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Of all of Blake's shorter poems "The Tyger" has received, by far, the most attention, an often confusing array of complementary (as well as contradictory) interpretations, source studies, and prosodic analyses. Of those, the seeking hither and yon for tigers of various sorts has produced especially little that is illuminating about Blake's possible sources for the poem as distinct from sources for his choice of animal or for its (still uneasily received) portrait in the illustration. I should like, therefore, to suggest what is at least a contributory "source" that has nothing to do with tigers at all, but that does have a good deal to do with the idea of creation lying at the center of the poem.

As early as *An Island in the Moon* (1785) Blake mentions Edward Young prominently, along with Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Voltaire, Chatterton, Hervey, Johnson, and others—a kind of thumbnail account of his own reading. But our steady attention to Young in Blake studies has, understandably, focused sharply on Blake's herculean project of illuminating *Night Thoughts*, little if any attention being paid to other of Young's poems—including the relatively unknown "A Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job," first published in 1719.<sup>1</sup> It is, to be sure, an unexceptional (if unexceptionable) work, predictably pious and rhetorically similar to other works by Young; but his footnote to the opening words of his paraphrase, "Thrice happy Job," is of some immediate interest with respect to "The Tyger":

Longinus has a chapter on interrogations, which shows that they contribute much to the sublime. This speech of the Almighty is made up of them. Interrogation seems, indeed, the proper style of majesty incensed. It differs from other manner of reproof, as bidding a person execute himself does from a common execution; for he that asks the guilty a proper question, makes him, in effect, pass sentence on himself.

Now, there is little doubt that Blake, well before writing "The Tyger," had taken note of the interrogatives of Job 38 and, as well, of the various suggestive phrasings in God's speech that, in themselves, doubtless informed the rhetorical contours of his own poem. As Morton Paley reminds us in his exhaustive documentation of the sublimity of "The Tyger," "the single book of the Bible . . . considered most sublime in the eighteenth century . . . was Job."<sup>2</sup> Blake would have found there the "reproof" of questioners that the speaker of "The Tyger" seems not to have read himself: "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it" (40:2). But the

burden of God's angry reproof of Job is the reaffirming of the latter's littleness and incapacity, culminating in the advice to "abase" the proud "and bring him low."<sup>3</sup> In any discussion of Blake's speaker, then, Young's footnote is at least an intriguing gloss on the biblical passage. If sublime interrogation is a manifestation of "majesty incensed," then the speaker of "The Tyger," in his usurpation of this rhetorical mode, is presumptuous beyond words, asking "the guilty a proper question" so that the guilty will, "in effect, pass sentence on himself." On the other hand, Blake may have found in Young's idea of "bidding a person execute himself" the germinal principle of the structure of "The Tyger," in which Blake, as creator, quite literally allows his speaker, by questioning, to convict himself before the reader's eyes. God incensed becomes fallen man incensed, both equally "guilty."

However characteristic such a splendid inversion is, I do not intend to press the point beyond suggestion here despite its potential impingement upon the Book of Job and Young's redaction of "part" of it. What the former lacks for Blake's purposes is not the sanction for the interrogatives but a language that could be construed as antecedent to that of "The Tyger." If such passages as God's description of Behemoth (40:18-19) and Leviathan (41:12) seem to resonate in the poem, the quietly modulated sublimity of God's entire speech argues against its prominence in Blake's creative memory. In Young's paraphrase, on the other hand, once Job and his friends reach "the last extent of human thought" without settling the argument, "Heaven" interposes interrogatively and, translating the Bible's passive "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?" and the general "who laid the corner stone thereof" (Job 38:4-6), focuses rather sharply on the creative hand—a focus that parallels Blake's frequently noted insistence throughout "The Tyger" on the fundamental equivalency of hand and eye. Here is Young: "What hand, declare, / Hung it on nought, and fasten'd it on air" (53-54). But if Blake's echoic truncation, "What dread hand?" thus suggests the hand of God, "what dread feet?" ambiguously refers to the creation as well as the creator. The immortal eye "frames" but also perceives what is framed thereby: "Did he smile his work to see?" This merging of creator and creature has been extensively analyzed by John Grant,<sup>4</sup> but the progressive diminution and severance of God's eye/hand to (implicitly) Blake's engraver-hand/readerly-eye and thence to the speaker's stunned eye/impotent hand need further remarking, since this process is a dramatic re-forming of Young's text and its originary biblicisms. Attributing the lesser perception to man as the Bible does, Young writes: "Earth's numerous kingdom, — hast thou view'd them all. . . . And can thy span of knowledge grasp the ball?" (59-60). Moreover, in Blake's heroic manuscript

struggle with his poem, "What the anvil? what dread grasp" was originally "What the anvil what the arm"; then he crossed out "arm" only to replace it with "arm" once more, then "grasp," "clasp," and "dread grasp" apparently in that order.

