

William Blake: The Eighteenth-century Genius of Intermediality as a Character in *Mad Girl's Love Song* /

William Blake: o gênio oitocentista da intermedialidade como personagem em 'Mad Girl's Love Song'

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ABSTRACT

The focal point of this work is the appropriation of William Blake's persona as a character in the novel *Mad Girl's Love Song*, by the Indian post-colonial writer Rukmini Bhaya Nair. We discuss initially, the intermedial character of Blake's work, as a poet and painter, with emphasis on his copper-engraving technique, the so-called illuminated impression, which constitutes the differential feature of his art. From the concept of remediation of previous media explained by Bolter and Grusin, Blake's work is seen as an eighteenth-century example of the immediacy and hypermediacy that characterize today's digital media. Leo Hoek's concepts of simultaneity and successiveness in intersemiotic translation are used to analyze the phases of production and reception of the text-image dyad. The relationship between Bhaya Nair's writing and the Western literary canon is seen not only as the appropriation of its themes, characters and writing techniques but as an instrument of protest against the subaltern position of the post-colonial subject.

KEYWORDS: Blake; Appropriation; Illuminated printing; Rukmini Bhaya Nair.

RESUMO

O ponto fulcral do trabalho é a apropriação da persona de William Blake como personagem do romance *Mad Girl's Love Song*, da escritora pós-colonial indiana Rukmini Bhaya Nair. Discute-se inicialmente o caráter intermediário da obra de Blake, como poeta e pintor, com destaque para sua técnica de gravação em cobre, a chamada impressão iluminada, que constitui o traço diferencial de sua arte. A partir do conceito de remediação de mídias anteriores

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explanado por Bolter e Grusin vê-se a obra de Blake como exemplo oitocentista de *immediacy* e *hypermediacy* que caracterizam as mídias digitais de hoje. Para análise das fases de produção e recepção da díade texto-imagem utilizam-se os conceitos de simultaneidade e sucessividade de Leo Hoek, na tradução *intersemiótica*. A relação da escritura de Bhaya Nair com o cânone literário ocidental é vista não só como apropriação de seus temas, personagens e técnicas de escritura, mas como instrumento de protesto contra a subalternidade do sujeito pós-colonial.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Blake; Apropriação; Impressão iluminada; Rukmini Bhaya Nair.

1 Introduction

Notable painter and engraver, William Blake (1757-1827) developed the prophetic thought of a visionary in his dazzling verse. An artificer rather than poet at the age of 15, Blake was apprenticed to the engraver James Basire, who taught the young man the fundamentals of his art. Engraving plates for publishers and painting watercolors independently became his means of livelihood. It was only in 1783 that his first collection of verses, *Poetical Sketches. By W.B.* was published. The collection contains poems of remarkable lyric intensity which the poet had written between the ages of 12 and 20, and was printed, according to its preface, thanks to the contribution of friends. In the association of the art of engraving with poetry Blake would find the ideal means for expressing his genius. The desire of recording rather than printing the text and the corresponding image of his poems materialized in the remarkable creation of what he himself would call *illuminated printing*.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair, renowned linguist and poet in twenty-first-century India, appropriates facts of Blake's biography and traits of his mystical but mercurial personality to transform him into a character in her novel *Mad Girl's Love Song* (2013), in whose plot he coexists with Sylvia Plath and D.H. Lawrence. Both William Blake's intermedial art and the role of Blake-as-character in a post-independence Indian novel are the objects of this work, plus the appropriation of the Western literary canon by a postcolonial subject.

No media event seems to accomplish its cultural function in isolation from other media (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 2002). Furthermore, the remediation of former media – a characteristic of digital media nowadays -- can be identified throughout the last several hundred years of Western visual representation.

Thus, the translation into visual media of the complex tropes of Blake's poems corresponds to the demand for *immediacy*, typical of the culture of the new era of digital media that wishes to be plunged live into virtual experiences on computer screens. In Bolter's and Grusin's conclusion,

the seemingly contradictory logics of *immediacy* and *hypermediacy* are mutually dependent. The joint effect of the reunion of multiple types of media is the immediate immersion of the receiver into the context of the experience. It happens both in today's technology-dominated world, when a viewer can be part of a hang-glider flight live on a screen, as well as in the conjunction of word and image in the engravings of the late eighteenth-century genius of intermediality.

