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THE ROMANTIC AGE

13. William Blake

William Blake

Songs of Innocence and of Experience (1789)

The following poems show a polar vision of reality, symbolised by the choice of two animals, the lamb and the tiger, here spelt 'tyger', which is archaic. Also, the language of the lyrics is different, since they belong to two different collections.

The Lamb 47

Little Lamb who made thee¹
Dost² thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed³.
By the stream & o'er the mead⁴;
5 Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing woolly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice:
Little Lamb who made thee
10 Dost thou know who made thee
Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy⁵ name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
15 He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou⁶ a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
20 Little Lamb God bless thee.

1. **thee:** you
2. **Dost:** Do
3. **bid thee feed:** ordered you to eat
4. **mead:** *arch.* for meadow
5. **thy:** your
6. **thou:** you

The Tyger 48

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
 In the forests of the night:
 What immortal hand or eye,
 Could frame¹ thy fearful symmetry?
 5 In what distant deeps or skies.
 Burnt the fire of thine² eyes!
 On what wings dare he aspire!
 What the hand dare seize³ the fire?
 And what shoulder, & what art,
 10 Could twist the sinews⁴ of thy heart?
 And when thy heart began to beat,
 What dread⁵ hand? & what dread feet?
 What the hammer? what the chain,
 In what furnace was thy brain?
 15 What the anvil⁶? what dread grasp⁷,
 Dare its deadly terrors clasp⁸!

When the stars threw down their spears⁹
 And water'd heaven with their tears:
 Did he smile his work to see?
 20 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?

1. **frame**: make
2. **thine**: your
3. **seize**: take and steal (it. *afferrare*), like Prometheus
4. **sinews**: cords in the body connecting our muscles to the bones
5. **dread**: terrible because full of energy
6. **anvil**: it. *incudine*
7. **dread grasp**: strong grip
8. **clasp**: hold
9. **spears**: weapons with a sharp point (it. *lance*)