



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature

**THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON WILLIAM
BLAKE'S POETRY AND PAINTING: THE CHANGING PHASES
OF EVIL**

Hüseyin ALHAS

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2017

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KABUL VE ONAY

Hüseyin ALHAS tarafından hazırlanan "The Impact of The French Revolution on William Blake's Poetry and Painting: The Changing Phases of Evil" başlıklı bu çalışma, 12.06.2017 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



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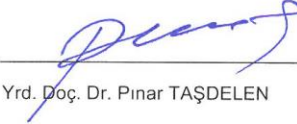
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To the memory of

Can ABANAZIR

The starry floor,
The wat'ry shore,
Is giv'n thee till the break of the day.

(William Blake)

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Özet

Alhas, Hüseyin. *Fransız Devriminin William Blake'in Şiiri ve Resimleri Üzerine Etkisi: Kötülüğün Değişen Evreleri*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2017

William Blake on sekizinci yüzyılın devrimlerinden derinden etkilenmiştir. Fırtınalı çağın olayları, özellikle Fransız Devrimi, Blake üzerinde birçok etki yaratmış ve onu teolojik ve politik değişimlere itmiştir. Kendisi ve eserleri bu bakımdan yaşadığı çağın ürünleridir. Bu çalışmada, Fransız Devriminin farklı dönem evrelerinin William Blake'in yazılarına ve illüstrasyonlarına olan etkisi dönemin olaylarıyla analogik olarak gösterilecektir. Devrimin Blake'e olan etkisi hali hazırda çalışılmış bir konudur; lakin Devrimin vahiy kitaplarına olan etkisi hakkında daha söylenecek pek çok şey vardır. Fransız Devrimi 1789 yılında vuku bulmuş olaylar üzerinden kavramlaştırılmamalıdır çünkü Fransız Devrimi aslında 1789'da başlayıp 1815'e kadar süren bir olaylar bütünüdür. Bu noktada, Fransız Devriminin Blake'e olan etkisi üzerine yoğunlaşırken, özellikle 1789'dan 1795'e kadarki dönemlerine, erken Devrim dönemi (1789-1792), Terör Dönemi (1792-1793) ve Savaş dönemlerine (1793-1795), dikkat çekilecektir. Her dönemin Blake'e olan etkisi Blake'in o dönemlerde yazdığı sırasıyla *Fransız Devrimi* (1791), *Cennet ve Cehennemin Evliliği* (1790-1793), *Amerika, Bir Vahiy* (1793), *Avrupa, Bir Vahiy* (1794), ve *Los'un Şarkısı* (1795) eserlerine ve atıflarla ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

William Blake, Fransız Devrimi, *Cennet ve Cehennemin Evliliği*, *Amerika, Bir Vahiy*, *Avrupa, Bir Vahiy*, *Los'un Şarkısı*, Orc, Urizen, Döngüsel devrim, İngiltere, Terör Dönemi

Abstract

Alhas, Hüseyin. *The Impact of The French Revolution on William Blake's Poetry and Painting: The Changing Phases of Evil*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2017

William Blake was deeply influenced by the revolutions of the late eighteenth century. The events of the turbulent age, specifically the French Revolution, created various impacts on Blake; and led him to many transitions both politically and theologically. He himself and his continental prophetic books are, therefore, the core products of the transitions he went through. In this thesis, the impacts of the different phases of the French Revolution on William Blake will be presented with the analogical readings of the texts and the illustrations with the events of the period. The impact of the revolution on Blake is already studied; yet it is incomplete when it comes to the continental prophetic books. The problem lies in the conceptualization of the French Revolution as a single event of 1789. The French Revolution is rather a series of events beginning from 1789 to 1815. Thus, while focusing on the impacts of the revolution on Blake, special attention will be drawn to the period from 1789 to 1795; early phase of the revolution (1789-1792), Terror Period (1792-1793), war-time period (1793-1795). Each period's impacts on Blake will be presented with references to Blake's works from different years, *The French Revolution* (1791), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793), *America, A Prophecy* (1793), *Europe, A Prophecy* (1794), and *The Song of Los* (1795) respectively.

Keywords

William Blake, French Revolution, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America, A Prophecy*, *Europe, A Prophecy*, *The Song of Los*, Orc, Urizen, Cyclic revolution, England, Terror Period

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INTRODUCTION

“A man without a mask¹”

William Blake (1757-1827) was an English painter, engraver, and poet who lived in the eighteenth century, the epoch of revolutions that gave “birth to the world which we know” (Bronowski 174). During the seventy years of his life, Blake witnessed three major revolutions; the Industrial Revolution, American Revolution, and French Revolution. Bronowski states that Blake “did not merely live through” these revolutions; “he lived them, in his own personal life; and he lived them into his prophetic books,” (54) indicating that these revolutions triggered a spiritual level of stormy revolution in his inner world. For Blake, revolution was a spiritual fight of eternal qualities as much as of a socio-cultural issue. The driving force that inspired Blake to create his own revolutionary concept was the very experience of the age of the revolutions he lived.

