

## “Bad” Queens, “Good” Queens, and George III (as His Satanic Majesty)

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- 1 WILLIAM Blake resorted to the use of allusions with great frequency, for allusions as silent signifiers enabled him to say more than was overtly expressed. They provided the poet with an additional dimension of meaning (and counter-meaning), and my argument explores these protean factors as they relate to Blake’s condemnation of royalty.
- 2 During the intensely repressive English political climate of 1792 (and thereafter), it became dangerous to criticize the government and King George III, a condition that culminated in Prime Minister William Pitt’s own “Reign of Terror” in response to the revolutionary tumult in France. Thus, in 1793 any person could be imprisoned without charge or trial, while in 1795 it became a crime to speak or write against government policy.<sup>1</sup> Despite such severe restrictions, the libertarian Blake repeatedly attacked the king with clandestine subtlety. Such condemnations are primarily concealed within Miltonic and biblical allusions.<sup>2</sup>

All citations of Blake are from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (New York: Anchor–Random House, 1988). References to the Bible are to the Authorized (King James) Version; those to *Paradise Lost* are to the edition by Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1935).

1. The London *Times* (6 March 1795) reported that the warrant used in the apprehension of the prophet Richard Brothers charged him with “unlawfully, maliciously, and wickedly writing, publishing, and printing various fantastical prophecies, with intent to cause dissensions and other disturbances within this realm, contrary to the Statute.” Certainly the same claims of sedition could have been applied to the engraved prophecies of Blake. For important additional details, see Michael Phillips, “Blake and the Terror, 1792–93,” *Library* 16.4 (Dec. 1994): 263–97.

2. Though scholars have universally recognized the influence of the Bible and Milton on Blake’s graphics and poetry, unnoted allusions permeate the texts. For recent studies, see Paul Miner, “Blake: Milton inside *Milton*,” *Studies in Romanticism* 51 (summer 2012): 233–76, and “William Blake’s Creative Scripture,” *Literature and Theology* 27.1 (March 2013): 32–47.

3 The *Annual Register* for 1793 (“Chronicle,” p. 4) reported a remarkable incident that occurred on 19 January, when the sun made an “extraordinary appearance”: about noon “a fog arose, by which the sun, as is usual, appeared like a red globe.”<sup>3</sup> The sphere enveloped by mist was unusual in that it had a pronounced “oblong opaque body nearly on its centre,” and “even when the fog dispersed, and the sun became very luminous, the spot was still visible, although the power of light was so great upon the eye as to dazzle and weaken the sight.” The *Gentleman’s Magazine* (January 1793, p. 8) further observed that “those whose minds are affected by superstition may be led to believe it a sign of some tremendous event.” Coincidentally, on 21 January Louis XVI was beheaded, and in February France declared war on Britain.<sup>4</sup> Marie Antoinette, the queen of France, was guillotined on 16 October 1793.

4 The *Times* (12 January 1793) had contrasted England’s secure Queen Charlotte, “surrounded by a numerous progeny, the pledges of connubial love, and the offspring of matrimonial chastity [monogamy],” with the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, confined by revolutionaries and “treated like the veriest street-walker that ever inhabited the walls of a prison.” In a private Notebook poem (c. late 1792), Blake satirically questioned the virtue of “the beautiful Queen of France,” who demanded that “the Brothels of Paris be opened” (E 499–500), a disparagement not unusual for republicans.<sup>5</sup> The author of *The Greatest of All the Joys of the Père Duchesne*, a scurrilous work that violently repudiated the French monarchy, recorded exhilaration as he witnessed the head of Marie Antoinette being separated from the “fucking tart’s neck.” This writer also denounced Louis XVI as a “sham father” and a “fat cuckold.”<sup>6</sup>

3. The sun as a “red Globe of fire [appears] in Los’s hand / As he walks from Furnace to Furnace” in *Jerusalem* (85.19–20, E 244). See also Blake’s design for the frontispiece of *Jerusalem*, portraying Los holding a radiating sphere. “Los” is engraved as “sol” (sun).

4. Except for short periods of “peace,” the French Revolution extended into the Napoleonic Wars, which lasted until 1815.

5. In 1790 the frontispiece of *Les Bordels de Paris*, a French pornographic pamphlet attacking royalty, portrayed aristocratic women in an erotic embrace (see Elizabeth Colwill, “Pass as a Woman, Act like a Man: Marie-Antoinette as Tribade in the Pornography of the French Revolution,” *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman [New York: Routledge, 2003] 155). A great deal of sexual slander was associated with the queen of France. She was accused of having lesbian propensities by the Countess de la Motte (of the affair of the necklace), who escaped to England, living only a few paces from Blake’s residence at Hercules Buildings; the countess died on 23 Aug. 1791. See Paul Miner, “Blake’s London: Times and Spaces,” *Studies in Romanticism* 41 (summer 2002): 306–07.

6. Quoted from Philippe Huisman and Marguerite Jallut, *Marie Antoinette* (New York: Viking Press, 1971) 238. A bawdy satire of the period alleged that Cardinal de Rohan was the real father of the queen’s second child. In further ridicule, a new die was smuggled by wags into the royal mint, which in 1785 unknowingly began to issue Louis d’or

- 5 Blake's continued rejection of royalty may be catalogued in his enigmatic design for *Jerusalem* plate 63, which depicts a blasting crescent (presumably the beams of the morning star) above a polyp-enwrapped female with exposed breasts.<sup>7</sup> This puzzling iconography finds its parallel, in part, in a caricature of 2 November 1790.<sup>8</sup> Gleaming rays surround the head of Marie Antoinette, whom Edmund Burke idealized in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as the morning star or Venus, a planet that briefly presents its crescent near the earth at dawn.<sup>9</sup> Burke embellished his memory of almost two decades before: "I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning star."<sup>10</sup>
- 6 In ironic derision of Burke's text, Blake responded with the following quatrain (E 500): "The Queen of France [as Venus, the goddess of love] just touchd this Globe / And

with the king's head on the obverse decorated with cuckold's horns (see Vincent Cronin, *Louis and Antoinette* [London: Harvill Press, 1996] 257). It was said that a congenital defect of Louis's sexual organs prevented consummation of the royal marriage (his penis had grown into his thigh). After seven years, however, he presumably underwent a painful operation, thereby permitting Marie Antoinette to become the true queen of France. For the conjectural details, see Dorothy Moulton Mayer, *Marie Antoinette: The Tragic Queen* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968) 50.

