The Taoing of a Sound –

Phonetic Drama in William Blake's *The Tyger*

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> "Not a line is drawn without intention... as Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant, so Painting
admits not a Grain of Sand or a Blade of Grass Insignificant,
much less an Insignificant Blur or Mark."
>
> William Blake,
> "A Vision of the Last Judgement"

0. Blake compares here the two art forms that he was such a great master of, and may not surprise us when he says that there is no element in a painting which can be left to chance, has nothing to say. We intuitively feel that we could not paint in a pigeon or two in the background of the Mona Lisa without totally altering its impact. But can we accept Blake's second clause? Can it be that in a poem too, every individual sound has significance, has its role to play? We are more accustomed to thinking that the greatness of a literary work lies in its conceptual richness; we would not be surprised if Blake had said that every clause in a poem was important, or even every word – but every letter, every sound?

Blake knew that the artist's perceptions and the verbal music in which they are communicated form one fabric, one inseparable whole. And that the sonic threads with which the artist weaves a poetic tapestry, the instruments in the poet's symphony, are the individual sounds, of which the poems words are made up. To penetrate fully into the beauty and power of a poem, then, we cannot stop at clauses, parts of speech, words, or even morphemes. We must go all the way, and study how the sounds of which the words are made up link and interrelate the network of those words.

Guy de Maupassant makes the same point, although he does not mention sounds:

> Words have a soul. Most readers, and even writers, demand only that they have a sense. One has to find that soul, which appears in the contact of words with other words.

In what follows, I propose to take William Blake at his word, and de Maupassant at his. I will examine Blake's The Tyger, one of his greatest poems, possibly one of the greatest poems of the English language, with all the microscopic attention to detail that Blake exhorts us to, in the hope that in studying the individual sounds of the words in The Tyger, we shall come a step closer to catching a glimpse of their souls, and of the collective soul which Blake has woven with them, as they revolve around and through each other, in the intensity of the dance of Tyger and Lamb.

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?

William Blake

Songs of Innocence
and of Experience (1794)[1]

1.

1.1. Before we "descend" to the level of sound (to use a metaphor of height [and therefore of importance] which I find exceedingly suspect), let me make a few preliminary observations about the macroscopic structure of this poem. Our first impression may be that the poem ends as it begins: that verse A (I will refer to the six verses as A – F) is identical to verse F. We then see that this is not quite true – that there is one crucial difference in words: a change of the modal could for the semi-modal dare – and one difference in punctuation: there is no comma after Tyger Tyger in F. The poem begins with a question about ability, in its fourth line, and moves, in its last line, to one about courage, or responsibility. This move was a most necessary one, for in line four, Blake set us a riddle: to discover in what way the Tyger is symmetrical, and beyond that, how a symmetry can inspire fear.

Interestingly, Blake never actually tells us – he just asks. There are no declarative sentences in the poem. And I think that we feel that the sequence of questions which the poem hammers us with – that they hammer at Blake with equal force. The unreflected life is not worth living, Plato tells us. And what problem can claim more urgency in our reflections than the existence of suffering, and of evil? If there ever was a century in which such thoughts had to be uppermost in a person's mind, is that not this century that we are nearing the end of?

Blake held that we go through our lives in a sort of cycle; that we come into the world innocent (as babes), that we go through life gathering experience through the process of questioning; and if we are clear and courageous enough to face even the fiercest of questions, that we can pass through experience into a kind of second innocence, a state in which the very polarity of innocence/experience can fall away, be transcended.

Therefore, since questioning has such a vital role in Blake's philosophy, let us examine the questions he uses in this poem, which can be seen as just a series – but I think perhaps slightly more revealingly as the climactic unveiling of a single question. Let us, then, with this in mind, inspect the poem's structure. Blake is a dramaturge; he, like Eliot who follows him, wants to lead us to an overwhelming question, but without telegraphing the punch line. How, therefore, are the questions to be arrayed within the six-verse macrostructure?

The poem has thirteen questions (i.e., sentences [or sentence fragments] ending with a question mark), seven question marks in the first half, and six in the second – an almost perfect numerical equilibrium. There is one further question which ends in a major mark of punctuation – the last question of the fourth verse, which is the only question to end in an exclamation point. Thus we have a total of fourteen questions which end with a mark of punctuation, seven in each half.

This balancing in the number of questions can be seen as a kind of numerical "rhyme," a rhyme which harmonizes with the many places in the poem where we see dualities, sometimes in repetitions (Tyger Tyger), sometimes in polar contrasts (as in the first two rhyme words – bright versus night). But Blake is too subtle an artist to give us only repetition without variation. We will see many parallels to the structural theme of difference within identity (as in the case of the almost identity of A and F) as we deepen our exploration of this poem.

1.2. When we look at the kinds of questions Blake uses, we find that in the first half, there is just one kind of question word: eight occurrences of the wh-word what, with one extra occurrence of a wh-word that does not question – the when on line 11, which opens the poem's first adverbial clause of time. In the second half, we find that Blake has included, as in the first half, exactly one adverbial wh-word that is not used as a question – and again, it is the word when.

It is worth noting that the two when's are placed similarly with respect to two singularities in the poem's punctuation. The when in line 11 comes one line before the last line of the poem's first half, the first line to contain two question marks, a pair which is answered by the two question marks in the first line of the second half. Since these two lines are the only two which contain double question marks, it seems safe to say that Blake wants us to see this transition between halves as an important one.

And now we note that the second when is located one line before the only line in the poem's four interior stanzas to contain a colon – and that the two lines which this colon precedes have a good claim to being the climax of the poem's questioning. They are the only two yes-no questions in all of the fourteen questions which Blake leads us to. We will see below that there are many other indications that there is an important poetic boundary before these last two lines of the fifth stanza.

The image Blake gives us of the creator in the fourth verse is that of the blacksmith, forging the ferociousness of the Tyger's brain – its savagery, implacability – out of molten iron. And we may even want to hear in the sound of the twelve what's – in the whoosh of the wh's, in the explosions of the [t]'s – the blows of the blacksmith's hammer.

1.3. The fact that the poem ends with a (near) repetition of its first verse gives it a structure of periphery (the two outer verses, A and F), and core (B – E), as schematically suggested in (1).

(1) A:

B:

C:

D:

E:

F:

If we exclude the two almost identical questions of the periphery, and ask: which of the questions of the core is the most shattering, the hardest of all to accept (for though Blake does not answer these questions in declaratives, does not force us with grammar to assent to an assertion, there can be no doubt about the answers he has been forced, in his own questioning, to arrive at), do we not all agree? Is there anyone who does not feel most unforgettably in the depths of their being this line, the last of the core:

Did he who made the Lamb make thee

We find no other answer than Blake found – the creator made the Lamb of God, the Prince of Light, with the same hand or eye that made the Prince of Darkness. We need not be Christians, need not believe in Satan and Christ, need not postulate the existence of a god, even, to come to feel that in this universe, the forces of light and dark, of good and evil, must necessarily come into existence at the same time. They are polar entities, like left and right. Without right, there could be no left, and vice versa. And so also for night and day, for Tyger and Lamb. It is interesting that Blake, even though he personally was a man for whom a Christian perspective was by no means foreign, does not go further towards imposing this set of beliefs on us than capitalizing the central word Lamb. Importantly, the three occurrences of the pronoun he (in lines 7, 19, and 20) and the lone occurrence of his (in line 19), are not capitalized, which I think Blake might have felt would Christianize the poem excessively. The fearfulness of this poem's symmetry, and its incredible power, are far more universal than could be contained in any one religion.

A thought that is equally chilling: the question one line before that of line 20, and of its implied answer. Yes, from Genesis, we remember that God looked upon what He had created and found it good. The creator could create the universe, with its fundamental, awesome, fearful symmetry, and could smile upon its perfection. Whatever brought our universe into being not only could do so, and dared to, but also, seeing the perfection, and beauty, of its central balance, smiled upon that beauty.

2.0. There is much more to say about this symmetry, and about the relationships between the Tyger, and its creator, and us, but let us leave the philosophical issues for the moment, and put on our linguist's hats. Given that the two last questions in the core, the two yes-no questions of lines 19 and 20, are of such central conceptual importance in the poem, is there any way that Blake highlights them, makes them salient in the way he frames them?

The strongest answer to this question comes from a fundamental observation, which I owe to my colleague Rajeev Patke. He pointed out that the question of line 20, though it has the inverted auxiliary-subject order of a typical yes-no question, is missing its question mark. This is a perception which may be hard to accept, for none of the published versions of Tyger which I have seen print line 20 without a question mark. However, the copy of the engraving which I have appended to this paper seems clear: there was room in the drawing for Blake to have included a question mark, and he did not.[2] The absence of this question mark, after this question to end all questions, is thunderous. One half of our mind hears Blake asking us for an answer, and the other half hears him as almost compelling our assent.

There are many other structural reasons for seeing the two last questions of the poem's core as being set off: it is only these two questions that are not what-questions, only these which are to be answered with yes or no. And there are a host of other ways in which Blake sets off first E, the stanza which will contain the climactic questions, and then, within E, line 20 – the most overwhelming question of all. Let us examine first, in (2), some of the structural ways in which E is made different from the other three stanzas of the core. For this differentness of E, I will write 'E ≠.'

2.1. (2) E ≠

a. Since this poem explores creation, and thus the kind of verbs that languages use to talk about creation – transitive verbs – will have to be extremely important. How does Blake distribute the transitive verbs of the poem?