A painting by the seventeenth-century artist Pieter Saenredam, a photograph by Edward Weston, and a computer system for virtual reality are different in many important ways, but they are all attempts to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation. All of them seek to put the viewer in the same space as the objects viewed. (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 2012, p. 11)

In the taxonomy proposed by Irina Rajewsky, Blake's work would be included within the group of phenomena which are exemplary of intermediality in the strict sense, ie as media combination, "such as opera, film, theater, performances, illuminated manuscripts, computerized facilities or *Sound Art*, graphic novel etc.[...]" (2012 a, p. 24, my translation)¹. The intermedial character of Blake's association of written verse and image comes from the crossing of boundaries implicit in the prefix *inter* that corresponds to the location of phenomena in the space between one media and another. Thus, the broad conception of intermediality, as well as the more restricted one, as Irina Rajewsky points out, "evidently proceeds from the assumption of tangible boundaries between individual media, as well as from specificities and media differences" (2012 b, p. 53, my translation).² The intramedial relationship between *Mad Girl's Love Song* and Blake's work acquires the character of intertextuality, a concept that is instrumental in theorizing intermedial references.

The presence of the imperatives of *immediacy* and *hypermediacy* -- more emphatically required by today's media culture -- is analyzed in Blake's illuminated printing, based on the poet's commentaries on art either transcribed by Nair or on scholarly texts about his work. In parallel, we study the appropriation of Blake's art and personality in the plot of *Mad Girl's Love Song*, whose first-person narrator, a schizophrenic young Indian girl invades Blake's life in the form of a glass-winged angel who protects and inspires him. The connotations of aggressive seizure and forced possession of the term appropriation might suggest that Blake would be a mere "signifier that can

¹ "[...] como ópera, filme, teatro, performance, manuscritos com iluminuras, instalações em computador ou de arte sonora, quadrinhos etc."

² "[...] procede evidentemente da suposição de fronteiras tangíveis entre mídias individuais, bem como de especificidades e diferenças midiáticas."

be seized and deployed”, but as posited by Huang and Rivlin (2014, p. 11) “appropriation carries strong overtones of agency and potentially for the appropriated as well as for the appropriator”.

From the consideration of Blake's works that are referred in the novel, we aim to fathom the artist's beliefs regarding the rights of human beings to physical and spiritual freedom, which Bhaya Nair uses to highlight the denial of these rights to colonized peoples.

The postcolonial writer's relationships with the Western canon range from opposition to revision/adaptation and even redefinition, that is, “the use of literature by members of former colonies or migrant populations engendered by imperialism helps to transform the canon into a more heterogeneous archive” (MARX, 2004, p. 85). An example of opposition, which is usually associated with political protest, can be found in adaptations of *The Tempest*, in which postcolonial playwrights have transformed Shakespeare's text into a means of questioning the European vision of colonization. The categorization, however, is not exclusive: the opposition to the canon and the revision of its contents can coexist. Bhaya Nair manages both to appropriate Blake's style in her narrative and to make use of his lyrics and prophetic books as a libel against the traumatic consequences of colonialism.

2 William Blake's intermedial art

Claus Clüver (1989) starts his reflections on intersemiotic transposition with the description of a legendary painting, supposedly dating from the twelfth century in China, as the pictorial representation of a line of verse. Such transposition, he argues, may be interpreted as an illustration for a text or even as a text's translation to the visual medium. Countless examples of the interrelationship and combination of verbal and visual media may be found in the Western artistic canon from medieval illuminated drawings to comic strips and other forms of today's multimedia. Nevertheless, nothing comes so close to that exquisite painting-poem – an intricate combination of visual and textual signs drawn in delicate Chinese calligraphy -- as the twentieth-century *livre d'artiste*. “[...] if we choose to disregard preceding individual verbal-visual works by poet-artists such as William Blake” (CLÜVER, 1989, p. 57).