7. Following Milton's description in *Paradise Lost*, Blake represents Sin—breasts exposed—as serpentine below the waist, possessing polyp-like "feet" (see *William Blake Archive*, Drawings and Paintings, Illustrations to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Butts set, 1808, *Satan, Sin, and Death*). In 1792 James Gillray portrayed Queen Charlotte as Milton's Sin (displaying her breasts and serpentine feet), while Pitt is caricatured as Death, the incestuous offspring of Satan and Sin in *Paradise Lost*. On Gillray's influence on Blake, see David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 221-23.

8. See M. Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, vol. 6 (London: British Museum, 1938) #7675.

9. Venus, which forms crescents, serves as both morning and evening star.

10. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Thomas H. D. Mahoney (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955) 85-86. Burke's veneration of the French queen became celebrated in its time—see Erdman, *Prophet against Empire* 183-87. Within a year, ten editions of *Reflections* were printed in England. George III (though disliking Burke) highly commended the volume, and a French translation was made by Louis XVI himself.

His effusive rhetoric had foundation in fact. In a letter to the Countess of Ossory (1 Dec. 1790), Horace Walpole commented that on one occasion he saw Marie Antoinette, when dauphiness, running after the king to chapel: "She ... shot through the room like an aerial being, all brightness and grace, and without seeming to touch earth." Walpole concluded, "Had I Mr. Burke's powers, I would have described her in his words."

the [sexual] Pestilence darted from her robe / But our good Queen quite grows to the ground / And a great many suckers grow all around." Blake's crescent of Venus in *Jerusalem* 63, warping the details of Burke's description, potentially signifies the genitals of the queen of France, Venus disrobed,<sup>11</sup> while the "great many suckers [that] grow all around" Queen Charlotte on earth suggest her extensive offspring. Charlotte delivered fifteen infants in twenty-two years,<sup>12</sup> and a contemporary witticism concluded that she appeared as if she were bearing all of her children at one pregnancy.<sup>13</sup>

- 7 Blake's context is also addressed in *A Vision of the Last Judgment* (E 562), where the "good ... Queens [of England]," adorned with "Crowns," are "calld in the Bible ... Nursing Mothers." These "queens" are the "nursing mothers" in Isaiah 49.23, abject royalty who must "bow down ... with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet."<sup>14</sup> Blake excoriated Queen Charlotte as a polyp-like

11. Burke concluded that, in the revolutionary world, "all the decent drapery of life is ... rudely torn off" (*Reflections* 87). France's virtuous queen is now left naked.

For varying interpretations of the iconography in *Jerusalem* 63, see David V. Erdman, ed., *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City, NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1974) and Morton D. Paley, ed., *Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press/William Blake Trust, 1991).

12. Did Blake notice the "harlot" in C[harlot]te's name? In Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love* (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1794), an infernal male (having escaped the "prison" of monogamy) rhetorically asks "with an hissing, ... What is a wife but an harlot?" (par. 79, p. 93), while in *True Christian Religion* (London: J. Phillips, 1781) Swedenborg's Satan observes, "What is a Wife?" declaring "she is my Harlot" (vol. 1, par. 80, p. 115). Similarly, in *Jerusalem* (57.8-9, E 207) Blake asks, "What is a Wife & what is a Harlot? ... / ... are they Two & not One? can they Exist Separate?"

13. See Christopher Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History* (London: Longmans, 1964) 134.

Blake's polyp-female in *Jerusalem* 63 finds her equivalent as a symbol of generation in his designs for Thomas Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" (p. 8), where a crowned "queen" of death (Gray's phrase) possesses pronounced breasts for nursing suckers. Dead bodies (described by Gray as "the painful family of Death," "a grisly troop") surround the queen, who is encompassed by a huge polyp-like worm. She has both feet placed on generative polyps (meaning "many feet") and holds chastising birches (comparable to the symbol of austerity in *Night Thoughts* 375). See Paul Miner, "The Polyp as a Symbol in the Poetry of William Blake," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 2 (1960): 198-205.

14. In *Jerusalem* (16.23-26, E 160), "England: nursing Mothers / Gives to the Children of Albion," for "the whole Creation ... groans to be delivered" in an apocalyptic childbirth. The imagery alludes to Romans 8.21-22, in which newborn man is a "creature ... delivered from the bondage of corruption," for "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Compare *Jerusalem* 79.24-26 (E 235), "London ... / ... gave / His children to my [Jerusalem's] breasts, his sons & daughters to my knees," which alludes to Isaiah 66.10-12: believers "shall ... suck" upon the breasts of Jerusalem "and be dandled upon her knees."