The answer is particularly evident: with the exception of E, there is just one transitive verb per verse. In A, on the fourth line (I will symbolize this as 'A.4'), we find the first transitive – frame. The list of all nine of the poem's transitives is as shown below. Note that the lone transitive verb of each of the first four verses is preceded by a modal auxiliary verb, alternatingly could and dare.

A.4 Could frame
B.4 dare sieze [I have kept Blake's spelling]
C.2 Could twist

D.4 Dare ... clasp

E.1 threw down
E.2 water'd
E.3 see
E.4a Did ... make
E.4b made

F.4 Dare frame

So all verses but E have just one transitive verb. Moreover, each of these verbs is a monosyllabic verb, located on an even line of its stanza.

E differs from all other stanzas in having more than one transitive; in having a bisyllable – water'd; in having all its verbs in the past tense; and in having one of these verbs followed by a verbal particle – threw down. And only in E are there no modals at all.

b. Except for E, the subjects of the transitives are all body parts, or are metonymically associated with body parts. Furthermore, all of these subjects start with the question word what:

A.4, F.4: what immortal hand or eye
B.4: what (the) hand
C.1: what shoulder, & what art
D.3: what dread grasp

E.1, E.2: the stars (the poem's only plural subject)
E.3: he
E.4a,b: he

When we put the two sets of observations in (2a) and (2b) together, the following picture emerges:

B, C, D	E
questioning	asserting
conditional	indicative
hypothetical	simple narrative past
a trickle of transitivity	a flood of transitivity

c. Moreover, the mood of E is completely at variance with that of B, C, and D. In E, we find ourselves in mythic time, in some unguessable setting. The stars have been doing battle in some great clash, located higher than heaven itself – and are the tears of the stars the shining lights we see in the night sky? With the creator present, smiling? Over what? The newly created Tyger? It feels as if we are present at the birth of the cosmos itself.

d. There are many other ways in which Blake sets off E from B, C, D. I will mention only a few of them here.

i. Adjectives. All stanzas except E contain adjectives:
[A, F: $_{3,\,23}$immortal, $_{4,\,24}$fearful; B: $_{5}$distant; C: $_{12}$dread (twice); D: $_{19}$dread, $_{20}$deadly].
Note that while the adjectives of the periphery **end** in the same way – in an unstressed vowel followed by [l] – the adjectives of the core **begin** in the same way: with a [d] which is followed by a stressed short front vowel.

ii. References to a second person possessor. All verses except E have at least one occurrence of the second person possessive thy (C has two). E is unique both in failing to have thy, and also in manifesting the lone occurrence of thee.

iii. Body parts. All stanzas except E have at least one reference to a body part. [A,F: $_{3}$hand, $_{3}$eye; B: $_{6}$eyes, $_{7}$wings, $_{8}$hand; C: $_{9}$shoulder, $_{10}$sinews, $_{10}$heart, $_{11}$heart, $_{12}$hand, $_{12}$feet; D: $_{14}$brain]

iv. Syntax. E is the only stanza which starts with a subordinate clause. Furthermore, in all the other stanzas, there is a major syntactic break after the stanza's first two lines. In E, though Blake ends line 18 with the poem's only colon, in fact it is the first three lines which make up a syntactically complete independent unit.

v. Nouns: all of the poem's lexical nouns fall on icti – metrically strong positions within their lines. In all of the stanzas except E, there are seven nouns. In each, these seven are so arranged that in three lines, there are two nouns, while in the remaining line, there is just one noun. Only in E is there a deviation from this rhythmic distribution of nouns – there, there are two lines which only have one noun. Since this pattern is somewhat complex, I will diagram it below:

A,F:	Tyger	Tyger
	forests	night
	hand	eye
	symmetry	
B:	deeps	skies
	fire	eyes
	wings	
	hand	fire
C:	shoulder	art
	sinews	heart
	heart	
	hand	feet
D:	hammer	chain
	furnace	brain
	anvil	grasp
	terrors	
E:	stars	spears
	heaven	tears
	work	
	Lamb	

2.2. Thus far in our investigation of the ways the Blake has made E stand out like a sore thumb (I will say that Blake has sore-thumbed E), we have been concerned with grammatical and conceptual patternings. But it is also true that Blake sore-thumbs E on the level of sound. One of the most obvious cases of this phonetic sore-thumbing lies in the distribution of the poem's second most salient alliterating segment – the [b]'s of line 1. In (3), I show in boldface all the words in which [b] is found:

(3) Tyger Tyger, **<u>b</u>urning <u>b</u>right**,

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?

In A, we see two [b]'s, both word-initial, both in the same line – in the two final icti of line 1. In B, we find just one [b]. The fact that this [b] occurs in burnt, a form of the word in which the first [b] was found, is highly significant; it makes us pay even closer heed to this sequence of alliterations. Then in C, we encounter again a pair of [b]'s in the same line, the second of which again being a line-final ictus. Though the first of the pair is not ictal, it is in the same foot in its line as was line 1's first [b] – both are in their line's third feet. Furthermore, though the word began does not contain [r], which all previous [b]'s have, it contains the [n] which was in the first and third [b]-words, and the line-final [t] of beat picks up the line-final [t] of bright and also the final [t] of burnt. When, in D, we encounter only one [b], in brain, we are not surprised – the pattern of two [b]'s in odd stanzas, and one in even ones, is confirmed, and we await the two [b]'s of the next stanza with confidence, a confidence that is strengthened by the recurrence of the [r] and the [n] which we have just met in brain. I refer to such sets of sounds as the {r, n, t} which we have seen above to accompany the poem's [b]'s as gangs; we will see other cases of the way Blake gangs the sounds of The Tyger below.

The high salience which the sound game of alliteration gains from the poem's first line, and the lexical repetition of burning – burnt (this is the first case of lexical repetition which we meet with in the poem, after the opening Tyger Tyger), and the alternating rhythm of: { 2 [b]'s, 1 [b], 2 [b]'s, 1 [b]} leads the reader to expect two [b]'s in E. With the thwarting of this expectation, E is sore-thumbed. It goes without saying that the fact that all of the poem's [b]'s are not only word-initial, but are also located in content words, as opposed to grammatical elements, increases dramatically that poetic weight and importance of the pattern we have just examined.

It is clear that the most salient alliteration of all is that of the [t]'s from the first two words of line 1, a case that I will take up below. For the moment, though, let me pass on to the next most salient case of alliteration, which I take to be that of the three [f]'s of line 4. In (4), I have boldfaced all of the words which contain [f] in the poem:

(4)

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 first thing that we note is that the sound [f] only occurs on even-numbered lines, and that it gangs with [r]. With the lone exception of the suffix -$_{4}$ful and the word $_{12}$feet, all of the poem's [f]'s appear in words with [r]. The first [f]-word falls on the second ictus of A.2, the next three falling on the first and second icti of A.4, and on the weak syllable of A.4's third foot. The [f]'s in the first six lines, then, set up a subpattern something like that suggested in (5):

(5) Second ictus of even lines: [f . . . r]

When the reader encounters the fire of B.2, this pattern is confirmed. The next place where the pattern could manifest itself is in B.4; there, we find it partially disconfirmed. While the repetition of fire fills the phonetic bill, the metrical requirements are not adhered to, for the second fire appears in the fourth, not in the second, ictus of B.4. And when the reader gets to the second foot of C.2, and finds there no [f], the pattern is further weakened. Arriving at line C.4, the reader finds only the ghost of the pattern: the second ictus has no [f], and though there is an [f] in the fourth foot of C.4, it is [r]-less.

Continuing on to the next even line, we find the pattern appearing one last time, with the syllable fur- of furnace occupying the second ictus. There is absolutely no trace of the pattern left in D.4, nor any in E. Thus we see that E is sore-thumbed not only by the absence of various grammatical elements, such as what and thy, but also by the absence of [b] and [f], two phonemes whose distribution is highlighted by the salience of their alliterations in the first stanza.

In the case of both of these phonemes, we note that a very clear pattern is set up initially, and that as we move through the poem towards the climactic stanza, the pattern weakens. This need not always be so; indeed, in the case of the question-word what, the opposite holds – the number of what's in the core increases monotonically right up to E. We must, therefore, try to find reasons not only for the establishment and discontinuation of patterns, but also for the speed of these changes in distribution. This will not be a simple task; it is clear that I am nowhere close to having enough cases to even be able to suggest plausible first hypotheses in this area.

It is clear, then, that E has been made to stand out like a sore thumb among the poem's stanzas. The differences already make themselves felt in E's first line. The stanza is set off from the others by the fact that it starts with a subordinate clause, by the plurality of its subject, by the presence of the verbal particle down, or of the first plural possessive their, to say nothing of the abrupt introduction of thematic material implying celestial conflicts, and so on. What I want to show now is that Blake increases the sore-thumbing within E – that line 20 is the most sore-thumbed line of the whole poem.

The two most obvious ways in which Blake has made line 20 stand out are in its syntax and in its lexical repetition. Syntactically, it is the only line in the poem which contains a relative clause, and from the point of view of repetition, the only two lines in the poem which repeat a lexical item are line 1 – the Tyger line – and line 20 – the Lamb line. Thematically, of course, lines 1 and 20 are the only ones to mention animals.

When we turn to the level of sound, we discover two striking ways in which Blake sore-thumbs line 20. One of the poem's most salient sounds is the first alliterator – [t], which occurs three times in the first line. If we follow the occurrences of [t] through the poem, we discover that there is just one line in which there are no occurrences at all of this sound – the Lamb line. And if we look at the distribution of the phoneme which is on the other end of Tyger, the most frequent sound of the first line, we find that [r] too occurs in every line of the poem but the Lamb line. In (13), I have superimposed these two distributions; the [t]'s are capitalized, and the [r]'s are boldfaced, to make them easier to spot.