In fact, Blake's work stands as reference for the early association between literature and painting. In a 1787 text, a fantasy in prose -- which publishers titled *An Island in the Moon*, when they brought it to light more than a hundred years later, in 1923 -- Blake foresees the possibility of

producing books in which words would be engraved rather than printed, with well-finished images on alternate pages. One of the first of Blake's books to be entirely conceived and produced outside the conventional system of printing was his collection of poems *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, which was exemplary of his illuminated printing. Each page of the book was devised separately, starting with the engraving of words and image on a copper plate bathed in acid and in ink of a single color. Following that the engravings were colored by hand by Blake himself and his wife Catherine using watercolor techniques. The product was then stitched between cardboard covers and sold for low prices. Manual labor made the whole process exceptionally slow and few items reached the public.

Except for *The French Revolution* (1791) however, every one of Blake's works written after the *Poetical Sketches* (between 1769 and 1777) were engraved and *published* in this manner. Blake turns out to be a multidisciplinary creator – poet and painter, engraver, printer and publisher, which inscribes him into the tradition of the illuminated books from the Middle Ages, with the difference that he founded a small but entirely autonomous mechanical production unit.

The search for new paths is intrinsic to Blake's passion for originality and his disgust for imitation. In chapter XXIX of his biography of the *Pictor Ignotus*, Alexander Gilchrist (1828-1861) reports Blake's opinion on some poets and painters he judges to lack inspiration: "I abhor imitation I am linked obstinately to the true Art Style as Michael Angelo Raphael Jul Rom Alb Durer left it" [...]. "The man, who on examining his own mind, finds nothing of inspiration, ought not to dare to be an artist: he is a fool, and a cunning knave suited to the purposes of evil demons." "The man who never in his mind and thought travelled to heaven, is no artist" (In: MARKS, 2013, Kindle ed.)³.

Blake is especially bitter in his hostility towards the universally admired and extolled Prince of English portrait-painting, Sir Joshua Reynolds. For Gilchrist, Blake is as far above Reynolds like "the star which shines down upon a mere earthly hill-top". Nevertheless, the biographer admits that there is a tip of resentment in Blake's attitude towards the sharp contrast of his and Reynolds' respective lots, "for recognition is dear to every gifted man, however unworldly" (2013, Kindle ed. pos. 42.476).

Regarding intersemiotic transposition, Leo Hoek (2004) focuses particularly on the phases of production and reception of the relationship between text and image, in the act of communication. *Successiveness* – text existing before the image or image existing before the text – characterizes

³ Quotations can be found at the beginning of Chapter XXIX. Opinions: Notes of Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake, Pictor Ignotus*, or at position 42319 of the Kindle edition.

the perspective of production; *simultaneity* — a text located in an image; an image located within a text; a text next to an image, an image next to a text — specifies the perspective proper to the reception as, for example, an illustrated book and an emblem. In both cases, the receiver perceives the existence of the text and of the image simultaneously. From the point of view of production, the illustration and the emblem are marked by successiveness. In the case of the illustration, it is the image that explains and interprets a pre-existing text; in the case of the emblem, it is the text that describes or explains an image conceived before it. This difference is lost in the taxonomy that chooses the point of view of the recipient, for whom the emblem and the illustration constitute a case of simultaneous presentation (2004, p. 168-169).

In the illuminated printing of the celebrated poem “The Sick Rose” (Fig. 1) one of the best known of the *Songs of Experience*, the simultaneous perception of text and image produces a violent impact on the receiver caused by the translation of the brief eight lines of the text into the shocking visual imagery of the worm that attacks the flower.

Figure 1: William Blake, *Songs of Experience*, The Sick Rose, Plate 11



Source: <http://www.gailgastfield.com/experience/soe11.html>.

The aggressive sharpness of the thorns and the voracity of the worm that devours the leaves stand out. The faint shades of violet in the representation of the *crimson joy* of the rose are repeated in the strange beings, with incongruous human traits, that bring about the destruction of the flower. There is an unmistakable sexual connotation in the phallic symbol of the worm that burrows into the rose's crimson bed.

