experience in developing humanity.

Blake demonstrates how, through the varying distinctions of innocence and experience, two contrary states depend upon each other, though sometimes unknowingly. A person should not feel compelled to choose between the two, or label one as good and the other as bad. Learning and understanding the significance between the two, be it love and hate, war and peace, or something as mundanely simple as going and coming, enables individuals

alone to comprehend their lives. As a whole, humanity could put itself at a greater advantage upon recognizing the balance of creation.

Conclusion

William Blake is an important poet representing the pre-romanticism in English literature in whose masterpiece *The Tiger* the structural identicalness between the enlarged metaphor “tiger” and the deafening “anvil music” represents the splendid “making process of the tiger”.