

Duality in william blake's the tyger

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



English author William Blake was notorious for his anti-authoritative poetry that challenged organized religion during the time of the Industrial Revolution. Regarded as one of his most acclaimed works, his poem 'The Tyger' molds together a series of rhetorical questions that seek to understand the meaning behind the creation of the ferocious tiger by a God with ostensibly cryptic intentions. By using deliberate symbolism, the poem 'The Tyger' written by William Blake criticizes the motivations of a God that allows for good and evil to coexist and supports the belief that creations are a direct reflection of their creators.

The narrator's fascination of a fearsome tiger, the main symbol of the poem, represents not only God's capacity of creating evil, but also alludes to the idea that God himself possesses an evil side to him. Right from the first stanza, and repeated once more in the final stanza of the poem, the unknown narrator says "What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" (3-4), questioning the inception of such a marvelous creature and deciding that it could not have come about by chance. The creator of such an animal, undoubtedly God, is described as "immortal" (3) to emphasize the scope of his power. Yet what is noteworthy of this line is the acknowledgement of the tiger's "fearful symmetry" (4), a point that highlights the duality in the capturing beauty of the tiger as well as its bloodthirsty nature. Combining these two features into one being itself seems like a cruel prank played by God because a dangerous animal is given power in its alluring appearance, which is an ill-intentioned concoction. Its existence hints at the belief that an evil design requires an evil designer and calls into question God's reasoning for even allowing the existence of evil.

This is further considered when the tiger is put in stark contrast to the lamb mentioned, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (20). The lamb is widely referred to as a symbol of innocence and gentleness, which increases the impact of the tiger as a symbol of ferocity. This contrast between both of God's creations is an example of the symmetry mentioned in the first stanza and is an attempt to explain the necessity of equilibrium in the universe, letting the reader contemplate that without the existence of one extreme, the dangerous tiger, the other extreme, the gentle lamb, cannot exist. Likewise, the poem suggests that this was perhaps God's intention all along in that for goodness to thrive, evil must first stand in its way. This bold notion may seem beyond human comprehension because the natural inclination for humans is to desire unending goodness, hence the hopefulness of reaching a paradisiacal heaven for most religious individuals. Yet, the poem begs its reader to consider that God created the universe in such a way that allows for the existence of opposing forces in order to fully express his power and godship, that which does not require the understanding of God's subjects.

Another impactful symbol utilized in Blake's poem is the blacksmith that he uses to personify the tiger's creator and assign additional characteristics to the purity of the creator's intentions. We see the introduction of the blacksmith symbol in the fourth stanza when the narrator wonders if the creator used a hammer, chain, furnace, and anvil to forge the deadly tiger, all tools of typical use to a blacksmith (13-15). The theory that all these tools were needed to create the tiger emphasize the deliberate intention behind God's doings and makes the readers ponder over the meaning behind God's seemingly painstakingly difficult task. In essence, if God was willing to go

through the trouble of creating such a ferocious animal, then God must have regarded the tiger's existence as necessary to create balance in a world of innocence that had not yet been tainted by the tiger's presence.

In similar fashion to the symbol of the blacksmith, the symbol of fire used throughout reminds the audience of the danger behind God's task of creating the tiger, and thus God's ability to be dangerous. The nature of a blacksmith's job is to use fire and heat to wield metal into different shapes, which requires not only great skill, but also a degree of courage to work in a possibly hazardous job. The poem demonstrates this at the end of the second stanza in the line "What the hand, dare seize the fire?" (8). In this line, the narrator is in awe that God would be so daring so as to metaphorically put his hand in a fire for the payoff of his evil creation, shedding light to God's more cunning side. The narrator again references fire by describing the tiger as "burning bright/ In the forests of the night" (1-2) and as having fire burning in its eyes (6). This imagery of fire contributes to the allure of the tiger's appearance, similar to how God is portrayed as welcoming and all-loving, but the narrator begs the readers to remember that fire itself is a perilous object, warning that God himself is not to be played around with lest anyone suffer the burn of his consequences. Should humans then fear God for his powerful yet hateful creations, or should they commemorate God for all the good that he has allowed to flourish and might continue to bestow on humanity? The poem is setup as a series of rhetorical questions, implying that this debate is up to the reader's interpretation, but the poem achieves its goal of convincing the reader to scrutinize God's work and challenge its purpose, with the implication that the concurrence

between good and evil that exists in the world is simply a physical manifestation of God's power.

William Blake's 'The Tyger' uses symbolism to criticize the intentions of a daring and experienced God in his noble and in his bad creations. Being compared to a daring blacksmith who plays with fire, God demonstrates just how far his authority can reach. The imagery behind a beautiful tiger stands in stark contrast to its violent nature, which in turn opposes the gentle nature of the symbolic goodness of a lamb. To experience a world where both of these clashing forces are allowed, and even encouraged, to exist uncovers the power behind God's unexplainable actions in creating harmony in the world. Much like the ferocious tiger cannot prevail unless it can prey on the innocent lamb, God's divinity cannot be fully realized if his benevolent creatures are not balanced by his more pernicious creations.