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

By Paul Miner

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1 W illiam 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 protem 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. Despite such severe restrictions, the libertarian Blake repeatedly attacked the king with clandestine subtlety. Such condemnations are primarily concealed within Miltonic and biblical allusions.3

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.” The sphere enveloped by mist was unusual in that it had a pronounced “oblong opake 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. 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 cannibal 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. 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.”


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 dissentions 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.

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. This puzzling iconography finds its parallel, in part, in a caricature of 2 November 1790. 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. Burke embelished 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.”

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 touched 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.


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.”

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.


12. Did Blake notice the “harlot” in C[harlot]’s name? In Swedenborg’s Conjugial Love (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1794), an infant 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. I, par. 80, p. 115). Similarly, in Jerusalem 57.8-9, E 207 Blake asks, “What is a Wife & what is a Harlot? . . . I . . . are they Two & not One? can they Exist Separate?”


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 austerit in Night Thoughts 375). See Paul Minner, “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.”

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

8 “London” (E 26-27) in Songs of Experience (1794) circumspectly 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).16 “London,” one of Blake’s most challenging compositions,17 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 hears18 the “german [Hanoverian] forged links” (see E 796),19 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).20 Possibly 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, however, 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.”21

10 “London” finds additional relevance in Joel Barlow’s Advice to the Privileged Orders, an anti-monarchical work published by Joseph Johnson in early 1792.22 Barlow remonstrates 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.”23 He refers to the fact that English law was traditionally printed in Gothic typeface, 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 abstruse Gothic/German “laws of the land” represent a “fathomless 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.24 These words of law, printed in Gothic typeface, become in the allegory of Blake’s “London” the “german forged” manacles of the mind.

11 The monarch in “King Edward the Third” from Poetical Sketches (1783) observes that “the enemy fight in chains, invisible 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

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


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.


52). 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.)

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). This "Lawful" deceit "forgets fetters for the mind" (E 472), is applicable to the "mind-forg'd manacles" in "London."

Blake's antinoman 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 rite 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," translating earth to the heavens.

13 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). 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 receiv'd the Demons light" (16.15, E 57)—that of fiery Orc, whose flames instigated the French Revolution (engendered by the revolution in America).

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). Appropriately, the new French calendar was initiated at the moment the sun entered the sign of Libra, and the first month was known as Vendemaire—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...
“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 “numrous 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, 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. 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 “but heat 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 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 “Concentered 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, 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.”

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-

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 hoes of a swinish multitude,” an expression that became infamous (see, for example, the Morning Chronicle of 8 July 1796, p. 3).

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 renounces 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 / Leve’d him 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 leprosy 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)” 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.

In another cancelled plate for America (pl. a) a large interlinear 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 “terror”s are also “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.”

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.” The “voice of Albions Angel” causes “plagues” to fall upon America as a “blight” (14.3-6, E 56); “then roll’d 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’n ing 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.” The flames, associated with comet-like plagues, are characterized by Blake as leprosy (“spotted … plagues”). Orcan fires of war inflict George III with “Pestilence,” “in [comet] streaks of red / Across the limbs of Albions Guardian.”“* 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).“* 

Blake continues the idiom near the end of Europe (14.37, 15.2-5, E 66), where Orc appears amid “furious-tors,” 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.”“*
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 covertsly associates the king with Milton's weeping and sighing Satan in *Paradise Lost*: "Thus wept" the Angel voice & as he wept the terrible blasts [or sighs] / Of trumpets, blew a loud alarm" (10.1-2, E 55). 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). In further acknowledgment, when Urizen, the degenerate prince of light, questions his beast-formed constellations, his words are "but an inarticulate thunder"; 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). In "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.")

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* Dalilah'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 uttered a / withriving heat" as "words burst forth" (69, E 289). So Tharsis, representing the bowels of compassion in *The Four Zoas*, "pitying back withdrawn 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 limbd 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). 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 that they 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." Similar irony is present in *America* plate 7 (E 53), where "Albions Angel wrathful burnt" in fires punctuating the heavens; 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."

50. In *Paradise Lost* Satan says, "I will mock/ him I mock, and mock him with a task/ I mock him and I mock him with a task" (10.1-2). In *Paradise Regained* Satan's reply to Christ is "Thrice I assay'd to speak before his Peers," just as in *Paradise Lost* Satan's "only Son" is Death. So Milton's world of the deceased is a place where "Thrice I assay'd to speak before his Peers," just as in *Paradise Lost* Satan's "only Son" is Death.

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; cursing with 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)—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 heav-
ens), 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."