This is a simplistic interpretation of the poem that can be profitably enlarged if read against the background of Blake's *oeuvre* and ideas. In his book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake expresses a vision of the universe in which the material world and physical desire are equally part of the divine order, or, in other words, a *marriage of heaven and hell*.

Figure 2: William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Title Page, Plate 1



Source: <http://www.gailgastfield.com/mhh/mhh1.jpg>

It was composed between 1790 and 1793, the period that encompasses the French Revolution and the radical changes it brought to world politics and to human interrelationships. The series of texts written in imitation of biblical prophecy express Blake's revolutionary beliefs and his controversial ideas on art, besides philosophical reflections.

And a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent: the Eternal Hell revives. And lo! Swedenborg is the Angel sitting at the tomb: his writings are the linen clothes folded up. Now is the dominion of Edom & the return of Adam into Paradise. Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary for Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. (In MARKS, 2013, Kindle ed., pos. 5158-5199).

At this point, Blake rejects his master Swedenborg's strict Manichaeism, which becomes clear in the epigrams and proverbs quoted above. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* starts with the short poem "The Argument" (Apud MARKS, 2013, Kindle ed. pos. 5158).

"The Argument" In: *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

Once meek and in a perilous path	Till the villain left the paths of ease,
The just man kept his course along	To walk in perilous paths, and drive
The vale of death.	The just man into barren climes.
Roses are planted where thorns grow	Now the sneaking serpent walks
And on the barren heath	In mild humility,
Sing the honey bees.	And the just man rages in the wilds
Then the perilous path was planted:	Where lions roam.
And a river and a spring	Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burden'd air;
On every cliff and tomb: And on the bleached bones	Hungry clouds swag on the deep.
Red clay brought forth.	

Figure 3: William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, The Argument. Plate 2



Source <http://www.gailgastfield.com/mhh/mhh2.jpg>

Correspondences with “The Sick Rose” are both lexical, the sick rose ↔ the roses that are planted, and semantic, death and destruction of life caused by the invisible worm ↔ the sneaking serpent. The Fall of Adam and Eve in The Book of Genesis comes to mind in both poems by the juxtaposition of symbols of the creatures in the Garden of Eden. Such multimedia or combination of media forms can either bring about changes or not, both in the meaning or in the external appearance of particular works or performances. Hence the categorization *intra*compositional and *extra*compositional intermediality proposed by Werner Wolf (RAJEWSKY, 2012 b, p. 59). Blake’s illuminated engraving of “The Sick Rose” would be an example of *intra*compositional intermediality, as it affects the external appearance of both media – the graphic disposition of the lines and details of engraving – plus their conjunct significance due to the simultaneity of the reception by the viewer. Each interpretation does not negate, but rather resonates alongside the one that precedes it. Sex, Death, Innocence, Experience – the eight lines of the poem contain everything.

3 William Blake: a character in the twenty-first-century postcolonial novel

Thomas Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education” (1835) led to the creation of regulations that introduced English language and English literature in schools in India. Rukmini Bhaya Nair was one of those children to whom English was a first language and who were widely knowledgeable in English literature. Thus, she had the necessary tools to recontextualize the historical William Blake and integrate him into her work. In the words of Huang and Rivlin “appropriations engage between passivity and action” (2014, p. 13). Nair both responds to a persona called William Blake and turns that persona in a form that is no longer him but still entertains some representative relationship to him.

Like her creator the protagonist-narrator, Pari or Parineeta, falls ardently in love with English literature, to the point of introducing herself into the life history of her favorite poets. Hers is not a passive presence, but one of active interference in their process of creation: the dark-skinned young schizophrenic postcolonial girl (in the shape of an invisible glass-winged Angel) becomes the source of inspiration for some of the greatest works of the three canonical giants.

The novel develops fictional stories based on events in the lives of the three poets, available in biographies and other referential texts. At the beginning of the second part of the book,

titled William (p. 101-218), Bhaya Nair deftly introduces a brief chronology of the main events in Blake's life which will be covered in her novel. We have selected for discussion those that have to do with Blake's process of engraving, or which highlight his utopian obsession with the physical and spiritual freedom of human beings.