For David Erdman, he was “such a poet as no age before his could have made, and no age since has made” (118). He, more than any, had the ambitions of simple man, spoke out their dilemmas, and suffered their neglect. Blake was referred to as mad in his lifetime by many people, among whom were William Wordsworth, Samuel Palmer, and William Hazlitt. Blake was quite aware that he was “born with a different face” (Frye 2) that separated him from others. Blake’s visions had been part of his life, beginning from his early childhood. Alexander Gilchrist, the first biographer of Blake, reports that Blake saw a vision of God looking at him through window at the age of four and a vision of “a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like star” around age nine, however these visions were not welcomed by his father (7). After “he relates the incident, seeing a tree full of angels,” to his father, “only through his mother's intercession he escapes a thrashing from his honest father, for telling a lie” (7). This

¹Keynes 14

incident was a milestone in the writer's life, since for the first time in his life, Blake was exposed to humiliation and "thrashing" due to his visions which was to continue unfortunately throughout his whole life. In his *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, written arguably twenty-six years after this incident², Blake comments on his father's reaction as "a fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees" (7), indicating how he situated himself as a visionary compared to other people, who vilified him, embodied in his father.

"Being labelled as insane, however, led to an afflictive neglect for Blake," since he "had what no real artist can be without, an intense desire to communicate" (Frye 3), which is quite clear in one of his letters; "those who have been told, that my Works are but an unscientific and irregular Eccentricity, a Madman's Scrawls, I demand of them to do me the justice to examine before they decide" (2). It is undoubtedly true that the neglect he faced and poverty he lived in deeply resulted from being "different." Even Blake himself had crises and blamed his own visions. In a letter, dated August 16, 1803, to Thomas Butts, Blake holds his visions accountable for his miserable life. He reproaches God: "O why was I born with a different face? / Why was I not born like the rest of my race?" (Keynes 87). The significance of this letter for Blakean studies is the very fact that it offers a rare glimpse into Blake's life from the very perspective of the writer in a manner which accepts being a visionary as a "curse" rather than a gift. The letter was written exactly thirty-six years after he was first punished for his visions by his father when he saw a tree full of angels, indicating the length of the time during which he was "thrashed" by others. However, there were also those who appreciated and believed his visions. Seymour Kirkup, a painter and younger contemporary of Blake, informs that Blake's wife Catherine, faithful believer and assistant of Blake, once told him "I have very little of Mr. Blake's company; he is always in Paradise," (Bloom 24) indicating that his wife thoroughly believed in his visions.

As Blake's philosophy in his poetry and paintings were seen as idiosyncratic in his time, and he could not find anyone to publish his works, he had to rely on engraving, which

² The exact date of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is unknown, however, since the work gives direct references to Edmund Burke's *Reflections of French Revolution* (1791), and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791), it is more plausible to assume that it was written after 1790, contrary to the claims of Bronowski.

was not seen as a branch of art back in the eighteenth century, to survive financially. The closest he got to publishing one of his works was *The French Revolution* (1791), which could not be published, since Joseph Johnson, a radical publisher and friend of Blake, cancelled the publication of the text due to the extreme oppression of the state during the period. As a result, the only chance to reach the masses and manifest his own ideas and ideals slipped away from Blake's hands. The condition of not being able to reach the common people as an artist, unequivocally troubled the financial condition of Blake. Therefore, the failure of the publication of *The French Revolution* was a milestone in Blake's entire life, for the chance to financially support his life through his poetry slipped away.

William Blake shines out as the "revolutionary prophet" among Romantic writers, for his revolution-themed works are visionary texts mirroring not only the ideals of the French Revolution but also the very changes that the revolution went through. There are many significant aspects of William Blake and his works that make him an ideal writer to perceive the impacts of the different phases of the French Revolution on English society. First of all, Blake's isolation, as a poet, from the society made him financially disabled; however, it also ironically provided him with an environment without any fear of censorship. Blake, deeply affected by American and French Revolutions, reflected his "dangerous" revolutionary ideals and thoughts in his books. In his *Prophet Against Empire*, David V. Erdman underlines this aspect of Blake's anonymity³ and remarks that "his isolation also gave free rein to his nervous fear of censorship, which was related to the political realities of his time" (139). Blake's works, therefore, harbour his bold critiques towards the events of his time and the institutions that abused people. Many of his arguments in his revolution-themed works such as "I have also The Bible of Hell which the world will have whether they will or not" (*TMHH* 22-24: 32) could have brought scaffold to any writer during this repressive period. However, these statements did not affect Blake. The burden of isolation, therefore, brought the fortune of an environment in which he could write freely.