These linguistic affinities between Young and Blake, however, would clearly verge on the merely fortuitous (not to say factitious) were there no other evidence of Blake's attention to Young's otherwise obscure poem. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* provides such evidentiary confirmation. It has long been recognized, of course, that Blake's tiger "includes" Behemoth and Leviathan, the penultimate "Memorable Fancy" of *The Marriage* establishing that relationship explicitly.<sup>5</sup> But Young as well has a role in Blake's composite imagining. For example, Blake writes, "a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro the deep blackning all beneath"; in Young, Leviathan's "pastimes like a caldron boil the flood, / And blacken ocean with the rising mud" (387-388). Blake's Leviathan "reared like a ridge of golden rocks" while Young's "rears him from the floods, / And, stretching forth his stature to the clouds, / Writhes in the sun aloft his scaly height, / And strikes the distant hills with transient light" (371-374). The forehead of Blake's Leviathan, parting the waves ("from which the sea fled away"), is "divided into streaks of green & purple," his mouth and gills hanging "just above the raging foam"; and in Young "His hoary footsteps shine along the sea; / The foam, high-wrought, with white divides the green" (390-91). None of Blake's details appears in the Book of Job.

Blake's analogizing in this "Memorable Fancy" (Leviathan advancing on the speaker and his Angel companion "with all the fury of a spiritual existence") reflects the minimalist perception of the religiously orthodox, to whom the physical details of this creation are at best similitudinously relatable to "spiritual existences." The hand is more powerful than the eye—which is to say the hand creates what the eye only sees, a subject-object dualism that is inherent in all Angels. "Spiritual existences" (E 41) are "framed" by the eye and hand and are perceivable only through the eye, to use Blake's later locution in *Auguries of Innocence* (E 496). Similarly, it is Blake's hand and eye that creates "The Tyger" which the Angelic speaker perceives as a tiger and the creation of which (both "Tyger" and tiger) he conceives of in terms of either/or ("hand or eye").<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising, then, that in *Jerusalem* 91:38-40 (E 251) Blake attributes these prodigious creations to Los's Spectre, not to Los: Leviathan is "War / By Land," Behemoth "War by Sea"—both fallen perversions of their eternal spiritual existences.<sup>7</sup> Such an allegorization betrays the "rational demonstration" or "thought" by which the Spectre creates the beasts in the first place. As early as 1788 in his annotations to Swedenborg's *Wisdom of Angels Con-*

*cerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* Blake wrote, "Thought alone can make monsters" (E 603). Thought alone also makes but similitudes: "Demonstration Similitude & Harmony are Objects of Reasoning" (Annotations to Reynolds, E 659). Thus Los's Spectre in *Jerusalem*, "Refusing to believe without demonstration" (91:35, E 251), "frames" the physical, outward counterparts, as *he sees* them, of "spiritual existences." In the parlance of *The Marriage* he imposes his "metaphysics" on everyone else precisely as the Angel of *The Marriage*'s Leviathan passage imposes *his* metaphysics (Leviathan itself) on the speaker, and as the speaker of "The Tyger" imposes his metaphysics on the reader. In "The Tyger," then, the speaker is an Angel-Spectre, a surrogate Urizenic god who frames, and the tiger emblemizes *his* "metaphysics."

Four other key words of Blake's poem may now claim our attention. While Young repeats faithfully the biblical account of Leviathan's appearance, his addition to the Job text of the word "terror" may well have claimed Blake's attention in writing "What dread grasp, / Dare its deadly terrors grasp." Such a speculation is lent additional credence by the collocation in "The Tyger" of "shoulders," "sinews," and "dread." For Young "Strength . . . sits in state" on Leviathan's "shoulder," the word "dreadful" occurs thrice in the same context, and Behemoth is said to display "complicated sinews."<sup>8</sup>

As Blake reminds us in a Proverb of Hell, "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees" (E 35). One might well argue that where one fool sees a tiger, another sees Behemoth and Leviathan. Or, in the language of *A Vision of the Last Judgment* (E 566), what both see is "somewhat like" a tiger—perhaps a useful gloss on Blake's puzzling graphic tiger at the bottom of the plate, which may well be yet another somewhat-likeness. Neither is "really" what is "there," but only a "similitude," one of those "Portions of life" that Urizen takes to be the whole in his anti-apocalypse (*Book of Urizen*, E 81). Even Jesus made the same mistake when he was young, as *The Everlasting Gospel* rather startlingly tells us—until God (that is, Jesus's own imagination, his true self) thumped him on the head to remind him that the God to whom he humbled himself was in his own breast, not "out there" as a framing hand or abstract power (E 520).

Assuming that I am correct about Blake's cognizance of Young's paraphrase one must still wonder what it was that led him to (as it were) "prefer" it to the Job chapters in the writing of "The Tyger." While it is impossible to be certain about such matters, I do have a guess or two. One has to do with Young's employment of the word "daring" to describe Job's words to God (29). The word in any of its forms is rare in the Bible, all but one of its occurrences in the New Testament.<sup>9</sup> Although this lone exception is in the Book of Job ("None is so fierce that dare stir him up"—41:10), where Blake would

have noted it, the context is God's description of Leviathan's power rather than the creator's power in its production. Blake, perhaps taking his hint from (and reversing) Young, places his form of the word at the center of his speaker's much-discussed charge "against" the creator of the tiger: "What immortal hand or eye, / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" Young's "version" of this is the Bible-sanctioned conventionality of God's chastisement of man's presumption: "And darest thou with the world's great Father vie?" (347). Put somewhat crudely, that is precisely what Blake as poet does dare and does do, in contrast to his speaker who only dares the divine darer and doer by questioning. Young's final vision of an unBlakean Job "O'erwhelm'd with shame," abhorring himself and his "weakness," and surrendering to God's "might" (407, 409, 401) thus may have had something to do with Blake's implicit criticism of his speaker.