In 1788, when Parineeta enters the story, Blake is thirty-one years old and in mourning for his brother, Robert, who had died of tuberculosis a year before. Suffering has blocked the poet's creative powers. Biographers inform that the deeply mystical poet attributed the revelation of his special process of engraving to a vision of his dead brother. In the novel's version, that secret is revealed by Parineeta, whom Blake believes had been sent to him by Robert; "*I know it, I know this true! You are a Vision sent to me by Robert*". Bhaya Nair appropriates Blake's style to recount the meeting of the poet and his *Vision*: "Tell Robert I am stalled. Tell him no angels sing since he is gone. My manuscripts need illumination! They need the Saints to shine in them" (NAIR, 2013, p. 121-122)⁴. The *Vision* murmurs soothingly across the abyss, attempting to calm him:

You wrote of loss of inspiration in those poems too. It may pass, this feeling.
Vision, do not harp, do not harp on those early effusions. [...] *The languid strings do scarcely move! The sound is forc'd, the notes are few!* I was fourteen when I wrote those lines. Fourteen! I knew not loss not sorrow. [...] Tell Robert I cannot do without him (2013, p. 123)

The William Blake in Nair's plot is a fictional character who develops a passionate love relationship with Parineeta, whom he elects his muse, the heroine at the core of his poetry. Along with her coming the poet's inspiration returns. She advises him about engraving in language that emulates Blake's prophetic idiom in *Heaven and Hell*:

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is: Infinite. This you shall do by printing in the infernal method by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away and displaying the infinite which was hid.
Infinity! *This* is the sign that you come to me from Robert, although you speak of Hell. We talked so often of Infinity but he has arrived there sooner than I. God bless him! (2013, p. 123)

The angelic Vision comes and goes in the course of their fantastic relationship and William's grief was deep "at [her] every withdrawal – in 1791, 1792, 1793, and all the years of [their] acquaintance." The Angel is invisible to everyone but William who is thought to be insane, when

⁴ All further references to *Mad Girl' Love Song* will be indicated by the date 2013 and page numbers.

he is heard laughing or talking alone. At times, the novel's fantasy becomes rather puerile: the protagonist must leave in spite of her lover's piteous protestations because she was "commanded to attend an Angel meeting and was an hour late already" (2013, p. 148, 149).

The reader cannot help contrasting the grieving lover with the thunderous voice of the prophetic poem, *America*. There was no doubt in Blake's mind that the triumphant destiny of America was to be the Paradise of the Future. In lines 126-129, Orc provokes the Angel of Boston to rebellion.

What God is he, writes laws of peace, & clothes him in a tempest
What pitying Angel lusts for tears, and fans himself with sighs
What crawling villain preaches abstinence & wraps himself
In fat of lambs? no more I follow, no more obedience pay. (Apud MARKS,
2013, Kindle ed. pos. 6453)

As she comes from the future, Parineeta cannot resist making insinuations about what would become of the America of the poet's utopian dreams. It is the expressed desire of Blake, as a character in the novel, to wander hand in hand with his inspiring angel, Parineeta, across an ideal unexplored American continent. The purpose of the young postcolonial subject that recounts the story, however, is totally opposite.

But I wanted to show him that his shining America was to revert to the dark hands of his Urizen, the ancient Jehovah, supreme authority personified. America's voice was to echo so powerfully in the future that all other nations were in danger of being silenced. (2013, p. 142)

The narrator continues: "Like most of William's poems, *America: a prophecy* was written between *bouts of ecstasy* and excited conversation" (emphasis added). Blake reveals that the entities "the red Orc" and "the shadowy Daughter of Urthona" in the first line of the poem are himself and she, Parineeta, his inspiring muse. "Read the poem closely" he advises, "and you will see that the form itself is unrhymed and dialogic - a talking poem, we could call it". "And the Angel to whom William is talking is *me*" (2013, p 145).

It is the fictional intervention of the glass-winged Angel in Blake's life that creates the inspiring context of his celebrated poem "The Tyger".