(6)

Tyge**r** Tyge**r**, bu**r**ning b**r**ighT,
In the fo**r**esTs of the nighT:
WhaT immo**r**Tal hand o**r** eye,
Could f**r**ame thy fea**r**ful symmeT**r**y?

In whaT disTanT deeps o**r** skies,
Bu**r**nT the fi**r**e of thine eyes?
On whaT wings da**r**e he aspi**r**e?
WhaT the hand, da**r**e sieze the fi**r**e?

And whaT shoulde**r**, & whaT a**r**T,
Could TwisT the sinews of thy hea**r**T?
And when thy hea**r**T began To beaT,
WhaT d**r**ead hand? & whaT d**r**ead feeT?

WhaT the hamme**r**? whaT the chain?
In whaT fu**r**nace was thy b**r**ain?
WhaT the anvil? whaT d**r**ead g**r**asp,
Da**r**e iTs deadly Te**rr**ors clasp!

When the sTa**r**s th**r**ew down thei**r** spea**r**s
And waTe**r**'d heaven with thei**r** Tea**r**s:
Did he smile his wo**r**k To see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee

Tyge**r** Tyge**r** bu**r**ning b**r**ighT,
In the fo**r**esTs of the nighT;
WhaT immo**r**Tal hand o**r** eye,
Da**r**e f**r**ame thy fea**r**ful symmeT**r**y?

3.0. I will return to some of the other ways in which the Lamb line is highlighted, but first, I will need to introduce another type of poetic structuring: co-sectioning. I will argue that "The Tyger" is not only a poem which is made up of a sequence of six quartets (which I have referred to with the letters A – F), but is simultaneously a poem of four sextets, which I will refer to with the Roman numerals I – IV.

3.1. One of the clearest pieces of evidence for the necessity of hypothesizing this co-sectioning of the poem comes from a study of the number of syllables per line. The great majority of the poem's lines (18 of them) are like the Tyger-line in having 7 syllables. When we examine where the six eight-syllable lines are placed, we see that their locations – namely A.4, C.2, C.3, E.2, E.4, F.4 – do not make any obvious pattern in terms of where they fall within the boundaries of A – F. However, if we divide the poem up into the four sextets I – IV, and plot the octosyllabic lines in this structure, we see a more hopeful distribution:

(7) Lines with **eight** syllables

I 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?
II 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?

III 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:
IV 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?

Now we can see that these six lines are distributed among the sextets in an even, alternating rhythm: 1 – 2 – 1 – 2. And when we investigate another type of unusual line, namely, those lines which, like the Lamb line, are composed only of monosyllabic words, we find that again, there are just six of these. And here too, when we look at their distribution in terms of the stanzaic structure of the poem, no regularity emerges. The monosyllabic lines are the following: B.2, B.4, C.4, E.1, E.3, E.4. However, looked at in terms of the four sextets, we find that these six lines manifest the same alternating 1 – 2 – 1 – 2 rhythm which the octosyllabic lines do. And when these two patterns are superimposed, as I have done in (8), where the boldfaced lines are the octosyllables, and the italicized lines are the monosyllabic ones,

(8) I 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?
II 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?

III 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:
IV *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?

then we see that there is just one place in the poem where these two singularities coincide: the Lamb line. Thus we encounter yet one more way in which this line is sore-thumbed.

Lest it appear that the only reasons for positing the above co-sectioning into four sextets have to do with octosyllabicity and monosyllabic lines, let me mention some of the quite considerable mass of additional evidence of different kinds which supports such a quadripartitioning.

3.2. One of the strongest cases comes from an examination of the distribution of the poem's four tensed intransitive verbs, which are all found in the core, one in each of the non-peripheral stanzas: burnt in B.2, began in C.3, was in D.2, and Did . . .smile in E.3. When we study their distribution with more care, we see that these four verbs form a mirror around the midline of the poem: the first and last close and open, respectively, the exterior sextets, and the inner two are respectively two lines before the end, and two lines before the beginning, of the interior sextets. There is even a regularity with respect to where in their lines the four intransitives are placed. The first and last are in the first feet of their lines (although the main verb of the complex [19]Did . . .smile falls on the second ictus of its line), while the stressed syllables of the interior intransitives fall of the third icti of their lines.

3.3. Another striking regularity that arises with the postulation of a quadripartitie structure comes from the poem's eight auxiliary verbs, which I have boldfaced in (9):

(9) Auxiliaries

I 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?
II 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?

III 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:
IV 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?

These eight fall into a 1 – 3 – 1 – 3 rhythm in the four sextets, in such a way that in every sextet but the last, there is an auxiliary at the beginning of the sextet's fourth line (in the last sextet, this auxiliary falls instead at the beginning of the sixth and last line). The first two of these line-initial auxiliaries are could, the second two are dare. Then, in addition, the two even sextets manifest a pair of identical auxiliries (which begin with [d]) in their first two lines.

Another element which I believe to be located in such a way as to support the quadripartite structure I have been demonstrating here are the poem's eight conjunctions. There are three disjunctive or's in the exterior sextets, and three line-initial and's and two ampersands – "&" – in the interior sextets. The two sets of three make vertical "corridors," a word I use to describe cases in poems in which the poet has placed all the elements of a certain type in such a way that they describe simple geometric objects. I have argued for the existence of such poetic devices elsewhere,[3] and will not go into any detail here, though I will show how these two vertical corridors run in (10).

(10) Two corridors for conjunctions

I 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?
II 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?

III 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:
IV 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?

It is clear that the two ends of a line are the parts which are the most salient – they will call attention to themselves even if there is nothing in them which is repeated. Thus when a poet chooses to use line-ends to repeat an element, whether this be a phonetic element, as in a rhyme; or a syntactic, semantic, or thematic element, the effect will be the creation of greater emphasis than if the repetition had occurred line-inter-nally. And my claim is that the same is true if repeated elements are placed along corridors, as with the conjunctions and and or here. In the case of these conjunctions, there is an additional element in their placing which increases their importance even further – their positioning in the lines within the sextets in which they occur. Thus note that the two or's occur in the third and the fifth lines of the first sextet, andthat the first two and's are similarly placed – in the third and the fifth lines of the second sextet. The last and starts the last line of its sextet, while the last or misses an identical positioning by only one line, falling instead in the fifth line of the last sextet.

3.5. Two more regular patterns deserve mention here: the four occurrences of third-person pronouns are all located in the first two lines of the even sextets, and the poem's two when's are located in the first icti of the penultimate lines of the interior sextets.

In addition, the location of non-nouns in rhymes – that is, the location of the six words $_1$bright, $_7$aspire, $_{11}$beat, $_{16}$clasp, $_{18}$see, and $_{21}$bright – also follows a 1 – 2 – 1 – 2 rhythm in the sextets; and finally, also in connection with rhyme-words, the poem's two pairs of rhymes which end in the plural suffix -s are the last couplets of the odd sextets.

3.6.

3.6.1. The above indications of quadripartite structure all derive from the way various elements are distributed within the twenty-four lines of the poem. But in addition, it is possible to provide evidence which shows that there is a boundary between lines 6 and 7, and also one between lines 18 and 19. In the former case, there is evidence that line 6 has special attention called to it. The first striking thing about line 6 is the fact that it starts with a tensed main verb (the only such line in the poem), and that further, this verb is followed by its subject, an order which, like the use of y in the spelling of Tyger, harkens back to an older stratum of English. Secondly, this line contains the poem's first two repeating lexical items – burn and eye – which are encountered after the initial repetition of Tyger. There is a further parallel here in that in both lines, what is burning is (a part of) the Tyger. Moreover, there is a phonetic link to line 1, for while nowhere else in the poem is there a line with more than one occurrence of the diphthong [ay], in these two lines, there are three [ay]'s. A final feature about line 6 is that it not only repeats two lexical items, to link it back to line 1, but also launches one more repetition, that of the noun fire – the nominal core of the repetition of burn – which will link line 6 forward to line 8. Thus line 6 is unique in containing only repeating lexical items.

Let me note here that the way Blake arrays his repetitions of lexical items in the poem as a whole functions in such a way as to sore-thumb E in yet another way. When we examine the words in B which are repetitions of words in A, we find that there are three: burn, hand, and eye. Between B and C, we find only one: hand. And between C and D, also just one: dread. But when we look to see what repeated words link D and E, or E and F, we find that there are none – E is totally isolated, lexically. The only linguistic items that E repeats are when, the, he, and to – but lexically, it is totally new, as befits a stanza whose thematic material concerns the birth of the cosmos.

3.6.2. In connection with line 6, we have seen how it is syntactically, repetitionally, and phonetically salient, in such a way that it loops back to line 1, and thus provides a closure for the postulated first sextet. The other side of this coin would be a demonstration that line 7 suggests a new beginning, that it launches new patterns.

There are several indications that this is indeed the case. First of all, syntactically, line 7 manifests the first instance of an inverted subject and auxiliary verb. Secondly, it is the first line to contain a pronominal reference to the divine he, and not unrelatedly, this line introduces the notion of daring. Finally, line 7 is the first line of the core to deviate from the strong tendency for lines to end in nouns – aspire is the poem's first line-final verb.