Jehovah stood among the Druids in the Valley of Anpandale  
 When the Four Zoas of Albion the Four Living Creatures the Cherubim  
 Of Albion tremble before the Spectre in the Starry Harnels of the Flow  
 Of Nations. And their Names are Urizen & Luvah & Tharmas & Urthona  
 Luvah slew Tharmas the Angel of the Tongue & Albion brought him  
 To Justice in his own City of Paris, denying the Resurrection  
 Then Vala the Wife of Albion who is the Daughter of Luvah  
 Took vengeance Twelve-fold among the Chaotic Rocks of the Druids  
 Where the Human Victims howl to the Moon & Thor & Friga  
 Dance the Dance of Death contending with Jehovah among the Cherubim  
 The Chariot Wheels filled with Eyes rage along the howling Valley  
 In the Dividing of Reuben & Benjamin bleeding from Chester's River  
 The Giants & the Witches & the Ghosts of Albion dance with Fr  
 Thor & Friga. & the Fairies lead the Moon along the Valley of Cherubim  
 Weeding in torrents from Mountain to Mountain a lovely Victim  
 And Jehovah stood in the Gates of the Victim. & he appeared  
 A weeping Infant in the Gates of Birth in the midst of Heaven  
 The Cities & Villages of Albion became Rock & Sand Inhumanized  
 The Druid Sons of Albion & the Heavens a Void around unfathomable  
 No Human Form but Sexual & a little weeping Infant pale reflected  
 Multitudinous in the Looking Glads of Enitharmon on all sides  
 Around in the clouds of the Female on Albions Cliffs of the Dead  
 Such the appearance in Cheviot in the Divisions of Reuben



When the Cherubim hid their heads under their wings in deep slumbers  
 When the Druids demanded Chastity from Woman & all was lost  
 How can the Female be Chaste O thou stupid Druid Cried Los  
 Without the Forgiveness of Sins in the merciful clouds of Jehovah  
 And without the Baptism of Repentance to wash away Calumnies and  
 The Accusations of Sin that each may be Pure in their Neighbour's sight  
 O when shall Jehovah give us Victims from his Flocks & Herds  
 Instead of Human Victims by the Daughters of Albion & Canaan  
 Then laughed Gwendolen & her laughter shook the Nations & Families of  
 The Dead beneath Beulah from Tyburn to Golgotha, and from  
 Ireland to Japan, furious her Lions & Tygers & Wolves sport before  
 Los on the Thames & Medway, London & Canterbury groan in pain  
 Los knew not yet what was done: he thought it was all in Vision  
 In Visions of the Dreams of Beulah among the Daughters of Albion  
 Therefore the Murder was put apart in the Looking Glads of Enitharmon  
 He saw in Vala's hand the Druid Knife of Revenge & the Poison Cup  
 Of Jealousy, and thought it a Poetic Vision of the Atmosphere  
 Till Canaan rolled apart from Albion across the Rhine along the Danube  
 And all the Land of Canaan suspended over the Valley of Cheviot  
 From Bashan to Tyra & from Troy to Gaza of the Amalekite  
 And Reuben fled with his head downwards among the Caverns

tree of genealogy that “quite grows to the ground,” for “just such a tree [is] at Java found”—the deadly upas tree.<sup>15</sup>

- 8 “London” (E 26-27) in *Songs of Experience* (1794) circum- spectly denounces the tyrannical attitude of George III. Though Blake investigates the trepidations of London’s earthly avenues, these thoroughfares also expand upon the heavens in what he later describes as “Londons opening streets” (*Jerusalem* 34[38].43, E 180).<sup>16</sup> “London,” one of Blake’s most challenging compositions,<sup>17</sup> clearly functions at one level as an astronomical poem.
- 9 In relating heaven to earth in the manuscript version (probably written in late 1792, as the Notebook placement tentatively indicates), Blake hears<sup>18</sup> the “german [Hanoverian] forged links” (see E 796),<sup>19</sup> because the laws initially were cried about the streets of the metropolis. He envisioned these proclamations as rotating laws of the universe, a starry chain of reasonings cast upon the Mundane Shell/brain. (Compare the “Prince of Light bound in chains [stars] of intellect” in *The Four Zoas* [57.16, E 339].) In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes identified such mental chains as “Artificiall Chains, called *Civill Lawes*” (2.21).<sup>20</sup> Possibly

15. Erdman (E 861) notes that the line “And a great many suckers grow all around” replaced “There is just such a tree at Java found.”

Erasmus Darwin mentions the upas (which regrew from its en- rooting branches) as a “HYDRA-TREE of death” proliferating upon a “blasted heath” among “human skeletons” (*The Botanic Garden* [1791] 2.3.237-50). A description had appeared in the *London Magazine* (Dec. 1783): 512. See Heather Glen, *Vision and Disenchantment: Blake’s Songs and Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge: Cam- bridge University Press, 1983) 193, 380n36.

16. For further details, see Miner, “Blake’s London: Times and Spaces” 279-316.

17. Donald Ault speaks of the reader-editor’s “urge to homogenize Blake’s heterogeneous texts”; “Blake’s wording clearly permits us to re- construct a normalized version (by the substitution of punctuation), but that ‘version’ neutralizes or forestalls the reader’s awareness of being engaged in an act of revisionary reading—a reading of a poem that, unless revised, is unreadable, an awareness that requires at least a two- fold vision.” See “Unreading ‘London,’” *Approaches to Teaching Blake’s Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, ed. Robert F. Gleckner and Mark L. Greenberg (New York: Modern Language Association, 1989) 132-33.

18. Scholars have called attention to the initial letters (HEAR) of the third stanza, which mentions the smoky cry and the bloody sigh of sweep and soldier, victims of state religion.

19. In part 2 of the *Rights of Man* (1792), Thomas Paine determined that England’s current problems could be traced to “the Hanoverians” (*The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner [New York: Citadel Press, 1945] 1: 410). See Paul Miner, “Blake, Paine, and Moses,” *Notes and Queries* 59.3 (Sept. 2012): 355-61. The London Cor- responding Society (which was sympathetic to the French Revolution) cautioned in Sept. 1792 that “the King of Great Britain will do well to remember that this country is not Hanover.” See Michael Ferber, “‘London’ and Its Politics,” *ELH* 48.2 (summer 1981): 321.