4 Tipu's Tiger. *Pari's History Book, written in the Eighteenth Century*

The title *Tipu's Tiger* and the epigraph of the chapter announce a change of pace in the narrative, which is interrupted by a historical detour. The reader is taken to 1757, the year of Blake's birth, which marks a momentous event for colonial England, with the conquest of Calcutta. "And slowly, the fabled riches of the Indies fell like ripe plums into the hands of Company and Crown" (2013, p. 151). The history lesson is designed to present the reader with the situation that ensured that William's "Tyger" would one day be immortal.

*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?* (2013, p. 151)

The enchanting verses would hypnotize dark-skinned children in schools in India, across the width and length of the country, centuries into the future, while thousands of real tigers disappeared annually at the sound of gunshots heard in Bengal's forests.

To give vent to the protest against the cruel voracity of the former colonizer, Rukmini Bhaya Nair appropriates every narrative device made available by her knowledge of English literature, a practice that was instituted in Indian schools by the British themselves: the genre, the style, the figures of speech, and mostly the ironic tone. And all this, after having transformed immortal poets into characters, whose weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies she exposes.

The voice of the narrator informs the reader that the choice of the tiger as a symbol of strength and power contradicted common beliefs. For William's contemporaries, the king of the jungle was the lion, the most noble of wild beasts. The tiger, on the contrary, was a symbol of cunning and cupidity, a cowardly beast, the most cruel, voracious, and destructive animal in creation. The tiger was the great villain of the expanding empire. *Tipu's Tiger* is the title of a sculpture that shows a prostrate Englishman in the claws of a tiger. The explanation continues. The sculpture can still be seen on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Inside the wooden body of the tiger a secret spring when wound up reproduces both the cries of the prone Englishman in mortal pain, as well as the satisfied growl of the tiger (2013, p. 162). A reversal of positions is implied, however, and confirmed by the subsequent tyranny of colonization.

Parineeta persuades a recalcitrant William to visit an exhibition of exotic animals from India. She intended to open his eyes to the dark reality of colonialism and to the yearning for freedom of

the colonized, of which caged animals were a symbol. However, instead of the beast advertised as – **“Cruel Flesh Eater of the East! Twenty Hands from Tail to Ear! One of the Largest Beasts Ever to be Shewn in the Western Hemisphere!”** (2013, p. 155) – they find only other species of ill-looking animals locked in infected cages.

Blake becomes prey to agitation and starts screaming shrilly, while Parineeta (invisible to everyone) tries in vain to calm him down. They are saved by a street urchin who appears unexpectedly and offers to take them to the tiger, "for just 5 pence". The boy is true to his word but disappears mysteriously. Only Blake, Pari, and the Tiger are left face to face.

He was all I could have wished – huge, golden, eyeball-to-eyeball with William and totally at ease. Lounging, almost. The silence was profound. Somehow, the crowds had all melted away, and we stood, it seemed, out of time, in some forest out of legend – William, the Tiger and I. (2013, p. 159-160)

A news item in the newspapers about the death of the tiger expected in the exhibition during the long ship journey deepens the atmosphere of mystery. Pari hides the newspaper so that William is not aware that the tiger had been merely an illusion. Thanks to the mysterious boy and the subtlety of Blake's protecting Angel the poem was written.

Completely recovered from his nerve-racking outburst William was transfixed with awe and admiration at the sight of the tiger. (Fig. 4).