³ "Blake's anonymity" is a term within Blakean studies to express William Blake's case of not being known as an artist by the English masses.

Secondly, Blake's poor financial condition made him stay within the borders of London. Different from his contemporary radically inclined writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Thomas Paine and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he was not an eye witness to American or French Revolution; he was indirectly affected by the effects of these catastrophic events. Instead, he learned about the revolutions from all manner of secondary sources ranging from the political statements of the politicians to the dinner conversations at Joseph Jonson's, from newspapers that every common Londoner could buy to the sophisticated political works of Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke. Consequently his "imprisonment" to London is vitally important within the perspective of cultural studies, for his reflections are deeply characterized by the sources available to every Londoner during the period. Therefore, in this thesis, the content of Blake's works will not only be analysed within the context of his personal revolutionary ideals but also with the analogical perception of the English common people and their changing attitude, in accordance with the evolution of the discourses. This thesis, therefore, will reflect both the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary discourses within society at the time. The newspapers, as primary sources, will be given specific significance in the first Chapter, for they served as vital sources of information, related to the French Revolution, for Blake. By supplying copies of the same newspapers from different years, the change of discourses, from pro-revolutionary to anti-revolutionary, within newspapers and their impact on William Blake and English common people will be discussed.

Thirdly, since Blake was a painter as well as a poet, he used two mediums, textuality and typography; and merged them together in his prophetic books. The illustrations within the prophetic books serve as supplementary additions to the context manifested by the text. Blake's illustrations, in the context, are in accordance with the revolutionary theme of prophetic books; therefore, it will enable us to perceive the portrayal of the revolution from an enchanting angle of typography. Not all illustrations, however, necessarily illustrate the text next to them. The analyses of the relation between words and images, according to Saree Makdisi, involve "turning back and forth through the plate⁴s, tracing

⁴ The term, "plate," stands for "pages" in Blakean terminology, for Blake etched his illustrations to copper plates.

and retracing different interpretive paths through the gap between words and images” (112). In the second Chapter, the illustrations within the continental prophetic books will be analysed in detail with their relation to the content of the texts.

Fourthly, Blake’s age becomes prominent, especially when compared to the late Romantics, in perceiving the revolution. Through his early works and letters, it is indeed known that Blake followed the socio-cultural conditions that led to the revolution and the fierce political debates in different phases of the French Revolution beginning from the early 1780s to the very end of his time. Thus makes Blake and his works good sources to seize how different phases of the French Revolution may have affected the common English man. His works, therefore, mirror the transition of the perception of the French Revolution and the very idea of the revolution itself. Blake’s early revolutionary approach, “pacifist revolution;” and its transition to “cyclic revolution” will be thoroughly analysed with the underlying reasons in the first Chapter.

Lastly, Blake’s complex system of dialectic and mythopoeia, though they may appear as impenetrable walls, offer readers the chance to perceive the events from quite an unorthodox angle through which the ideals of the revolutions appear in their pure form. Blakean mythopoeia becomes a complex language. Once grasped, however, it unleashes a new perspective in which the very line between “good” and “evil” is blurred; and the catastrophic socio-cultural events of the period are perceived with their relation to the cosmological forces that have dominated the world from the first emergence of the religions. Therefore, in the first Chapter, the Blakean mythopoeia and dialectic of contraries will be explained with the socio-cultural dynamics that led Blake to initiate them. In the second chapter, the continental prophetic books will be analysed through Blake’s personal system of thought and the events of the period, the American Revolution, French Revolution, and Industrial Revolution.

The French Revolution and Industrial Revolution are inter-connected in regard to their impacts. Dramatic reactions to the French Revolution were direct results of the awareness that the Industrial Revolution penetrated into people’s minds along with the desire to change the bitter conditions that industry brought. Thus, it is vital to focus first upon how the Industrial Revolution affected the common English people to be able to perceive the reasons why the masses embraced the revolution in France.

The Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) altered both the structure of the society and the minds of people. Bronowski remarks that “the massive expansion of manufacture by the machines changed the economy of England and how people looked at the economy and their lives...so long as the men worked in villages, they thought of their livelihood as a gift: a gift from God or from nature, which God or nature might bless with plenty in one year and blast with famine another” (4-5). Before the transition from villager to town and city labourer, people were less inclined to question their harsh conditions, for their fate was in the hands of God, the unquestionable. As they were then employed by employers, human beings like themselves, they could question the causes of the bitter conditions of their lives. The vital aspect of this transition from obedient villagers into questioning workers was caused by a newfound social awareness, which resulted from the Industrial Revolution. This cultural transition is one of the fundamental dynamics that gave momentum to the revolutionary spirit in Britain since it forced men to “seek their destiny,” and “find their station not in the hands of God but in their own hands” (Bronowski 5).