All of the above evidence supports strongly the conclusion that the first half of the poem can be seen as consisting of the two six-line subsections which I have been referring to as sextet I and sextet II. What evidence can we adduce for a similar division of the poem's second half, i. e., for a boundary between lines 18 and 19?

I think that the clearest evidence that line 18 marks the conclusion of something is the fact that Blake ends this line with the poem's only colon. And what of evidence that line 19 begins something new? Here, let me recapitulate somewhat: line 19 manifests the poem's first yes-no question, and also has the first instance of the auxiliary did. Furthermore, like line 7, which opened the first interior sextet, the subject of line 19's verb is he. Moreover, we note that the intransitive verb of line 7, aspire, has an [ay] as its stressed nucleus – like the [ay] of line 19's intransitive verb smile. Finally, line 19's rhyme, in [iy], is the only one in an odd line of the poem to repeat an earlier rhyme – the rhyme of the crucial noun $_4$symmetry.

4.0. I think, then that we can with some certainty conclude that "The Tyger" can be regarded as being cosectioned – that is, there are sets of evidence which lead us to regard the poem as having simultaneously six verses of four lines apiece, and also four sections of six lines apiece. Let me suggest now what might be the poetic meaning of such a cosectioning. In the first case, that of six quatrains, one might say that the "fourness" of the poem is subordinate to its "sixness" – that is, that it is quadripartite on a lower level than the level on which it is sextipartite. In this first way of looking at the poem, the quadripartiteness of the stanzas is produced by the AABB rhyme scheme, and its sextipartiteness is produced by the spaces between the stanzas, as well as by many of the distributional regularities that have been mentioned above, such as the fact that basically, there is one occurrence of thy in each stanza, and one transitive verb, etc.

However, when we view the poem, as in the discussion immediately above of the four sextets, as being composed of four units of six lines each, then we are choosing to see its sixness as being subordinate to its fourness, and we give a higher priority to the distribution of the poem's auxiliaries, to its intransitives, to its conjunctions, etc. – than we do to its rhyme scheme.

The poem itself, of course, may not care how we wish to view it. We have here a situation of what psychologists refer to as a gestalt switch – as in the case of an ambiguous image: do we see the white vase against the black background, or do we see the two black silhouettes of the lovers, about to kiss against a white background? The painter may have been aiming at making the choice between the two ways of seeing as fluid as possible, or may have wanted to lead us to see one of the two available images more immediately, with the other only appearing after some work (or, for certain purposes, the other images may have been intended to remain always in the background – one thinks of the subliminal projections in some movies or advertisements). In the case of "The Tyger," I suspect that the sextipartite structure is meant to dominate over the quadripartite one, but whenever there is a cosectioning of x subsections of y lines, and also y subsections of x lines, then there will, I believe, be a suggestion that the very notion of hierarchy is to be transcended, dropped. Blake's poem may be supposed to have neither fourness nor sixness as dominant – it may be pointing us towards the state of mind in which it was written, or guiding us to be in such a state when we read the poem.

For, to "descend" to a new kind of level, the Tyger may be more than just a symbol of the dark side of the universe, or of the poem itself, burning bright inside the poet. A poem is a bit like a ticket to a rollercoaster. A good way to see the difference between what a poem does and what it means comes from a brilliant example constructed by my friend and colleague Charles Pyle. He contrasts the sentence in (11) with the dialogue in (12)

(11) You are a fool.

(12) A: Do you know how to make a fool wait?
B: No – how?
A: I'll tell you tomorrow.

While (11) is an insult, (12) goes beyond insult. The former transacts in the area of meaning, and of truth, and while words can hurt one, there are verbal rebuttals which can be offered. One to whom (11) has been directed can say, "That's a lie." However, there is no verbal defense against someone who has been made the butt of (12): (12) makes a fool of B. And the great poem can have the same kind of impact as (12). While we can accept the final couplet of Archibald MacLeish's "Ars Poetica,"

A poem should not mean,
But be.

and understand that being is greater and deeper than mere meaning, we can, I think, demand still more from a poem, and ask that it not only be, but do.

If we accept the invitation of "The Tyger," opening ourselves to what it can do to us, and come to feel in our bones the truth of the fearful symmetry it frames – if we can come to live that symmetry, and if we can come to smile when we look upon the creation we are a part of, we may have come closer to entering the state of one who could forge such a symmetry. And in such a creator, there is no hierarchy of evil and good; nor is there any easy separation of the creator and the created. The light and the dark interpenetrate; a transitive verb, which portrays creation asymmetrically, as a relationship between a volitional agent, and a distinct result of the verb, dances a counterpoint against an intransitive verb, which predicates a quality of a subject in which two aspects revolve around each other, here, in the intensity of fire. The Tyger-Creator burns, and a light which illumines, as well as a heat which can destroy, results. Heat and light interpenetrate, dance around each other, in fire. In the cauldron of be(com)ing, Creator-Lamb-Tyger similarly dances around each other and interpenetrates.

5.0. If one of the crucial experiences that our poem/ticket takes us to is the chilling knowledge that the darkest of the dark is also part of the creator, let us now ask: is there anything "said" by the formal structure of the poem which would suggest an interpenetration of Tyger and creator?

I see the following poetic structures as saying/effecting – as creat-ing, in the universal language of poetry, this identity, inseparability.

(13) The merging of creator and Tyger

a. One of the clearest indications is the possessors of the first repeated noun of the poem (the first after Tyger) – $_3$eye, $_6$eyes. In line 3, the possessor is the immortal subject of the verb frame, and in line 6, the eyes are thine, that is, the Tyger's.

b. Another parallel between Tyger and creator can be seen in the choice of subjects for the poem's four intransitive verbs:

Verb	Subject
$_6$burnt	the fire of thine eyes
$_{11}$(began to) beat	thy heart
$_{14}$was	thy brain
$_{19}$smile	he

As is clear from this list, the first three subjects are linked to the Tyger, while the last subject is the creator. The fact of these "two" actants occurring in the same kind of syntactic environment also unites them.

c. As I have mentioned above, there is a heavy concentration of body parts in the poem, in all verses except E. All of the possessors of these body parts are either the creator or the Tyger:

Tyger's parts	creator's parts
	$_3$hand or eye

$_{6}$eyes	$_{7}$wings
	$_{8}$hand
	$_{9}$shoulder
$_{10}$sinews, $_{10,\,11}$heart	$_{12}$hand
$_{14}$brain	

Aside from eye(s), which is associated first with the creator, in line 3, then with the Tyger, on line 6, and then again with the creator, in line 23, there are three body parts which are associated only with the creator – namely, hand, wings, and shoulder – and there are three body parts associated only with the Tyger – namely, sinews, heart, and brain. The most interesting body part of all I have saved for last: $_{12}$feet. To my ear, there is quite a bit of vagueness here as to whose feet are meant. On the one hand, the great power of the Tyger's claws is such as to inspire dread; on the other, any part of the creator would also inspire dread. And since the noun is left unassociated with any predicate (an earlier version of the poem had a seventh verse, whose main clause started with line 12, but all that remains of this verse in the final version is the enigmatic predicateless line 12), I think we can assume that Blake would have nothing against our inability to clearly separate creator and Tyger.

d. A related blending occurs when we look at the causes of fear. The nouns which the poem says inspire fear are:

symmetry	(Tyger's)
dread hand	(creator's)
dread feet	(???'s)
dread grasp	(creator's)
deadly terrors	(Tyger's brain's)

Thus we see that Tyger and creator are alike in fearfulness.

e. Let me now return to the distribution of the poem's most frequent part of speech – its nouns, which we began to look at in (2dv). There, I called attention to the existence of a basic rhythm of two lexical nouns per line, but seven per stanza, because of the presence in each stanza of at least one one-noun line. However, I have not yet discussed the positioning of the nouns in the four icti of each line. This distribution is diagrammed below, in which I have also included the three ictal pronouns $_{7}$he, $_{20}$he, and $_{20}$thee:

Nominals – lexical nouns and ictal pronouns

Line #:	First ictus	Second ictus	Third ictus	Fourth ictus
1	Tyger Tyger			
2		**forests**		**night**
3			hand	eye
4			sym-	metry
5			deeps	skies
6		**fire**		**eyes**
7		wings	he	
8		**hand**		**fire**
9		**shoulder**		**art**
10		**sinews**		**heart**
11		heart		
12		**hand**		**feet**
13		**hammer**		**chain**
14		**furnace**		**brain**
15		**anvil**		**grasp**
16		terrors		
17		**stars**		**spears**
18		**heaven**		**tears**
19		work		
20	he		Lamb	thee
21	Tyger Tyger			

22	**forests**		**night**
23		hand	eye
24		sym-metry	

We note a high preponderance of nominals in the second and fourth icti. In fact, it is true that except for lines 1, 7, 11, and 21, any line which has a nominal in its second ictus will also have one in its fourth one. Such second-and-fourth-ictus lines have been boldfaced above; we note that this type of nominal distribution is also increasingly common. In fact, within the core, the <u>only</u> double-NP line whose two NP's are not placed in even icti is line 7. There are 12 second-and-fourth-ictus lines, and the 24 nominals that they contain account for 54% of the 44 nominals in the whole poem. Aside from these second-and-fourth-ictus lines, there are six more nominals in the fourth ictus, and another four in the second ictus, which means that a total of 34, or 72%, of the poem's nominals occur in these two icti. Of significance is the fact that all of the body parts that are mentioned in the core fall in these two even-numbered icti, and six out of the eight of them there are in second-and-fourth-ictus lines.

Given the preponderance of nouns in even icti, nominals in any other metrical position are bound to gain added salience. The nominals in the first ictus are the rarest of all – there are just three of them.