20. See Nelson Hilton, *Literal Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 269n20.

because of the oppressive political climate of the period, Blake amended “german forged links” to “mind-forg’d manacles.” The thought remained in his imagination, how- ever, for in a poem of September 1800 he speaks of “Rend- ing the manacles of Londons Dungeon dark”; London stands “Ghastly pale,” a “City in fear.”<sup>21</sup>

- 10 “London” finds additional relevance in Joel Barlow’s *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, an anti-monarchical work pub- lished by Joseph Johnson in early 1792.<sup>22</sup> Barlow remon- strates that in England “the people at large” are “ignorant of the acts of parliament,” for “they are printed by one man only, who is called the king’s printer,—in the old German character, which few men can read.”<sup>23</sup> He refers to the fact that English law was traditionally printed in Gothic type- face, known as German blackletter or Old English script. (Gothic typeface was used in Germany until the beginning of the twentieth century.) Barlow protests that if one wishes to have knowledge of English legalities one must “find out the king’s printer, pay a penny a page for the law, and learn the German alphabet.” He cynically concludes that the ab- struse Gothic/German “laws of the land” represent a “fath- omless abyss,” and thus Blake saw Barlow’s laws of the abyss as a starry chain of words forged in the heavenly dungeon of the mind.<sup>24</sup> These words of law, printed in Gothic type- face, become in the allegory of Blake’s “London” the “ger- man forged” manacles of the mind.

- 11 The monarch in “King Edward the Third” from *Poetical Sketches* (1783) observes that “the enemy fight in chains, in- visible chains, but heavy,” for “their minds are fetter’d” (1.13-14, E 424), and Blake’s laws of Hanoverian oppression find their extension in *America* (1793), where “a heavy iron chain / Descends link by link from Albions cliffs” to bind the minds of the revolutionary “sons of America” (3.7-9, E

21. See Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley, “‘Dear Generous Cum- berland’: A Newly Discovered Letter and Poem by William Blake,” *Blake* 32.1 (summer 1998): 4-13.

22. Note also Barlow’s *The Conspiracy of Kings*, a poem published in Feb. 1792 by Johnson. For additional information on Blake and Bar- low, see Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire* 23, 154. Note also Michael Phillips, ed., *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, by William Blake (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011) 13. Recall that Blake was a pe- ripheral figure, operating on the fringes of Johnson’s literary coterie.

23. Joel Barlow, *Advice to the Privileged Orders, Part 1*, 2nd ed. (Lon- don: J. Johnson, 1792) 124-26. The *Analytical Review* 12 (April 1792): 459 (also published by Johnson) found this passage on the “old Ger- man character” sufficiently interesting to quote in its entirety.

24. In *Europe*, issued in the same year as *Songs of Experience*, Lord Thurlow, formerly England’s chief parliamentarian, is described as “Guardian of the secret codes” (12.15, E 64); in *An Island in the Moon* (c. 1784-85), “Steelyard the lawgiver” stalks in “with an act of parlia- ment in his hand,” objecting that “it was a shameful thing that acts of parliament should be [issued] in a free state” (E 451).

52).<sup>25</sup> English “Governors,” threatening the American colonists, “Shak[e] their mental chains” (13.1-3, E 56), which relates to the stars as German-forged links encircling the heavens. (Compare the caricature of 1 March 1776, *The State Blacksmiths Forging Fetters for the Americans*.)<sup>26</sup>

- 12 In Blakean allegory the divine right of kings is of satanic origin. Hence, the starry typography of God’s statutes, taken from the “brazen Book” of the fallen prince of light (Jehovah, who codified the Ten Commandments), is “copied on Earth” (in Gothic type) by Hanoverian “Kings & Priests” (*Europe* 11.3-5, E 64).<sup>27</sup> This “Lawful” deceit “forges fetters for the mind” (E 472), which is applicable to the “mind-forg’d manacles” in “London.”
- 13 Blake’s antinomian and heretical Orc in *America* will “stamp to dust” God’s (that is, the devil’s) “stony [starry] law” of morality (which the poet equates with the decrees issued under George III). In this passage (8.3-9, E 54), Blake envisions the Decalogue as starry words circulating upon the dark voids, the cyclical rote of God’s stony law, allegorically forming a repetitive mill of hell (see *There is No Natural Religion*, E 2). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) a revolutionary “wonder” (later identified as Orc in *America*) rejects such restriction and “stamps the stony law to dust” (pls. 26-27, E 44-45). He eradicates the fallen heavens of morality by “loosing the eternal horses [of the sun] from the dens of night”; in this context, godly and kingly “Empire is no more! and now the lion [Leo] & wolf [Lupus] shall cease,”<sup>28</sup> translating earth to the heavens.
- 14 Early on, Blake expressed anti-royal sympathies in *Poetical Sketches*: “O what have Kings to answer for, / Before that

awful throne!” of God (“Gwin, King of Norway,” E 420). In his design “Our End is come,” issued a decade later, he portrayed a crowned king with two nefarious ministers (holding spear and sword respectively); they are subjected to sublime terror and fear, reminiscent of the pitiful state of Zion in Lamentations—“our end is come” (4.18).<sup>29</sup> In “Our End is come” no one can avoid divine judgment: “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6.17). The question “Who can stand?” appears four times in the prologue to “King Edward the Fourth” from *Poetical Sketches* (E 439), which speaks of God’s awful wrath to be visited on “The Kings and Nobles of the Land.” In *America*, Blake writes that “their [kings’ and nobles’] end should come, when France reciev’d the Demons light” (16.15, E 57)—that of fiery Orc, whose flames instigated the French Revolution (engendered by the revolution in America).<sup>30</sup>