The Industrial Revolution also had adverse effects upon society. High levels of unemployment during the period were quite common and was brought about through various causes. Handicraft jobs, once performed by skilled workers, were substituted for the newly emerging machinery. Rural life was also hard to endure at the time, as one’s life was completely dependent upon the unpredictable weather. Thus, people flocked into cities where they hoped to obtain one of the newly emerging salaried jobs. The abundance of the workers in the cities resulted in either unemployment or under-employment. The factory owners often exploited their workers as it was not difficult to find other unskilled workers who could replace those who left. Also, the improvements in “hygiene and medical knowledge had led to increased life expectancy,” but the “rise in the population,” also increased the rate of unemployment, and “poor harvests and war created serious hardships” (Sinclair 4).

Child labour was, unfortunately, a bitter outcome of the Industrial Revolution. The factory owners searched for ways to acquire cheap labour to lower the cost of production. Child labour was the answer, for it was the cheapest compared to all others. The children worked for long hours in mines, mills and factories in terrible working conditions. Even

some of the machines were operated by them, as the machines were so easy to use. Child labour became so common that even some jobs were only performed by them such as chimney sweeping, as the job required a body small enough to enter into the chimney and clear the funnel from the inside. Blake's "Chimney Sweeper," therefore, is not a fictional symbol; it is rather a realistic portrayal of the conditions faced by the child workers at the time.

The women of the age also shared the same destiny as the children. Before the Industrial revolution, women used to "parent and also play a role in producing food or goods needed for the household," since "work and parenting were flexible and interwoven" (Sinclair 16). Industrialization altered this role of women dramatically. As the inter-woven houses, in which women helped the economy of the family with domestic hand-crafting works, were affected by newly built factories, women found themselves excluded from the working world. As a result, London was full of women willing to "prostitute" themselves since there was no other way to survive in the city if a woman did not have anyone to provide for her.

William Blake lived what was arguably the most violent age of British history as it was overwhelmingly in Blake's lifetime that industry moved to the factory and "iron and coal gave England her new skeleton" (Bronowski 173). When Blake was born (1757), the population of England was less than seven million. It had doubled during his life; wages had not. Moreover, all through these years, people were deeply affected by the burdens of wars. Blake was born during the Seven Years' War. He grew to be a man during the industrial age and witnessed the dramatic cultural change within society and how people were bitterly affected by it. Sinclair argues that the age harboured "underlying sensitive unrest, unease and disenfranchisement and Blake's writing comes out of that," (4) indicating all of these bitter experiences were to reverberate through Blake's artistic works. Blake's experience of witnessing grave conditions of the women, children, and the unemployed took place in Lambeth; where he lived from 1790 to 1800, with his wife, Catherine Blake. It is not a coincidence that Blake wrote his most daring critical prophetic books during this period. The terrible conditions he witnessed, therefore, played an important role while composing the prophetic books. He was also informed, particularly through the newspapers, about the bitter conditions in France.

The condition in France was no different from England. The underlying cause of the bitter condition of the French people was the heavy defeats of France in wars. France participated in many world-wide wars during the eighteenth century, including Seven Years' War (1754-1763), The American Independence War (1775–1783), all of which ended in defeat for France. The Seven Years' War, that France entered with the hope of securing and expanding its colonial power against Prussia, Britain and their German allies, was disastrous for France, for they lost both their Atlantic and Mediterranean navies against Britain, which ultimately forced France to abandon the majority of Indian and American territories and limit their trade traffic with the Caribbean islands; and the eradication of the majority of its armies against Prussia not only damaged the economy but also hurt the pride of the French people (Doyle 33-34). To restore its might and once again gain colonial power, France supported the American rebels during the 1770s. Louis XVI saw it as a chance to “take revenge on Britain” (35). France played key role in the war, which ultimately resulted in success. America emerged victorious because Louis XVI, “could pay them with French loans and stiffen them with French troops and ships” (Bronowski 56). However, though France seemed to be victorious on the table of peace in Paris in 1783, they could not gain any significant territory in North America and the “traditional trade affair of America with Britain continued despite the opposition of France” (Doyle 35).

Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence ruined the French economy. The burden of the Seven Years' War was shouldered by French peasants with extra taxes imposed on them. The navy and the army used in the American War of Independence were also funded with the taxes of the third-estate. French taxation depended upon estates. France, back in the eighteenth century, was divided into three estates: The First Estate being the clergy, the Second Estate the nobility, and the Third Estate was the rest of French society, who later became the dynamic force of the Revolution. The very first and probably the most vital problem in this period was the unjust taxation system. The first two estates, despite possessing major income from the lands, paid either nothing or low amounts. Ironically, being the poorest of all Estates, the Third Estate had to shoulder the burden of variety of heavy taxes, which resulted from the country's desire to restore its economic power after inglorious recent events (Doyle 74).