Two are occurrences of <u>Tyger</u>, and one is the ictal <u>he</u> of line 20.

Sharing such a limited distribution is another way of "saying," in the language of poetry, that two items coevoke each other.

•

6.0. I propose a new word, and a new symbol, for such cases of coevocation. I will say that Tyger and creator <u>tao</u> each other, or, symbolically,

Tyger ¶ creator

I have chosen the ancient symbol for <u>tao</u>, the Way, because of its appositeness in suggesting graphically the idea of interpenetration. In the midst of the largest white area of the symbol, there is a spot of black, just as in the midst of the largest black area, there is a spot of white, which conveys that idea that there is no stasis, that all is in flux, and that no sooner does a process reach one of its extremes than it starts to turn towards the other. In just this way, Lamb and Tyger are not fixed poles – each leads to the existence of the other.

6.1. I have saved until last one of the most striking ways in which Blake suggests that creator and Tyger tao each other – in his use of line-internal rhyme, which he reserves the fullest version of for one line of the poem. When we examine all the cases of such line-internal rhymes, we find that in lines 1 and 21, there are two adjacent icti which are open syllables, of the form [tay]. Since they are identical, they of course count as line-internal rhymes, though both of them are parts of the larger word Tyger. In each of lines 12 and 13, there is a pair of ictal what's; these two occurrences of the sequence [hw◊t] have short vowels, and are closed syllables. Then in line 16, a line made important by its adjacency to the sore-thumbed stanza E, we find the two rhyming syllables [der] and [ter]. The vowels of these syllables are longer, and at least the first of them is closed. The fact that the second is a rhyme for the first is obscured somewhat by the second not being a free-standing word.

Only in line 20 is there a full internal rhyme, of two free-standing ictal monosyllables, with long vowels: [hiy] and [ðiy]. Their rhyme, in all but onset consonant, is a way of taoing Tyger and creator. Moreover, the fact that the other two icti of the line both begin with voiced sonorants, [m] and [l], makes the character of [h] and [ð] as continuants stand out.

When we examine the stressed vowels of line 20, we discover that they are the exact opposite of those in the Tyger line. While the opening line has four stressed back vowels, the poem progresses to a climactic line in which all four ictal vowels are front vowels. Furthermore, while all of the words in the Tyger line except one are bisyllables, this line being the most polysyllabic of the whole poem, all of the words in the Lamb line are monosyllabic – it is the line which has the greatest number of monosyllables of all of the lines in the poem. And while the Tyger line is rich in stops, the Lamb line is poor in them. All of the icti in the former line start with stops, while no ictus in the latter line does. The Tyger line has two non-ictal onset stops; the Lamb line has only one – the [d] of Did. Each line has one ictus with a codal stop (bright, made); it is only in the least salient environment for a sound – the coda of non-ictal syllables – that the Lamb line has two (Did, make) where the Tyger line has none.

When we recall that the Lamb line is the only one in the poem in which the initial [t] and the final [r] of Tyger are absent, we see that there is a pattern involved in the contrasts I have just noted: the two lines are being kept maximally separate on the level of sound, with the difference deriving from the basically different phonetic palettes of the two central words. Thus, since Tyger is rich in stops, has only back vowels, contains [r] but no nasals, and is bisyllabic, we find that all of these qualities are emphasized in its line. Significantly, the only syllable of the first line to manifest a front vowel also has the line's only two nasals.

Both of these non-<u>Tyger</u>like properties are confined to the non-ictal second syllable of <u>burning</u>.

The prominence of the [m] of <u>Lamb</u>, its monosyllabicity, and its front vowel are all echoed in the sound of its line. This line's 6 front vowels are a maximum for the poem, as are its two and a half phonetic [m]'s (the geminate [m:] caused by the fusion of Lamb and made is unique in the poem, as are the two words that begin in [m]).

We see, then, a definite pattern of phonetic distantiation of the two lines. But is this all that we can say? We must remember that there is a taoing not only of creator and Tyger, but also of Tyger and Lamb. This means that while their lines must be kept phonetically distinct, they must also be held together phonetically in some way. It is to an examination of this difficult feat that I now turn.

6.2. But first, there is one last tool that we will need to understand the nature of, before we can appreciate the subtleties of the dynamic relation of opposition /repetition with which the two lines are woven simultaneously together and apart. This is a class of taoings which I have found in many poems, taoings in which two or more elements in one order are linked to alternate orderings of the same two elements. Symbolically, we find

(14) <u>The suspension of sequentiality</u>

AB ¶ BA

Let us consider some instantiations of this taoing in our poem, observe it at work. In the first line, we see that there are four [r]'s, all adjacent to back vowels – they are all arrayed in (15).

(15) <u>Tyger</u> [g™r] <u>Tyger</u> [g™r] <u>burning</u> [b◊r] <u>bright</u> [brayt]

Here we see that the four [r]'s share the environment of occurring in a syllable which is opened by a voiced stop. The difference between the first two and the third is only one of stress, while the difference between the third and fourth is a case of the type of taoing that we are discussing. While the [r] of <u>burning</u> is in the coda of its syllable, the [r] of <u>bright</u> is an onset [r], and therefore a more salient one. Thus as we move through line 1, we see the liquid [r] moving from the end of its word, in a weak syllable, to a position in a first, and stressed, and ictal syllable, and finally to an onset position in the ictal rhyme syllable of its line. One of the phonetic meanings, or sound games, which could be derived from such a monotonic strengthening of a sound is: this sound will be important in the poem to come, or more obliquely: a sound like this one will be important.

It is not possible to predict exactly which of these melodic possibilities the poet will pick up on, will do a dance with, but no well-crafted poem can put a sound in the spotlight as this line does, and then just drop it. It would be a bit like a movie opening with a slow pan of a bedroom scene, complete with creepy music, finishing the pan with a five-second focus on a revolver in the drawer of the bedside table, and then going on for the rest of the movie without ever using this revolver. Of course, while such movies could be made, they would be spoofs, or metacomments about film-making. In any first-level film, such an opening would topicalize the revolver, just as a first line with words like those in (15) must topicalize the sound [r] (or the class of liquids, or sonorants, etc.).

The poem does not leave this dance of reordering unused. We next encounter it in connection with the salient alliteration of [f] in lines 2 and 4:

(17) for™ st

freym

fiyr

As was the case in line 1, the [r] dances between coda and onset. Further confirmation: something is up.

And our next intimation that [r] is to be topical comes from the structure and positioning of the poem's first two (and, as it will turn out, only two) trisyllables in two adjacent lines. As we see in (16), which compares the two words in terms of their underlying morphemes, these two trimorphemic non-Germanic words have a lot in common.

(16) in + mort + æl

sin + metr + i

Both start with a prefix which ends in /in/, and both end in a suffix starting with a front vowel. The two roots have the same number of segments, and differ only in the backness of their mid vowels, and in the ordering of the liquid [r].

Of course, once we come to understand that Tyger must tao Lamb, that the extremely weak [r] of the former protagonist must tao the most salient sound of the latter – its onset [l] – then we can begin to understand why there should be so much of this suspension of sequentiality of [r]. It is as if [r] is carrying the ball, in this first stanza, for the order-freeness of the class of liquids.

6.3. I have as yet not been able to understand what all of the sound games are in which [r] is involved – we have thus far only discussed its role in ganging with [b] and with [f], and its use as a sore-thumber (by absence) of line 20, and now its salience in the establishing of the relevance for this poem of the suspension of sequentiality. But there are still many, many [r]'s left to wonder about. It seems much simpler to understand what the eight [l]'s are doing. I list them in (17).

(17) $_{3}$immort + al

$_{4}$fear + ful

$_{9}$shoulder

$_{15}$anvil

$_{16}$dead + ly

$_{16}$clasp

$_{19}$smile

$_{20}$Lamb

I think that we can see these [l]'s as gradually, and possibly even monotonically, increasing in salience. First, it is clear that the [l]'s of the first two words are less salient than all of the others, due to what we might call a law of <u>asymmetry of salience</u> such as that in (18):

(18) <u>Roots over affixes</u>

Segments in roots will tend to have more salience than will segments in affixes.

Between the two [l]'s in suffixes, I think we might see a slight difference in salience, favoring that of <u>fearful</u> over that in <u>immortal</u>, because of the asymmetry in (9), which probably should be regarded as a corollary of (18):

(19) <u>The more meaningful, the more salient</u>

The more meaning that the morpheme containing a segment has, the more salient will be that segment.

Thus, since the etymological link between the suffix -<u>ful</u> and the word <u>full</u> is transparent to speakers, while no meaning can be assigned to the suffix -<u>al</u>, (19) claims, correctly, in my view, that there is a slight increase in salience as we move from <u>immortal</u> to <u>fearful</u>.

That the [l] of shoulder should be more salient than either of the first two follows from (18), but what about the relationship between shoulder and anvil? I believe that both of the following two asymmetries of salience are valid:

(20) The ends over the interior

Segments at the beginning of a unit will tend to have more salience than will those in its end, and those at either end will predominate in salience over those in the unit's interior.

(21) The higher the stress, the greater the salience

Other things being equal, a segment in a syllable with higher stress will tend to predominate in salience over a segment in a syllable of lower stress.

The problem here is that I do not know enough about the details of segmental salience to know how to weight these two inequalities. If (20) is more important, then the [l] of anvil is more salient than that of shoulder, but if (21) is more important, than the reverse will be the case. Thus I will have to leave this problem for future research.