- 15 Thus, in *Europe*, “terrible Orc, when he beheld the morning in the east,” descended with “the light of his fury” “in the vineyards of red France” (14.37, 15.2, E 66).<sup>31</sup> Appropriately, the new French calendar was initiated at the moment the sun entered the sign of Libra, and the first month was known as Vendemiaire—the vintage month, a time of reaping the harvest (*Annual Register* for 1793, “Chronicle,” pp. 41-42). The balances or scales of justice weigh the equatorial heavens in plate 5 of *America*, an equinox where kings presumably will meet their judgment.
- 16 “Albions Angel,” first introduced in that plate, may be presumed to be analogous to George III, cunningly converted by Blake into the devil, his satanic majesty. Star-soldiers

25. In “Earth’s Answer” (E 18-19) the Earth, confined in night’s dark “den” (a dungeon kept by “Starry Jealousy”), implores, “Break this heavy chain” surrounding “my bones” (compare the “heavy chains” of “hipocrisy” in *The Four Zoas* 123.31, E 393). Blake alludes to Lamentations 3.6-9, where God “set me in dark places, as they that be dead,” making “my chain heavy” and enclosing “my ways with hewn stone.”

26. See George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, vol. 5 (London: British Museum, 1935) #5328.

27. On the laws of priests and kings, see Paul Miner, “Francis Quarles’s Influence on *Europe* 11,” *Blake* 47.4 (spring 2014).

28. Compare “Th’ Infernal Empire, ... so near Heav’n’s door” in *Paradise Lost* (10.389). Blake’s phrasing also utilizes Isaiah 11.6, a passage he illustrated in *An Island in the Moon* (see *William Blake Archive*, Manuscripts and Typographic Works, *An Island in the Moon*, object 18), and 2 Kings 23.11, 14-15, in which “the horses ... given to the sun” are taken away, while “images” are broken and the “high place” is “stamped ... small to powder” (compare *Jerusalem* 55.58-59 [E 205] and the language in Daniel 8.10). Starry chains of the mind are stamped “furious to dust” by Los in *The Book of Los* (3.47-48, 4.19-22, E 91-92).

For Blake’s interest in astronomy, see Paul Miner, “Blake and the Night Sky: III, Visionary Astronomy,” *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 84 (1981): 305-36.

29. Matthew (24.14) also speaks of an apocalyptic “gospel ... preached ... unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” In a letter of 1806 Blake deplors bad art: “But now, I say, now its end is come” (E 768); at the “Last Judgment ... Men of Real Art Govern” (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E 561).

30. In “A Song of Liberty” Blake speaks of the defeat of a “jealous king” with “his grey brow’d councillors, thunderous warriors ... chariots horses ... Falling” through the heavens to perdition (*The Marriage* pl. 26, E 44; see the horse, chariot, and sword-wielding warrior descending into the voids in the illustration to pl. 5). In *The Four Zoas* Blake announces that “Mystery [Rahab the whore, who ironically symbolizes moral virtue in Blakean symbolism] ... thy end is come” (see Revelation 17.1, 5, 16), for “Kings & Councillors & Giant Warriors / Go down into the depths ... / ... with horse & Chariots” (134.5, 7-9, E 402). *A Vision of the Last Judgment* (E 558) also mentions “Kings & Councillors & Warriors” associated with Rahab and her fiery end.

31. The imagery finds a parallel in Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (London, 1789): “Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting AMERICA free, reflected to FRANCE, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates EUROPE!” (50). Paine also noted that liberty, beginning as a “small spark kindled in America,” expanded into a “flame ... not to be extinguished” (*Rights of Man*, part 2 [*The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* 1: 398]).

“must’ring in the eastern sky” (*America* 13.13-16, 15.4-6, E 56-57) are envisioned as slaves of the king in vocabulary that emulates book 1 of *Paradise Lost* (657-66), where “Millions” of “Celestial Spirits in Bondage” (slaves to Milton’s vengeful God) draw their “flaming swords” to illuminate the darkness of hell (an ironic simulation of morning). The “num’rous hosts” of the king (see the “numerous Host” of devils that fled through the “deep” in *Paradise Lost* 2.993-94) number “forty millions”; as stars fading in the light of the rising sun, they throw off “their hammerd mail, / And cast their swords & spears to earth,” seeking liberation in the new dawn as a “naked multitude.” They are naked in part because those who “walk in the flesh ... do not war after the flesh,” for the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal” but spiritual, and therefore result in “casting down imaginations [glossed as “reasonings”], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10.3-5). Blake’s imagery also reflects Romans 13.12-13: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting ..., not in chambering and wantonness.” In consequence, Blake’s revolutionary edicts presume sexual satiety.

17 Blake’s phrasing also mocks Burke’s political perspective. In his *Discourse*, which commemorated the Glorious Revolution of 1688,<sup>32</sup> Price empathized with the “nations panting for liberty” and noted that he had “lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS of people ... spurning at slavery,” a number derided by Burke in his *Reflections*.<sup>33</sup> As noted, Blake deliberately increased the number in question to “forty millions” and converted these panting slaves into a “naked multitude.”

18 In *America* Orc is the devilish spirit of the revolution, opposing devilish George III: thus devil confronts devil. Aptly, Orc occupies a Miltonic hell where “heat but not light” pervades the “murky atmosphere” (4.11, E 53); this alludes to the furnace-like “Dungeon” in book 1 of *Paradise Lost* (61-63), in which “on all sides round / ... flames / [emit] No light, but rather darkness visible.” (Recall that in Miltonic cosmology, hell is located in the southern hemisphere, abstractly represented on the title page of *The Marriage*.) As

32. A song in *An Island in the Moon* concerns “William the prince of Orange” becoming king of England (E 465). James Parker, Blake’s former print-shop partner, engraved a plate (1790) after James Northcote of the Prince of Orange’s being offered the crown.