France's bitter condition is crucial in understanding Blake's critiques within the prophetic books. The examples above present the problem of the corrupted order, which Blake fiercely attacks. This order in France was dominated by the king and the elites within society. The decisions concerning the fate of the nation were made by this order; however, it was the people, the third-estate, who suffered the consequences of these decisions. The defeats in the wars consumed the people, not the King or the elites. Blake's aim to replace the corrupted order with the energetic chaos stems from this, for Blake believed that the order, when corrupted, is a calamity on the common people of the nations. The issue regarding the King's authority over the fate of a nation is the key here, since it, according to Blake, is the root cause of conditions of the common people.

In his famous essay "What is the Third Estate?" (1789) Abbé Sieyès argued: "What is the Third Estate? *Everything*, what has it been until now in the political order? *Nothing*, What does it want to be? *Something*" (2-3). Sieyès' work became the defacto manifesto of the Revolution. The Third Estate was "everything" to France, as they were the ones who maintained France's wealth through taxation, but "nothing" in political influence. Sieyès' name and his work were common topics appearing on the English newspapers during the period. *The French Revolution* also involves the character, called Sieyès, whom Blake refers to as the "the voice of the people" (*F.R* 206). The Revolution, portrayed in Sieyès' manifesto, was inevitable. In "Ironic Apocalypse in Romanticism and the French Revolution," Greg Kucich argues that "like the early Christians expecting the Apocalypse, modern society has been waiting since (the late-eighteenth century) for the coming of the Revolution" (27). Kucich's remark illustrates the gravity of the change that the common people desired.

Robert Darnton states that "[n]o one was ready for a revolution in 1789, the idea itself did not exist" and "if you look up 'revolution' in standard dictionaries from the eighteenth century, you find definitions that derive from the verb *revolve*, such as "the return of a planet or a star to some point from which it parted" (2). Though people wanted alteration in their lives, they did not know how to do that. The concept of revolution as it is known today did not exist back in the eighteenth century. So, in a way, many people saw revolution as a means to return to the good old days, the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), which was not that long ago. So, the initiative driving force of the third-estate's desire

was to restore the country's condition back to its recent glorious past. However, the experience of the French Revolution was quite different from their expectations. It altered the very concept of revolution itself, since it became a destructive force against the system rather than a vehicle with which to restore it. Marilyn Butler opposes this argument and claims that "it's manifestly untrue that before 1789 the word 'revolution' signified only a revolving which was natural and not political," (4) which indicates that revolution as a political concept existed before the French Revolution. However, when revolutionary texts are analysed, the driving demand is restoring what is corrupted rather than eradication of what is corrupted. In the light of Abbé Sieyès' "What is the Third Estate," one of the most influential works to ignite the fire of the revolution, it is evident that the demands listed in the text are more about restoring the condition of the third-estate and entitle it with rights in political order that they have long deserved (2-3). In *Right of Man*, Thomas Paine also states: "What were formerly called Revolutions, were little more than a change of persons, or an alteration of local circumstances...but what we now see in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles...combining moral with political happiness and national" (140). Paine's claim is quite valid since Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language* also defines the word, revolution, as follows: "Change in the flate of a government or country," (268) suggesting a change within the system, not of the system itself.

William Blake, in his early revolutionary work, *The French Revolution* (1791), presents a pacifist revolution. The very idea of peaceful revolution in which the revolutionary and counter revolutionary forces clash through "dialogues" results from the origins of the revolution as a restorative force. Blake's early work bears traces of this idea. However, the next phase of the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror Period, was to change the idea of "restorative revolution" forever.

The experience of the French revolution, therefore, is what defines twenty first century idea of what constitutes a revolution. The crucial aspect of the French Revolution lies in the fact that it initiated what are known today as the revolutionary dynamics, which determined the basic human rights of the contemporary world. The first three articles of the *Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen* are vital indicators of initiation for basic

human rights, followed by the dramatic change that the French Revolution brought. The first article, “[m]en are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights,” (1) determines the fundamental innate basic human right: freedom. The second article, “[t]he end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression,” (1) is one of the most crucial articles that harbours key clauses clarifying the content of human rights. However, the fourth clause, “resistance to oppression,” is problematic and not explicit, for the content of “resistance,” whether it can include violence or not, is not determined; and “oppression” is a matter of perspective. The third article, “[t]he nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any individual, or any body of men, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it,” (2) stands in direct opposition to a monopoly of authority, which was the case in the eighteenth century France and Britain.