That somewhat dubious point aside, my second guess as to the reason for Blake's recollection of Young's Job has to do less with conceptions than with language. Given the severe selectivity of Blake's "borrowings" from the paraphrase, I think that he may have perceived in those isolated but crucial words the remnants of the "original genius" Young himself wrote about in *Conjectures on Original Composition*, a work Blake surely read along with everyone else in the later eighteenth century, and one that participates subliminally, at least, in Blake's earliest conception of "the true man . . . the Poetic Genius" in *All Religions Are One*. In this light Young's epilogic line in the paraphrase, "Man was not made to question, but adore," would have been to Blake more than casually memorable. He himself no doubt found that "lesson" in the Book of Job by reading it in its "infernal sense," perceiving the sublime allegory hidden beneath its numbing "allegorical" surface. And he applies that lesson in his own sublime mode (fortified by Young's footnote reference to Longinus) to "The Tyger" and its benighted speaker. Yet we should notice that Young's grammar in that memorable line could not have rung quite right in Blake's ear. The words are right, as *The Everlasting Gospel* and *Auguries of Innocence* seem to urge, for in the latter

The Questioner who sits so sly  
Shall never know how to Reply  
He who replies to words of Doubt  
Doth put the Light of Knowledge out  
(E 494)

Questions and answers are both equally pernicious to the Imagination. In *Milton* (41:12-13) "the idiot Questioner . . . is always questioning, / But never capable of answering"; when he does answer, he "publishes doubt & calls it knowledge; whose Science is Despair / Whose

pretence to knowledge is Envy, whose whole Science is To destroy the wisdom of ages . . ." (41:15-17, E 142). It is not, then, as Young would have it, that "Man was not made to question" but rather, for Blake, that *the* man who is merely "made," framed like the creatures (or perceives himself to be so made or framed), is the idiot questioner—and answerer. Eternal Man, the Human Form Divine, the Imagination is neither "made" nor a questioner-answerer. So with Young's other addition to the Book of Job here, man being born to "adore." Blake's "reversal" of this apothegm is: "Thou art a Man God is no more / Thy own humanity learn to adore" (*The Everlasting Gospel*, E 520). If Blake concluded from his reading of the Job paraphrase that Young "read the Bible day & night," he also saw that Young "readst black" where Blake reads "white."<sup>10</sup> And therein lies all the difference.

<sup>1</sup>Morton D. Paley, in *Energy and the Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), does refer to one of Young's footnotes but ignores the poem itself. In his splendid *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job* (Abo, Finland: Abo Akademi, 1973), Bo Lindberg mentions the paraphrase as something Blake read, perhaps even while reading *Night Thoughts* in the same 1796 edition, but says nothing further about Young's Job.

<sup>2</sup>*Energy and the Imagination*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>40:11-13. I have taken this quotation out of its proper context in Job, but God's point here is the same as it is elsewhere, that Job has not the power to humble anyone.

<sup>4</sup>"The Art and Argument of 'The Tyger,'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 2 (1960), 38-60. Grant's conclusion that the speaker is "an average but also imaginative man who is almost overwhelmed by the mysterious prodigy he sees as a Tyger," however, seems to me to underestimate Blake's achievement as well as to confuse the issue of the speaker.

<sup>5</sup>*The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 41-42, hereafter cited in my text as E plus the page number.

<sup>6</sup>The Notebook drafts interestingly show that Blake was undecided as to "or" or "&" in the line "What immortal hand or eye."

<sup>7</sup>Jean Hagstrum is one of the few to pay particular attention to this *Jerusalem* passage in connection with Blake's Job illustration #15; see his *William Blake: Poet and Prophet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 134. See also Lindberg, *William Blake's Illustrations*, p. 297. Grant makes an uncharacteristic error in identifying this creation in *Jerusalem* 91 as Los's ("Art and Argument," p. 53).

<sup>8</sup>Although the phrase "sinews of his stones" appears in the biblical Job, that text includes neither "shoulders" nor "dread."

<sup>9</sup>Romans 5:7 and 15:18, 1 Corinthians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 10:12, all quite conventional and unsuggestive with respect to Blake's poem. "Daring" does not appear in the Bible.

<sup>10</sup>The quotations are from the section of *The Everlasting Gospel* in which Blake also distinguishes sharply between the "Vision of Christ" which is "Thine" (the one that "is the Friend of All Mankind") and that which is "Mine," the one who "speaks in parables to the Blind / Thine loves the same world that mine hates / Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates" (E 524).