What of the [l] of deadly? I have already used (18) to support the claim that shoulder and anvil are of higher salience than the [l]s of -al and -ful, so by parity of reasoning, to pass from anvil to deadly should signify a drop in salience. But I wonder whether it may be the case that the assonance of the three short /e/'s of line 16, and the alliteration of dare and deadly (and of the dread of the previous line), and the nearly alliterating [t] of terrors, coupled with the intensity of the semantics of deadly, may swing the vote towards this adjective. As I have said already, I have just begun to think about the issues here, and I have no way of knowing even which of the two last words from (17) is the more salient, let alone whether a combination of factors such as those I have just mentioned can overcome (18).

With respect to clasp, it feels correct to me to assert that the fact that its [l] belongs to the onset of a stressed syllable of a stem means that it will outweigh either anvil or deadly in salience. However, with respect to the relationship of clasp and smile, we are again on the slippery ground of trying to decide whether the absolute final position of the [l] in smile gives it greater salience than that which comes from the [l] of clasp being part of the onset of this root. It is evident that it is too early to tell.

Thus we cannot know with anything approaching certainty as to whether the broad-brush increasing of salience that the [l]'s of (17) seem to exhibit is in fact strictly monotonic or not. I doubt that we will come close to such a goal in the near future, if ever. I have discussed the poem's [l]'s only to point out another kind of function/game which a sound can have in a poem.

6.4. But let us return for a moment to (15) – the suspension of sequentiality. By the nature of the case, the validity of this postulated taoing is in a chicken-and-egg relationship with the poetic importance of the cases which one can find to confirm it. That is, on the one hand, the high visibility of the sound games in which [r] plays a role in Tyger – in line 1, in the [f]-alliterations, and in the case of the two trisyllables – supports the postulation of (15). On the other hand, behind (15) is the claim that such phenomena are to be expected in the poetries of the world. There is thus a circularity of thought here, but I believe it to be a hermeneutic circularity, not a vicious one, for the recognition of (15) as a principle behind the structures of a number of poems that I have studied has led me to deeper understandings of them.

Here, I lack the space to show the operation of (15) in other poems, but I will point out one more aspect of its usefulness in "The Tyger." This has to do with the verb burn, the only one in the poem to be repeated except for make, the verb of the Lamb-line. The subject of the first occurrence of burn is the vocative NP Tyger Tyger, which precedes it. The subject of the second occurrence is a part of the fire which the Tyger is – the fire of thine eyes – and this time the object of burn follows it. Fire is hologrammed throughout the Tyger; the move from the whole burning Tyger to the burning of his eyes is one towards his interior, his center, his essence. This move is continued through the poem, right up until stanza E. Eyes are followed by heart in C, then by brain in D. I think, thus, that we are justified in seeing a taoing of the Tyger and his parts:

(22) Tyger ¶ eyes ¶ heart ¶ brain

and are thus also justified in concluding that the behavior of the two subjects of burn, one before, one after, can be considered as a case of (15).

7.0. Another way of seeing (15) is as a claim that poetic coherence can be made up of the same set of elements, occurring in various orders. Let me now turn to the most complex case of the use of (15) in this poem, the taoing of [h] and [ð].

7.1. On the one hand, it is obvious that Blake could not have tipped his hand by using this pair of sounds in prominent lines throughout the poem. Possibly one of the worst things we could do to the power of the poem would be to turn line 20 into a refrain, repeating it once after each verse. Imagine by how much such a change would reduce the impact of this line.

The great poet must be a dramaturge; a great poem is like a great play. Poets must be like story-tellers, in that they must know how to build to a climax. In this poem, we are given an enigma in the phrase thy fearful symmetry. We find ourselves on a journey inward towards the essence of the Tyger, and see our way marked in parallel by the increasing number of references to a creator of immense and awe-inspiring power, even as the number of what's, like blows of the poet's hammer, increases. Now we ask: as Blake builds this mounting tension, as we come ever closer to the moment of truth, when we will stand face to face with his overwhelming question, how is the ground is prepared for [h] and [ð] to tao each other? How are these two sounds woven into the consonantal fabric of the poem?

7.2 In the Tyger line, we encounter the following sequence of consonants, where syllable divisions are marked by vertical lines, and ictality is indicated by boldface:

(23) Line 1: [**t** | g r | **t** | g r | **b** **r** | n ° | **br** **t**]

What kinds of sound games are set in resonance by this sequence? There are many, some of which are listed in (24):

(24) a. Stoppedness and "[r]-ness"
b. Alliteration
c. Halving
c. The change from voiceless to voiced
d. The increase in prominence of [r]
e. The increase in prominence of closed syllables
f. The increase in prominence of monosyllables
g. The interchangeability of onsets and codas
h. Two nasals, [n] an onset, and [°] a coda

It is clear that any line in which six out of seven syllables begin with stops, and four out of seven contain the liquid [r], must call attention to those two groups of sounds. But line 1 is not only full of stops – its four words begin with two pairs of the same stops. Thus the line's melody "says": repetition of sames will be important. And the fact that the alliterating stops are adjacent, rather than intercalated (i. e., as in t - b - t - b), or in an onionskin pattern (i. e., as in t - b - b - t) harmonizes with the AABB rhyme scheme, as well as with the strong conceptual dyadicity generated by the polar opposition of Tyger ¶ Lamb.

The fact that it is the voiceless pair of stops which precedes the voiced pair "rhymes" with the fact that Tyger begins with a voiceless segment, while all of the segments of Lamb are voiced. Similarly, while the liquid of Tyger is in its least prominent position, the liquid of Lamb is in its most salient position. Thus the increase in prominence of the four [r]'s of the Tyger line is a harbinger of the coming of Lamb, as are the changes from bisyllable to monosyllable, and as the change from the open syllable [tay] of Tyger to the closed [b™r] and [brayt] of burning bright presages the closedness of the syllable Lamb. Moreover, the fact that [t] moves from word-initial position in Tyger to word-final position in bright, in precisely the same way as [r] moves from coda to onset, is not only the first case of the suspension of sequentiality, but also a foretaste of the fact that the move from Tyger to Lamb is one from a liquid-final word to a liquid-initial one. It is even possible to see bright as a quasi-inversion of Tyger, with the [t] and the diphthong [ay] reversing their order, and the atonic syllable [g™r] finding a rough correspondent in the [br] onset of bright:

(25) t ay g™r

br ay t

Finally, we come to the line's two nasals, which sandwich its only front vowel. I suspect that this pair of nasals is linked to the fact that the Lamb-line will have two highly prominent verbs which begin with nasals, the second geminating the [m] of Lamb.

7.3. Now what do we find when we look at the consonantal melody of the second line?

(26) Line 2: [**n** | ∂ | **f** **r** | sts | **v** | ∂ | **n** **t**]

The contrast is sharp indeed. The 7 stops which dominate line 1, five of them ictal, and all but one in onset position, have been reduced to two, only one in an ictal syllable, and neither one an onset. Instead of four [r]'s, we find only one; the nasals hold at two, this time both the same, as will be the case in line 20, and again, one an onset, one a coda. In line 2, however, both are ictal; the fact that their syllables open and close the line is thus another case of AB ¶ BA. Like the previous line, line 2 is clearly halved, but this time, not by the way its consonants alliterate, but rather by its sequence of parts of speech. Each half starts with a two-segment preposition, whose first segment is a short vowel, and in each half, this preposition is followed by a definite NP.

However, the greatest source of contrast between the lines is of course that provided by line 2's six spirants, which constitute a majority of the line's consonants by about the same margin as the stops in line 1 constitute a majority there. And when we look closely at the spirants, we see that they form a mirror, whose center is the [t] which is sandwiched by the two immediately adjacent [s]'s.

(27) ∂ **f** s
T s **v** ∂

dental labial dental
dental labial dental
voiced **unvoiced** unvoiced unvoiced
voiced voiced
onset *coda*

The salience of this mirror is strengthened by the fact that the two [∂]'s are both at the beginning of the's. I have called attention typographically to the differences between two focal syllables of the mirror – the icti which contain line 2's only labials. The switch between voiceless and voiced recalls the switch from line 1's first pair of voiceless alliterants to its second pair of voiced ones. And the switch from onset to coda is another suspension of sequentiality.

Summarizing, then, from the two consonantal prosodies that we have encountered in lines 1and 2, we can conclude that alliteration is important, and that stops are (especially [t] and [b]), and also that spirants are (especially the labials [f] and [v]). The two lines combine to say that certain transformations of sound will play a role: changes of voicing, and changes in order of elements.

7.4. What dances of sound are set in motion in line 3?

(28) Line 3: [**hw** **t** | ø | **m** **r** | t l | **h**
nd | r | ø]

In the first place, we know, from the rhyme scheme, punctuation, and syntax, that the first two lines constitute a unit – they have the function of a vocative, they identify who the poet is addressing the poem to. Now, with line 3, we hear the first of the poem's many questioned constituents. And as would befit a line in which so much of the macrostructure has changed, we find many changes in the phonetics. Most strikingly, all of the spirants which dominated the previous line are absent. We do find two ictal nasals, again one an onset and one in a coda, and importantly, we hear for the first time the [m] of Lamb, as we also hear the first [l]. The stops continue on a low burner, with the only onset stop being the downplayed unstressed last syllable of immortal. But there is a kind of return to the most important sound game of line 1 – alliteration. However, line 3's alliteration differs not only in that the line introduces a new segment as the alliterant – [h] – but also in the fact that the alliterating words are not in neighboring icti, and in the fact that while the initial alliterant is the cluster [hw], the second is a reduction of that cluster to the simple segment [h].