The news of the revolution in France received varied responses in Britain in July 1789. “In every province of this great kingdom the flame of liberty has burst forth” reported *The London Chronicle* (1791). Even for moderate Britons, the Revolution could initially be seen as a belated attempt by the French to mimic the establishment of a constitutional monarchy like that of England’s Glorious Revolution (Jarrells 39-40). *The English Chronicle*, in a sensational report heavily-laden with exclamation marks, declared that “thus has the hand of JUSTICE been brought upon France” and praised the men who had brought about a “great and glorious REVOLUTION” (2).

The Revolution was welcomed by many aristocrats throughout Britain. English Romantic artists and political figures were deeply affected by it. “Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive” wrote William Wordsworth in his *Prelude*, recalling the storming of the Bastille (84). In “Revolutions Compared: The English Civil War on Political Touchstone in Romantic Literature,” Joseph Nicholas argues that “the English Romantics believed they were living in the fourth great epoch of republicanism – the first two occurred in Ancient Greece and Italy, the third in their own country during the Parliamentary uprising of the seventeenth century” (24). This indicates that they perceived the French Revolution as one of the milestone events in world history. One major reason behind this was the very fact that many people in England were not happy with socio-political condition of their

own country. They, therefore, desired a wind of change that would lead their society into better conditions too.

The impact of the French Revolution on English labourers was also dramatic, resulting from the fact that the driving force of the Revolution was the third-estate of France, which shared a similar destiny with them. Both French and English labourers shouldered the burden of their respective countries and received little in return. The success of the third-estate of France deeply inspired the English working-class. One other crucial aspect of the Revolution for them was the fact that it was enabled by the union of French middle-class and lower class, which also indicated the radicals in England that the radical change they desired could only be achieved through unity among classes. Blake's prophetic books are also characterized by this idea of unity. The forces of the revolution, in Blake's revolution-themed prophetic books, specifically in *America, A Prophecy*, range from people from different background and mythological characters, who initially opposed to one another; yet, eventually united.

One other impact of the Revolution was the methods used to realize it. Till the late eighteenth century, wars were always fought by professional soldiers, trained for combat (Doyle 39). However, with the experience of the Revolution, it also altered, since it was initiated by the third-estate's sole power, later accompanied by national guards (Doyle 78-79). This experience reminded English common people their long forgotten power over authorities.

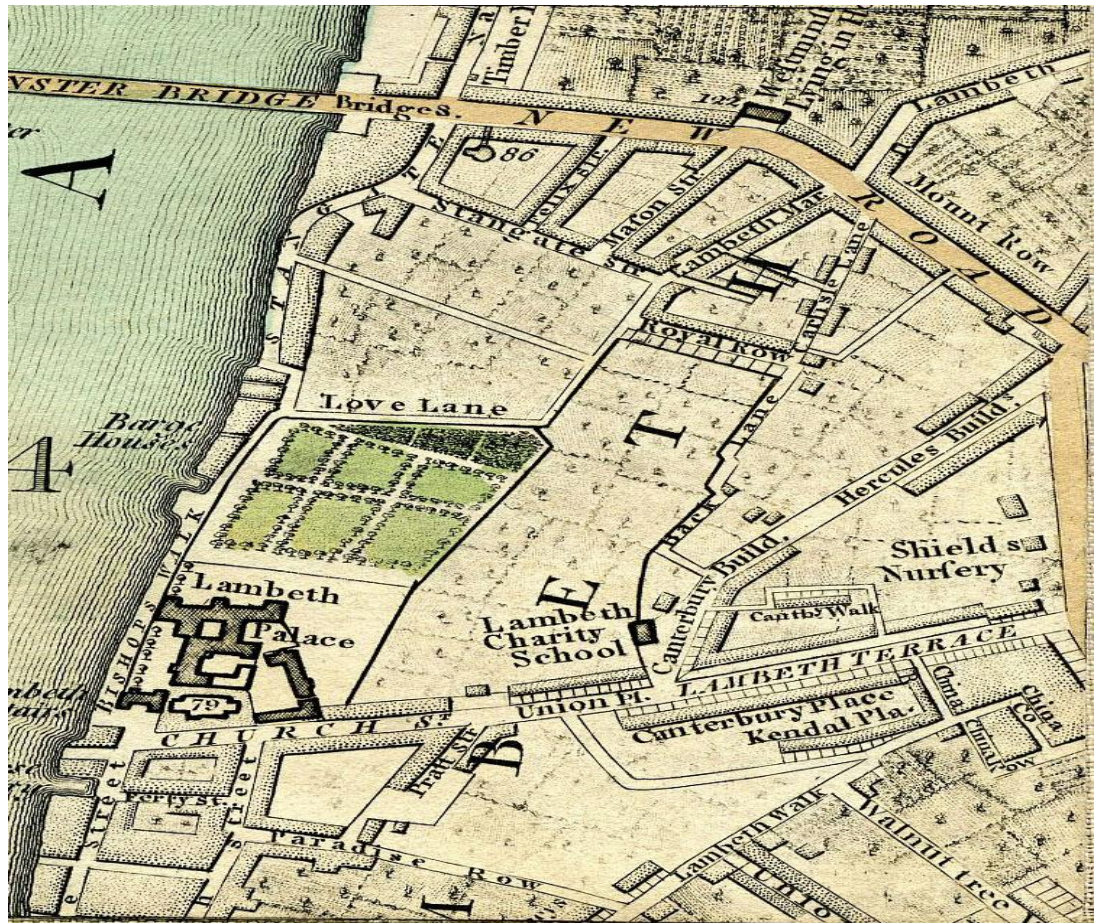


Figure 1: "Cary's New and Accurate Plan of London and Westminster"