33. Burke stressed that the revolutionary tendencies of the times ultimately would reject true knowledge, at which point “learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude,” an expression that became infamous (see, for example, the *Morning Chronicle* of 8 July 1796, p. 3).

an awful “Wonder” of the revolution, Orc arises in “red clouds” “o’er the Atlantic sea,” and “The King of England looking westward trembles at the vision” (4.7-12, E 53). In the shifting layers of *America*, Orc is described as a “Devourer of thy parent” (the monarchy) (9.20, E 54), reflecting Milton’s specter-like Death, who “his Parent [Sin] would full soon devour” (*Paradise Lost* 2.804-05). (Note also Blake’s language in *The Four Zoas*, in which Orc “Concenterd into Love of Parent Storgous Appetite Craving” [61.10, E 341].) Blake’s genealogy additionally addresses the issue that royal tyranny gave birth to revolution; hence, George III is envisioned as the metaphorical satanic father of fiery Orc,<sup>34</sup> who is associated with Death, a creature born from Milton’s Sin.

19 Blake’s anti-government posture is further revealed in a cancelled plate for *America* (b, E 58), where “George the third holds council” with “his Lords”; in view of the relentless severities of the period, Blake possibly rejected this plate because of its implied derogation of the monarch. In the passage privileged lords sit on “Angelic seats” in a “hall of counsel” in which Albion’s angel comes “Shut out from mortal sight.” Unmistakably Blake once more transforms the king into Satan; in *Paradise Lost* Milton speaks of the “Council” of infernal “Peers” (to Blake the House of Lords) on “golden seats” in a “spacious Hall” of hell (1.755-62, 796), while Satan “exalted sat” on a “Throne of Royal State” (2.1-5). In a later sequence (10.444-46) Satan comes “invisible” to his “Plutonian Hall” and “Ascended his high Throne, which under state / [is] Of richest texture spread.”<sup>35</sup>

20 Blake was obsessed with the “terrors” that appeared in heaven and hell when the “American War began” (lines to John Flaxman, E 707-08), and (as the revolution was end-

34. Emblem 8—“My Son! my Son!”—of both versions of *The Gates of Paradise* (1793 and c. 1825-26) alludes in part to the battle between Death and Satan in *Paradise Lost* book 2, where Sin remonstrates with Death: “What fury O Son, / Possesses thee to bend that mortal Dart / Against thy Father’s head?” (728-30). Satan twice refers to Death as “my Son” (2.743, 818). In one illustration to *Paradise Lost* Blake explicitly follows Milton’s “Each at the Head / Levell’d his deadly aim” (2.711-12); in another version he depicts Satan and Death focusing their gaze and leveling their spears toward each other’s genitals (see *William Blake Archive*, Drawings and Paintings, Illustrations to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Thomas set, 1807, *Satan, Sin, and Death*, and Butts set, 1808, *Satan, Sin, and Death*). See Diana Hume George, *Blake and Freud* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980) 164.

35. Recall that the English coronation chair is momentarily canopied during the ceremony. That Blake was familiar with Milton’s passage in book 10 is confirmed in *America* 16.2-7 (E 57), where Urizen as “Weeping” devil-god protrudes “his leprous head / From out his holy shrine”; in *Paradise Lost* Satan sits “unseen” until “At last as from a Cloud his fulgent head / ... appear’d,” surrounded with “false glitter” (10.447-52).

ing)<sup>36</sup> he approached the subject in “King Edward the Third,” where “war [shall] stain the blue heavens with bloody banners” (5.63, E 437), allegorically reflecting comets and meteors as omens streaming across the darkness. He converts these astronomical events into a declaration against royalty, with George III in mind.

21 In another cancelled plate for *America* (pl. a) a large inter-linear design depicts a nude (Miltonic?) warrior holding a spear-staff, from which flies a huge banner of war. As discussed above, these banners are, at one level of interpretation, comets or meteors, projectiles often portrayed as “flags” waving in the air. Warlike “terrors” are also seen “at the flapping of the folding banners” in plate b (19-20, E 58). Blake continues to explore the idea in *The Four Zoas* (91 [second portion].26, E 364), which mentions “the flappings of the folding banners” in the voids. Later, Tharmas speaks of hell’s belligerence, exclaiming, “Lo darkness covers the long pomp of banners on the wind” (134.14, E 402). The phrasing once again alludes to *Paradise Lost* (1.531-37): a “mighty Standard” from a “glittering Staff [is] unfurl’d,” displaying an “Imperial Ensign” that “Shone like a Meteor streaming to the Wind.”

22 In *America* Orc is described as a “terror like a comet, or more like the planet red [Mars] / That once inclos’d the terrible wandering comets in its sphere” (5.2-3, E 53). The allegorical plague-sigh (11.13, E 55) is a royal sigh of blood running down the palace walls of heaven in the form of a comet, a pestilential product of state religion.<sup>37</sup> The “voice of Albions Angel” causes “plagues” to fall upon America as a “blight” (14.3-6, E 56);<sup>38</sup> “then rolld they back with fury / On Albions Angels” (14.20-15.1, E 56), reflecting Milton’s *Comus*, where “evil on itself shall back recoil” (line 593; see also *Paradise Lost* 7.56-58 and 4.15-18). In plate 15 (E 56-57), “plagues creep on the burning winds driven by flames of Orc,” with “ensigns sick’ning in the sky” and “ban-

ners seard”—fiery comets/meteors as flags or ensigns are viewed as veins cauterized, to stanch the flow of blood.<sup>39</sup> The flames, associated with comet-like plagues, are characterized by Blake as leprosy (“spotted ... plagues”). Orcan fires of war inflict George III with “Pestilence,”<sup>40</sup> “in [comet] streaks of red / Across the limbs of Albions Guardian.”<sup>41</sup> Fires of passion break out in the form of pestilence when nature (macrocosmic Orc) is inhibited, so “Over the hills, the vales, the cities” of Albion “rage the red flames fierce” of the revolutionary fires of Orc (*America* 16.1, E 57).<sup>42</sup>