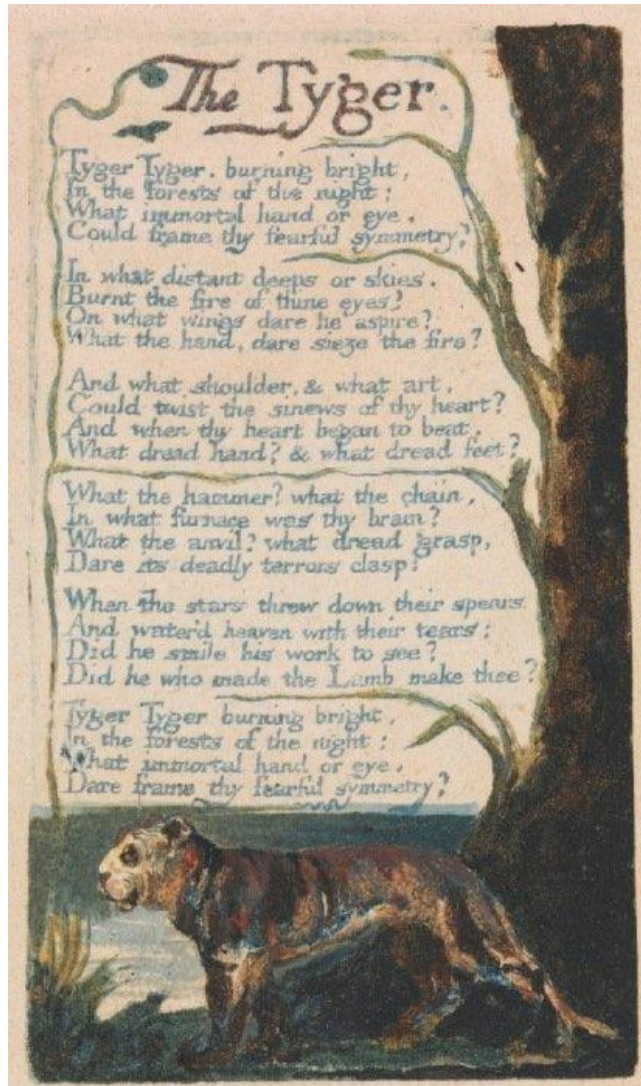
He tells me he's here because he wants to be. No one captured him, no one *could!* They who imprison him are themselves the prisoners, he says. He came only to see me and tomorrow he will be gone, back to his Kingdom! (2013, p. 160).

Parineeta is moved to tears when she witnesses William's joy and pride at having written his immortal poem. The episode, she comments, ended in the usual way, the two of them blissful in Flopham, with their merry *Spiritualist* and *Optimist* beer-mugs clinking happily. The final version of the poem includes a stanza of special meaning for her.

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? (2013, p. 216).

Anyone familiar with William's poetry, Parineeta observes, knows that in his vocabulary the word 'star' corresponds to 'angel'. The association of 'angel' with her tears is a signal that the poem was meant for her (2013, p. 217).

Figure 4: William Blake, Songs of Experience, The Tyger. Copy F, plate 42



© Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/william-blake-39/blakes-songs-innocence-experience>

In the concluding part "Exit Seraphim", Parineeta takes leave of William who is seated at his desk revising an old draft from *Songs of Experience* "utterly relaxed and confident in his newfound freedom". He has not forgotten her: the title of the poem he is tinkering with, "The Human Image", was altered in his final years to *I heard an Angel singing...* (2013, p. 217-218).

Final considerations

From an initial discussion of the intermedial characteristics of William Blake's literary creation put into relief by his technique of illuminated printing, we moved on to the relationships of appropriation between a postcolonial subject and the Western literary canon and of opposition to the subaltern status of colonized peoples engendered by imperialism.

We referred to Bolter & Grusin's understanding of remediation as a process that can be identified centuries back in Western visual representation to call attention to the incredible modernity of William Blake's work. Years of analyzing his poetry in graduate courses, of studying his very particular mythology and complicated reasoning fall short of the profitable reading offered by the studies of intermediality.

Secondly, we trust the analysis of the appropriation of Blake's persona as a character in Rukmini Bhaya Nair's novel has brought to light relevant aspects of the artist's craft as well as his beliefs regarding the rights of human beings to physical and spiritual freedom, which is denied to the colonized subject. We have attempted to emphasize, furthermore, that Nair's aesthetic purposes supersede her very honest manifest intention of using Blake's works to fight postcolonial trauma. She makes highly appropriate use of Blake's reported visions of Angels as the source for her Parineeta, who invades the poet's life as a glass-winged celestial creature: "As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyment of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity, I collected some of their Proverbs ..." (From "A Memorable Fancy". Apud MARKS, 2013, Kindle ed. pos. 5249). Rukminii Bhaya Nair's deep knowledge of English literature in general, plus her familiarity with Blake's work and style, allowed her to construct a convincing character named William Blake by granting him the active traits of his appropriated persona.

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