Eventually, in London, a wide range of new political groups, like The London Corresponding Society ("LCS," formed in 1792), emerged and old groups, like The London Society for Constitutional Information, were revived with the participation of both intellectual middle class and proletarian working class (Sinclair 5). Thus, people from different structures of the society, as in the case of French Revolution, united with the desire of the radical change. Their first initiative was to better the condition of the poor. Therefore, they initiated philanthropic movements to help working-children and women in harsh condition. Figure1 evidently indicates that Blake's home, situated in Hercules buildings, was next to Lambeth Charity School. Blake, therefore, witnessed the success of these philanthropic movements, which are the embodiment of the unity of people from different social structures. In the continental prophetic books, the fires of the revolutionary Orc spread to minds of the common people; and the revolutionary fires

unite Orc and people under the spirit of change. The war in *America A Prophecy* and “Asia” of *The Song of Los*, is fought together with Orc and the common people.

Surely there were also counter-revolutionary approaches towards the French Revolution in England, one of which was Edmund Burke’s. In his *Reflection on French Revolution* (1790), Burke attacks the ideals of the Revolution and dismisses it as a threat to the stability, safety, and future of Europe, for it triggered anarchy rather than restoration of the system. Burke criticises the “so-called” freedom that the Revolution brought as follows:

To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide; it only requires to let go the rein. But to form a free government, that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind. This I do not find in those who take the lead in the National Assembly. (203-204)

Burke focuses upon the destructive impacts of the uncontrolled liberty of the Revolution on the values of culture, tradition and religion that determined the French characteristic throughout the history. Thomas Paine responds to Burke’s claims with his *Rights of Man* (1791) stating that Burke “pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird” (24). Paine suggests that Burke had lost his touch of reality, since he ignored the pre-revolutionary period of France in which the third-estate suffered and shouldered all the burden of the country, and only focused upon events from the perspective of royalist approach.

During this period, Blake was employed as an engraver by the radical publisher Joseph Johnson, who was associated with a group of prominent radicals, including Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, and William Godwin. Dinners at Johnson’s were common gatherings where political matters were discussed and Blake too would join these dinners. These politically radical dissenters were valuable sources from whom Blake obtained direct information about the events in France and their impacts throughout Europe, for many of these people travelled to France and saw the Revolution first-hand (Erdman 139-141). Until Blake joined this circle, the main sources of information related to the French Revolution was newspapers; however this changed after he joined this circle of radicals. These radical dissenters were not only a valuable source of information about the French Revolution but also provided their own perspectives regarding the Revolution. The French Revolution, therefore, widened the range of voices contending for change, as in

the example of Paine, and Godwin; and led some radicals to adopt, as Blake did, “prophetic modes to envisage a turning point in history” (Sinclair 5-6). But unlike many of these radicals, Blake saw recourse to law as a problem in itself. The social problems he witnessed around him seemed to require a complete liberation from existing political systems, since Blake lived a humble life of a common person, indifferent to other radicals.

In August of 1790 Blake moved from his house on Poland Street across the Thames to the area known as Lambeth, which was still partly rural, but had its share of social problems, since there were alms-houses, workshops of the Philanthropic Society, and an asylum for orphaned girls; overcrowded housing and grim factories were also beginning to appear (Sinclair 6). The Lambeth period holds vital importance in Blake’s artistic life, since it was at that time that he produced some of his most daring illuminated works, including *The French Revolution*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Songs of Experience*, *America*, *Europe*, and *The Book of Urizen* there. Blake’s Lambeth period, specifically *The French Revolution*, was deeply shaped by Johnson’s circle of radicals, specifically Thomas Paine. In his early works, Blake’s approach to the revolution was similar to the argument that France was imitating England’s Glorious Revolution. Blake’s attitude towards the Revolution was entirely pacifist. Blake, just like Paine, expected the Revolution in France to conclude without violence.