23 Blake continues the idiom near the end of *Europe* (14.37, 15.2-5, E 66), where Orc appears amid “furious terrors,” among “golden chariots raging,” their “red wheels [as comets] dropping with blood.” (Compare *The Four Zoas* [75.29-31, E 352], in which Urizen’s “Comets” “with wheel impetuous” are envisioned as orbs “gorg’d with blood” surrounding “red Orc.”) In *Europe* “the voice of Albions Angel” is heard “howling in flames of Orc” (12.12, E 64). The king was renowned for his ruddy complexion; Peter Pindar admonished that one of Benjamin West’s portraits made the monarch “A very *Saracen*” (Pindar’s emphasis), so much so that he looked as if he had “a fire-ship in his belly.” Pindar concluded that the populace was “anxious for his [George III’s] life.”<sup>43</sup>

39. Urizen and his flaming chariot in Night the First of *The Four Zoas* reflect, in further irony, book 5 of *Paradise Lost* (588-96), where planetary “Hierarchies” (God’s angels encompassed “Orb within Orb”) raise “Ten thousand thousand Ensigns ... / [that] Stream in the Air,” “glittering Tissues” that Blake’s mental eye saw as shining veins of blood waving upon the winds.

40. In *The American Crisis* no. 2 (1777), Paine describes “the sword of war ... *ultima ratio regum*” “cast[ing] a sickly languor over an insulted people” (the American colonists) (*The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* 1: 58-59). Thus, in *America* (3.1-2, E 52), “Sullen fires” belong to the “Prince of Albion” and “glow to America’s shore.” In *Common Sense* (1776), Paine remarks that “a thirst for absolute power is the natural disease of monarchy” (*Complete Writings* 1: 7); in his annotations to Bacon’s *Essays* Blake says that “A Tyrant is the Worst disease” (E 625). (Compare the reference to the “purple [royal] plague” in *The French Revolution* [1791] [24, E 287].) Paine describes George III as a “sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England” (*Complete Writings* 1: 25); in *Jerusalem* (89.18-19, E 248) Blake speaks of “Pharoh [sic] in his iron Court: / And the Dragon of the River” (Ezekiel 29.3 condemns the “Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers”).

41. Compare Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 1* (1.1.2-5): “Comets, importing change of times and states, / Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, / And with them scourge the bad revolting stars, / That have consented unto Henry’s death!” Blake alludes to Shakespeare’s description in his spiritual conversation with Hotspur, who denounces “Prince Hen[r]y,” blaming the malign “Influence” of the “cursd Stars” (E 686).

42. On these plagues, see also Miner, “Blake’s London: Times and Spaces” 283-84.

43. Peter Pindar, *More Lyric Odes, to the Royal Academicians* (London, 1783), ode 2. Pindar’s sardonic observation is corroborated in a fash-

36. The Revolutionary War began in April 1775; though hostilities terminated in 1781, the war was not officially over until the Treaty of Paris was executed in Sept. 1783. The end was celebrated in Oct. 1783 in England; see the *London Magazine* (Oct. 1783): 364-65 and the *European Magazine* (Jan. 1784): 32.

37. Compare “the hapless Soldiers sigh / [that] Runs in blood down Palace walls” in “London” (E 27). Blake’s satanic prince of light as Urizen in Night the Fifth of *The Four Zoas* laments, “O did I close my treasuries with roofs of solid stone / And darken all my Palace walls with envyings & hate” (64.15-16, E 344), presumably fiery comets (see the “Envyings” that represent the fallen “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5.19-21).

38. A caricature of 1784 portrayed the king in the act of expelling a blast from his buttocks (“R-Y-L Inflammable AIR”); see George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, vol. 6, #6486. In deleted lines to “The Little Vagabond” Blake speaks of “poor parsons” who “with wind like a blown bladder swell” (E 795). See also the “Plague” in possession of Inflammable Gass in *An Island in the Moon* (E 451).

24 In *America* (pl. 11, E 55) a colonial angel, aflame with the fires of Orc, threatens the destruction of George III (for militancy creates counter-militancy) and disingenuously inquires, “What pitying Angel lusts for tears, and fans himself with sighs[?]” Blake again covertly associates the king with Milton’s weeping and sighing Satan in *Paradise Lost*: “Thus wept<sup>44</sup> the Angel voice & as he wept the terrible blasts [or sighs] / Of trumpets, blew a loud alarm” (10.1-2, E 55).<sup>45</sup> In *Paradise Lost*, “Thrice [Satan] assay’d” to speak before his “Peers,” but in vain; “Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last / Words interwove with sighs found out their way” (1.612-21).<sup>46</sup> In further acknowledgment, when Urizen, the degenerate prince of light, questions his beast-formed constellations, his words are “but an inarticulate thunder”;<sup>47</sup> no “voice / Of sweet response could he obtain tho [he] oft assay’d with tears” (*The Four Zoas* 70 [first portion].39, 43-44, E 347).<sup>48</sup> “In vain the voice / Of Urizen in vain the Eloquent tongue” (71 [first portion].3-4, E 348), for he is afflicted like Satan in *Paradise Lost*. (Compare Blake’s *Tiriel* [c. 1789] [4.46, E 281], where “eloquent tongues were dumb.”)

ion note in the *European Magazine* (Jan. 1784) that criticized the “suit of marone velvet” worn by the king at the queen’s birthday celebration (her birthday, on 19 May, was celebrated in winter so as not to conflict with the festivities for the king’s birthday, 4 June, as explained in the *Times*, 18 Jan. 1785). The “colour was too high for a complexion so florid as his majesty’s”; those in attendance observed that he had never worn “so unbecoming” an attire. (Note that Blake speaks of “visages redd’ning with war” in *The French Revolution* [111, E 291]; compare *The Four Zoas* 15.11-12, E 309.)