7.5. The first-time reader cannot know it yet, but it will turn out to be the case that the two segments in these alliterant onsets – namely, [h] and [w] – occur more frequently in ictal onsets than do any other segments. There are 11 icti in [hw], all of them in question words, and there are 10 other icti in which a word-initial [h] is followed by a vowel, for a total of 21 icti in [h]. Moreover, in addition to the 11 [hw]-icti, there are 6 icti in which an onset [w] is not preceded by an [h]. Thus of the poem's 96 ictal onsets, 21, or 21.8%, start with [h], and 17, or 17.7%, contain [w], as can be seen in (29), which lists the poem's 96 ictal onsets. The [hw]'s are in italics, the [h]'s are in boldface, and the six [w]'s which are not part of [hw] clusters are underlined. If a vowel-initial word appears in an ictus, I list the vowel between brackets.

(29) Ictal onsets

Ictus:	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Line 1:	t	t	b	br
Line 2:	[I]	f	[◊]	n
Line 3:	hw	m	**h**	[ay]
Line 4:	fr	f	s	tr
Line 5:	[I]	d	d	sk
Line 6:	b	f	[◊]	[ay]
Line 7:	[a]	<u>w</u>	**h**	sp
Line 8:	*hw*	**h**	s	f
Line 9:	[æ]	çs	[æ]	[a]
Line 10:	tw	s	[◊]	**h**
Line 11:	*hw*	**h**	g	b
Line 12:	*hw*	**h**	*hw*	f

Line 13:	*hw*	**h**	*hw*	çc
Line 14:	[I]	f	w	br
Line 15:	*hw*	[æ]	*hw*	gr
Line 16:	d	d	t	kl
Line 17:	*hw*	st	d	sp
Line 18:	w	**h**	w	t
Line 19:	d	sm	w	s
Line 20:	h	m	l	∂
Line 21:	t	t	b	br
Line 22:	[I]	f	[◊]	n
Line 23:	hw	m	**h**	[ay]
Line 24:	fr	f	s	tr

However, this mere listing cannot portray accurately enough the extent of the interdependence of [h] and [w]. For almost without exception, in whatever line one of them is found in an ictus, so will the other be. For the [hw]-icti, this is trivially true; for the six [w]'s not in [hw]-clusters, there are three lines with ictal [w] but no ictal [h]: the [w]'s of $_{7}$wings, of $_{14}$was, and that of $_{23}$work. Note, however, that even in these lines, $_{7}$wings and $_{14}$was are preceded by the [h]'s of unstressed what's, and that $_{23}$work is preceded by the unstressed [h]'s of $_{23}$he and $_{23}$his.

For [h], the interdependence with [w] is even more striking: there is only one ictal [h] which is not preceded by an ictal [w]. This is the [h] of line 20, which could not be so preceded, as it appears in its line's first ictus, the only such [h] in the poem. These facts highlight in yet one more way the [h] of the Lamb-line.

This taoing of [h] and [w] is the most solidly established coevocation of the poem, To me, it seems clear that this interdependence of these two sounds is simply an extension of the poem's focus on questioning – on asking an ever more forcefully and intensely repeated question which begins with the cluster [hw]. I believe that the interrelationship of these two glides is the principal phonetic framework which the rest of the poem's sound games play off of or hitch a ride on the coattails of. I will discuss one of these latter types immediately below.

Before leaving line 3, let me call attention to one more aspect of its melody. It is this line which introduces the poem's first ictal front vowel in a lexical item – the only other front-vowel ictus was the in of line 2. It is not without significance that this first lexical vowel is the same as the vowel of Lamb – the [æ] of hand. It is also important that this first front vowel is followed by a nasal, and the fact that this [æ + nasal] follows [h] links it to a member of the central dyad h ¶ w.

7.6. Let us move on now to line 4, whose consonants are as shown in (30):

(30) [k d | **fr** **m** | ∂ | **f** **r** | f l | **s** **m** | | **tr**]

Some of the most salient of the sound games that are launched by this line are the following.

7.6.1. First of all, it is clearly a return, in spades, to the alliteration of line 1. As in that line, the two icti which alliterate are the first two in the line, and the alliterants are voiceless in both lines. However, at the same time, it is also obviously an evocation of the fricative-rich second line, whose highlighted segments were the onset [f] of forests, and the codal [v] of of. Also, we note that the two [r]'s of line 4 move between the onset, in frame, and the coda, in fear, a dance which echoes the behavior of the four [r]'s in line 1, but also the onset/coda change of the f~v of line 2. Thus line 4 enacts a blending of lines 1 and 2.

7.6.2. An important taoing which line 1 launches is that between dentals and labials: the two [t]'s in the first hemistich are followed by the two [b]'s of the second. In a way, this taoing survives, in a transmuted form, in the mirror sequence of the fricatives of line 2: ∂ | **f** | sts | **v** | ∂, for in each half of this mirror, there is a pair of dentals sandwiching an ictal labial.

When we come to line 4, we find an echo of this taoing of labial and dental: the pair of alliterant [f]'s is not followed by a pair of ictal [z]'s, as would be the case if line 1 had been copied exactly, changing stops to fricatives. We do find, however, an [s].

Let us say, then, that line 4 establishes a kind of parity between [f] and [s]. All four of line 4's icti are front vowels, like the four icti of line 20, a fact which also helps to establish a kind of equivalence between them, given the general lack of front vowels throughout the first stanza.

I cannot hope to do justice to all the ways in which the consonantal and vowel melodies of line 4 tie into the three lines before them, and into the other lines to follow. Rather, I will follow one line of development through the poem, given that the present context of our discussion is: the preparing of the ground for the [h] and the [∂] of the Lamb-line.

7.6.3. To do this, I will jump from line 4 directly to the next fricative-rich line, which is, not coincidentally, the next even line, line 6:

(31) [**b** **rnt** | ∂ | **f** **r** | **v** | ∂ n | **z**]

Here we find, as in line 2, two ictal labial fricatives, the first in an onset, the second in a coda. As in line 2, the first is preceded, and the second followed by, a [∂]. What is new about line 6 is the third ictal fricative, the [z] of eyes, a sound which is highlighted in any case, because of its being in a repeated lexical item.

This is the third even line of the poem, and in each of the them thus far, we have found a pair of labial fricatives in ictal syllables. It would seem, then, as if one of the functions of the poem's even lines may be to establish a set of coevoking fricatives, and to specify the features in phonetic space which define what are the allowable differences between the members of this set. Line 2 starts the set off with [f] and [v], and allows voicing differences and shifts between onset and coda. Line 4 widens the set to include [s], therefore adding to the set of changes the intersubstitutability of labial and dental, an equivalence class generated initially by the t – t ¶ b – b of line 1. Now line 6 allows us to include [z], generated from the new [s] of line 4 by the allowable operation of voicing.

7.6.4. I pass over line 7, noting only that its ictal [w] and [h] reiterate the taoing of these two sounds which was set in motion in line 3. This reiteration is crucial for the next step in our tracing of the trajectory of the poem's fricatives, for note what happens in the next even line – line 8:

(32) [**hw** **t** | ∂ | **h** **nd** | d r | **s** **z** | ∂ | **f** **r**]

This line has in its last two icti three of the four fricatives which lines 2, 4, and 6 have made equivalent – only [v] is not present. What is important about this line is the fact that its first two icti reiterate the [hw] ¶ [h] taoing of line 3, which I believe to be the phonetic backbone of the poem. Line 8 has a transparent hemistich structure, emphasized by its medial comma; the first hemistich highlights one formative taoing, and the second hemistich highlights the other. This line thus ties together the two sets – the [(h)w] ¶ [h] of lines 3 and 7 (and many more to come) –and the fricative set – [f ¶ v; s ¶ z] of lines 4 and 6. Most crucially, line 8 links, for the first time, one member from each of the two sets: the glide [h] of hand, the line's first noun, with a fricative – the [f] of the line's second noun – fire. Both nouns repeat from earlier lines, and here in this line, they meet for the first time in a sentence, whose meaning is that the first dominates, tames, the second. The hand is the essence of the creator, and fire is the essence of the material out of which the created arises. They appear different, though as both are merely different aspects of creation, both are also deeply the same. They bear the same conceptual relationship as do the he and thee of line 20; it is of the greatest significance that the [h] ¶ [f] of line 8 is so similar to the [h] ¶ [∂] of the Lamb-line.

7.6.5. Passing on to the next even line, we find the following:

(33) [k d | **tw st** | ∂ | **s n** | z | **v** | ∂ | **h rt**]

In this, the second line of the third stanza, we find, in the inner icti, as we have found already in each of the preceding second lines, a voiceless fricative in the onset of the second ictus, followed by a voiced codal fricative in the third ictus. This pattern will continue through all the poem's six stanzas; in the first three and the sixth stanzas, the codal fricative will be the [v] of <u>of</u>, but this will change in stanzas D and E. In the first two stanzas, the voiceless onset of the second ictus has been an [f] – but here, in the third stanza, the [f] is replaced by a dental, via the general taoing of labials and dentals which we have already noted above. What is important about line 10 is the fact that it repeats, in a new way, the intermingling of the [(h)w] ¶ [h] taoing – and the higher-order taoing of the fricative set – [(f ¶ v) ¶ (s ¶ z)] – which we saw in line 8. This time, the former taoing is outside that of the fricatives, wraps around it: <u>twist</u> – [<u>sinews</u> ~ <u>of</u>] – <u>heart</u>.