44. Although George III fathered numerous offspring, Blake visualizes him as “an aged King in arms of gold” “Who wept” over “his only son” (c.23-27, E 59). In *Paradise Lost* Satan’s “only Son” (2.728) is Death, an ironic parallel to Christ, God’s only begotten son (John 3.16).

45. The trumpets echo the sounds of those who “blow an alarm with the trumpets” at the time of war in Numbers (10.9). (See the design in *America* pl. 3, where the fiery blast from a heavenly trumpet assaults fleeing human forms.)

46. In *Samson Agonistes* Dalila “Thrice ... assay’d with flattering prayers and sighs” (392) to learn the secret of Samson’s strength; in Blake’s “Samson” from *Poetical Sketches* “Dalila’s fair arts” are “tried in vain; in vain she wept in many a treacherous tear,” since “Thrice” Samson has “mocked” her (E 443-44). Blake follows Milton’s spelling, “Dalila,” rather than the biblical “Delilah.”

Blake’s Miltonic phrasing also occurs in “An Imitation of Spencer [sic]” (*Poetical Sketches*), where Pan “in vain might thee assay” in words of “Sound without sense.” In *The French Revolution*, the prisoners of the Bastille “assay to shout” (52, E 288) while the French king’s “heart flam’d, and utter’d a / with’ring heat” as “words burst forth” (69, E 289). So Tharmas, representing the bowels of compassion in *The Four Zoas*, “pitying back withdrew with many a sigh” as “his tears flow’d down” (48.23-24, E 332).

47. Compare the “myriads of Eternity” that “utter’d / Words articulate, bursting in thunders” (*The Book of Urizen* 3.44, 4.3-4, E 71) and the last “Trumpet thundering along from heaven to heaven” with a “sound articulate” (*The Four Zoas* 117.10-12, E 386).

48. Blake also has in mind Milton’s fruit of the tree of knowledge, “Whose taste ... at first assay / Gave elocution to the mute,” for the serpent of Eden could speak (see *Paradise Lost* 9.745-49, 764-65).

25 Blake uses related imagery in *Europe*—Albion’s “red limb’d Angel” attempts to blow “The Trump of the last doom; but he could not blow the iron tube!” though “Thrice he assay’d presumptuous to awake the dead to Judgment” (13.1-3, E 65; compare 12.12-13, E 64).<sup>49</sup> The guardian “Angel” of England cannot awake those in their graves. Such phrasing ironically relates to 2 Peter 2.9-10: “The Lord knoweth how ... to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [state religion]. Presumptuous are they, ... they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”<sup>50</sup> Similar irony is present in *America* plate 7 (E 53), where “Albions Angel wrathful burnt” in fires punctuating the heavens;<sup>51</sup> he denounces Orc as a “Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities.” Blake’s imagery establishes that both Albion’s angel (George III) and Orc are warlike creatures, one as an angel-tyrant enforcing repression and the other as a revolutionary energy that rejects any curtailment of liberty. The matter is assessed in “A Song of Liberty” (*The Marriage* pl. 27, E 45), where no longer will the curse of morality rule mankind, nor the “brethren” whom, erroneously, the tyrant “calls free,” reflecting Galatians 4.31: “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

26 The king’s sighs and tears of state religion allude, in further irony, to Milton’s “Upon the Circumcision,” where “flaming Powers, and winged Warriors bright” are dejected soldiers whose “fiery essence can distill no tear.” (Note also Blake’s peace-loving Grey Monk, whose “eye was dry no tear could flow / A hollow groan first spoke his woe” [E 489].) Milton’s angel kings (like his weeping Satan) breathe forth upon the wind as they expansively “Burn in [their] sighs, and borrow / Seas wept from ... deep sorrow.” These angels are an order

49. Once more he alludes to *Paradise Lost* (11.72-77). In *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* Milton speaks of the “wakeful trump of doom [that] must thunder through the deep” (line 156). See also *William Blake: The Continental Prophecies*, ed. D. W. Dörrbecker (Princeton: Princeton University Press/William Blake Trust, 1995) 276-77 (note on *Europe* 15[16].2-3 [plate number in this edition; pl. 13 in Erdman]).

50. In Jude 8 “filthy [prurient] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”

51. Recall 3.13-16 (E 52), where “a terrible blast” proceeds across the heavens, witnessed by “Albions wrathful Prince,” a “dragon form clashing his scales at midnight,” flaming “red meteors round the land of Albion.” Compare b.1 (E 58), where Albion’s guardian angel reveals “the dragon thro’ the human; coursing swift as fire” through the heavens—a meteor, popularly referred to as a dragon. The kings of England took their lineage from Cadwallader, symbolized by a red dragon. This legendary beast supports the tomb of Henry VII and his queen (see B. Lambert, *The History and Survey of London and Its Environs* [London, 1806] 3: 429), as Blake undoubtedly noticed as an apprentice assigned to sketch monuments in Westminster Abbey. Additionally, Blake did not miss the irony that Satan is a great red dragon in Revelation (12.3; compare the dragon king illustrated in *America* pl. 4).



of ethereal spirits associated with the planets of heaven, a celestial hierarchy mentioned by Blake in his inscriptions to Dante (E 689). In a constructive sense, Blake deduced that “a Tear is an Intellectual thing” and “a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King” (*Jerusalem* 52.25-28, E 202)<sup>52</sup>—hence the ironic association with Albion’s angel, the devil as George III.

- 27 Such are Blake’s disparate allusions attacking royalty, the “bad” queen of France (as a beaming crescent of the heavens), the “good” queen of England (quite growing to the ground), and red-flushed George III, his satanic majesty.

52. In a variant stanza on the monk of Charlemaine Blake determines that “The Tear shall melt the sword of steel” (E 811). The intellectual tear becomes “The Tear of Love & forgiveness sweet” that “every wound . . . shall heal”