7.6.6. Proceeding to the next even line, we find, for the first time, two <u>what</u>'s:

(34) [**hw t** | dr d | **h nd** | nd | **hw t** | dr d | **f t**]

Of course, this sequence of [hw] – [h] – [hw] will salientize the [hw] ¶ [h]-taoing, and in addition, the strong hemistiching of this line, and the total parallelism of the two hemistichs, will strengthen the link between [h] and [f] which was first unlocked by line 8.

7.6.7. Line 14 presents this array:

(35) [**n** | hw t | **f r** | n s | **w z** | ∂ | **br n**]

Here, for the first time, we see a third ictus of a second line which is not the preposition <u>of</u>; the [z] we find in the place of the expected [v] is a reconfirmation of the latter sound's membership in the fricative taoing, which was established earlier, in lines 6 and 8. It may be that the [w] of <u>was</u> provides another link to the [(h)w] ¶ [h] taoing, though given the lack of any ictal [h] in this line, I offer this only as a suggestion.

7.6.7. And now for something completely different: line 16 gives us

(36) [**d r** | ts | **d d** | l | **t r** | rz | **kl sp**]

Here, as in only one other even line, line 12, we find one lone fricative. But in contrast to that line, which has two ictal [hw]'s and one ictal [h], here there are no occurrences of either of those two onsets. So line 16's codal [s] is totally isolated, with respect to the two taoings that we have been examining. In many ways, line 16 is sore-thumbed – it marks the boundary between the rest of the core and the many singularities of the fifth verse. And Blake has placed the first instance of a direct object which precedes its verb in this line, and has chosen three words from the semantic field of fear, namely dare, deadly, and terrors, to put in three of its icti. He ends the line with clasp, a verb which also suggests intensity. The two rhyme-words of lines 15 and 16, grasp and clasp, are unique phonetically, in that only they end with two voiceless segments. They are also unique morphologically, in that both are basically verbs, though the first has been nominalized. Nowhere else do we find two verbs as the rhymes of a couplet. Furthermore, semantically, this couplet is the only one of the poem whose rhyme-words are close to being synonymous. And to top it all off, Blake has chosen to make all the ictal vowels in line 16 front vowels, like line 4, and to make all the icti begin with stops, like line 1. It is pretty clear that we are at a cusp here: something is ending, something is beginning.

8.0. I have already called attention above to some of the many ways in which line 17 smacks us in the face with its differentness – its plural subject, its subordinate clause, its celestial conflict – but now let me point out that in addition, it contains a return – to the second stanza. For only in the first lines of B and E do we find two plurals. In each line, one of these plurals is celestial (skies, stars), and each of these lines is followed by a rhyme in the next line that has to do with eyes: eyes, tears. The first of these lines is followed by the verb burnt, and the second is followed by the somewhat antonymic verb water'd. Finally, it should be noted that the poem's only [p]'s are grouped around the opening lines of B and E. In each case, the [p] is preceded or followed by [s]: the first [p] is in deeps, then aspire, then the rhyme-word pair grasp, clasp, and finally a last [p] in spears.

We have been following the unfolding pattern of spirants in even lines, but before we turn to the next pair of even lines, let us pause briefly to call attention to the wealth of odd-line spirants in the two lines we have been commenting on – the first lines of B and E. While most other odd lines are characterized by an almost total absence of spirants, we find three [s]'s and a [z] in line 5, and two [s]'s and two [z]'s in line 17. I believe that this is one sign that the poem will proceed to a merger of the odd-line hw ¶ w taoings and the even-line f/v ¶ s/z higher-order taoings.

I mention in passing that this opening line of E is the first line to contain an [h] that is not preceded by a [w] – this line's [w] follows its [h]. This is the first rumbling in the breakup of a very salient pattern.

8.1. Whether or not I am correct in my feeling that line 17 may be the first hint of the merger of taoings, let us proceed to examine the fricatives of the next even line, line 18:

(37) [nd | **w** **t** | rd | **h** **v** | n | **w** **ə** | ə r | **t** **rz**]

Here too we see singularities: we encounter two [w]'s in a line which are not part of [hw]-clusters. And for the first and only time, the second ictus of the second line of a stanza does not have an [f] or an [s] as its onset, but rather another voiceless continuant – [h]! But surely the headline news in this line must be the identity of the voiced continuant in the coda of the third ictus, which pairs with this new [h]: a brand-new player in the game, none other than the voiced fricative [ə]!!! Let us swish this new phonetic development around in our snifters for a moment.

For four stanzas in a row, in the interior icti of a second line, we have met with first a voiceless member of the even-line spirant taoers in the first onset, followed by a voiced member in the third coda. And now we find, in line 18, for the first time in any ictus, a [ə]. And just in case we weren't paying close enough attention, look at the onset of the next syllable – another [ə]. The poem's first ictal [ə], and it forms the only geminate obstruent in the poem? Could there be a more piercing phonetic fanfare to herald the arrival on the scene of a major new force? So line 18 gives us a preview of what must come. Here, the [h]-words –hand, he, heart, hammer, and now heaven (I am indebted to my colleague Masako Hiraga for pointing out to me that all of these words except the two occurrences of heart are words linked to the divine) – a spirant. An element from each of the two taoings we have been following has been joined in a spotlight that the first four second lines have made to shine brilliantly.

The stage is set for line 20.

8.2. (38) [d d | **h** | h | **m** **d** | ə | **l** **m** | m k | **ə**]

I will call attention to only one of this line's melodic points of note: the geminate [m] in the coda of the third ictus, in the place prepared for it by the geminate [ə :] of line 18. What differentiates line 18 from this one, however, is the semantic use to which the great taoing h ¶ ə, which we have waited for for so long, is put. When we first encounter it in line 18, it links heaven, a to be sure highly important concept, with the lowly preposition with. An unequal match, from which no sparks fly. But here, in line 20, where we have been led inexorably to that overwhelming questions of questions, where we have looked that fearful symmetry in the eye, and feel its endless chill to our marrow, here this taoing links creator and Tyger – and Lamb. The three are at once different, and the same. Each of us is a dweller in the forests of the night as much as a being of Light.

9.0. My purpose in this paper has been to celebrate Blake's mastery, to try to glimpse backstage a bit, to see the artist at work at his forge. This poem is a musing on the mystery of creation, in which creator and created are at the same time identical and distinct. We see this paradox enacted syntactically in the dance of transitive and intransitive predicates which I have discussed above, but I have concentrated on another way of exhibiting the paradox, by focusing on one small aspect of the musical fabric of the poem's sounds – the intertwining of the glides [h] and [w], with the fricatives [f], [v], [s], [z], and [∂]. Although my discussion has been severely limited in its scope (for instance, I have almost completely disregarded the poem's vowels, and also its non-ictal syllables – not a happy analytic decision, but one has to start somewhere), I have tried to show that these groups of sounds are initially linked to odd and even lines, but that they come to form one set of coevoking sounds. The set of spirants starts with the first ictal spirant, [f], but is joined, one ictus later, by its voiced mirror image, [v]. The ground was prepared for the change from onset to coda in this mirroring by the dance of [t] and of [r] around the vowels of line 1, and the change in voicing from [f] to [v] was heralded by the change from t – t to b – b in that same line. Thus one could say that the [f] and [v] of line 2 are the same, since the [v] was produced out of the [f] by the sound games of the <u>Tyger</u>-line – but on the other hand, they are also distinct, and go their separate ways as the poem unfolds. I then tried to show how the set {f, v} is expanded to include [s], and later [z] and [∂], in a gradual series of taoings, a bit like the passing of a baton in a race. And in the course of these taoings, the set of spirants gets blended into the [hw] ¶ [h], so that it might be said that the climactic [h] ¶ [∂] taoing is, like the f ¶ v of line 2, made up of sounds, which like the creator and the created, are at once the same and different.

¶

I am acutely conscious of the many weaknesses of my attempt; there is simply no way to paper over the limitations in my understanding of how the musical cohesion of the sounds of a poem is created. I hope to write a book on The Tyger one day, but until that has happened, all I can offer the reader are the suggestions that I have made above as to the nature of some of the tools that poets have at their disposal to work their magic.

To the extent that one succeeds in such an enterprise, one begins to understand what Guy de Maupassant meant by his word “contact, ” in the quote with which we began. Taoings are just one kind of the contacts which are necessary between words, so that we may come to surmise the deepest nature of their souls.

I would like to close with a quote from Robert Frost, another poet who knew the ways of this contact, He gives us all some feeling for the extent to which the poet’s art is as risky and unpredictable as a high-wire dance. I bow down to him and to William Blake, and to any poet anywhere who is brave enough to attempt such feats.

> Just as the first mystery was how a poem could have a tune in such a straightness as metre, so the second mystery is how a poem can have wildness and at the same time a subject that shall be fulfilled.
>
> It should be of the pleasure of a poem itself to tell how it can. The figure a poem makes. It begins in delight and ends in wisdom. The figure is the same as for love. No one can really hold that the ecstasy should be static and stand still in one place. It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life – not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but a momentary stay against confusion. It has denouement. It has an outcome that though unforeseen was predestined from the first image of the original mood – and indeed from the very mood. It is but a trick poem and no poem at all if the best of it was thought of first and saved for the last. It finds its own name as it goes and discovers the best waiting for it in some final phrase at once wise and sad – the happy-sad blend of the drinking song.

Robert Frost
from the Preface to his
Collected Poems (1949)
Holt, Rinehart, and Winston,
New York, New York.

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