The French Revolution (1791), which was written during Blake’s Lambeth period, reflects how he perceived the Revolution and the events that took place in France along with his hopes and expectations for the future of the Revolution in the early stages of the Revolution. In the poem, Blake celebrates the rise of democracy in France and the fall of the monarchy. King Louis personifies a monarchy that is old and dying. The sick king is lethargic and unable to act: "From my window I see the old mountains of France, like aged men, fading away" (9). The "old mountains" representing the monarchy are doomed to collapse under the pressure of the people and their representatives in the assembly. The "voice of the people" demands the removal of the king's troops from Paris, and their departure at the end of the first book signals the triumph of democracy.

As Blake reflects not only his individual views related to the Revolution but also the cultural perceptions of the Revolution that he witnessed within English society, he enables readers to see how it created impacts on the English society. The poem maintains

a positive atmosphere in which the king yielded to the Revolution and consented to the revolutionary principles. The people are merry and have the authority over King, which indicates that people had embraced the Revolution. However, what is vitally important here is the fact that the King found a new place in the new system of revolutionary order, which indicates that after the revolutionary chaos, Blake expected it to be followed by a revolutionary order, in which tyranny is replaced by clemency (*Assimilation of Chaos* 18). This poem is dominated by revolution as a pacifist force, reflecting Blake's perception of the revolution during the early phases of the French Revolution. Such prediction indicates that Blake had high hopes for the future of the revolution in France. However, the future events would prove him wrong.

Aside from the overwhelmingly positive atmosphere and the embracement of the Revolution in France, there were also anti-radicals in England who opposed a radical change from the very beginning of the Revolution (1788) and were gradually aided with the support of the state. Beginning from 1791, the "Church and King" movement ushered in a range of anti-radical campaigns, and after the publication of Paine's *Rights of Man* (Part II) in February 1792, a Royal Proclamation against Seditious Writings (1792) was issued (Sinclair 9). Paine and his printer Joseph Johnson, who was also Blake's close friend, were prosecuted after the second part of *the Rights of Man*. In September 1792 "another warrant was issued against Paine for a speech which he had just made to the Friends of the People...It was Blake who packed him off from Joseph Johnson's to France...twenty minutes before the warrant followed him to Dove" (Bronowski 72-74). Blake was also affected by the oppression. On 10 December 1792, a Lambeth group affiliated with Reeves's Crown and Anchor Society decided to ask every local householder to sign a declaration of loyalty (Sinclair 7). Blake did not sign the declaration despite knowing the potential consequences. Blake's anonymity was the guardian that protected him, for his writings did not reach to the citizens and he was merely a little-known engraver. Erdman explains Blake's condition in those days as follows:

He assumed that his own republican thoughts would be considered deeply subversive and bring him scaffold. Yet in his bardic self he remained bold. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The French Revolution*, *America*, and the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* reverberate with hope and energy, and defiance of repressive terrors. If these works did not reach the awakening citizens who were reading Paine and rushing together in republican societies, they did nonetheless reflect the stir and tumult of that awakening. (139)

Erdman's remark indicates how anti-radical activities oppressed the writers during the period (1792-1793). Blake's works, especially *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and the continental prophetic books, indicate Blake's stance against these oppressions of the anti-radical activities.

The anti-radical activities reached their climax with two events; the "Reign of Terror (1793-1794)" period in France and after the war against revolutionary France broke out in 1793. During the Terror Period, countless people lost their lives at guillotines, including Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and even well-known and influential revolutionaries such as Georges Danton, and Camille Desmoulins. These unfortunate events created two negative impacts upon English radicals in England. Firstly, affected by the king's death, the British state feared the possibility of such incident taking place on English soil and, therefore, took dramatic precautions and "restricted the activities of reform societies under the guise of national security" (Sinclair 11). They initiated rigid oppression upon English dissenters. This ultimately resulted in less radical voices in public, since the radical publishers either stopped publishing such revolutionary works or were imprisoned for publishing them. Secondly, radicals, such as William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Wordsworth, who initially supported the Revolution started to lose their trust in the revolutionary ideals in France after witnessing famous revolutionaries, Danton, Camille, and Robespierre, fall victim to the same Revolution itself during Reign of Terror.

The newspapers were also affected by the oppression. Government-sponsored journalists propagated counter-revolutionary messages in the press, while spies on the ground penetrated radical meetings and organisations; and provided exaggerated reports of treasonous plots (Sinclair 11). Specifically after the Reign of Terror period, the newspapers, which once supported the Revolution, also started to mark their discontent with the Revolution's rotation, which ultimately affected the public opinion on the French Revolution. The newspapers were sources of information at cheap price that every Londoner could obtain; making the newspapers ideal sources on the events of the Revolution for common people living in Britain. The change within the discourses towards the Revolution, therefore, dramatically affected the common people. William Blake, sharing the same financial status as other common people in London, made use of

the newspapers as sources. The change of discourse, therefore, affected Blake and his works too. Blake's works, in this context, are valuable sources to perceive the impact of the newspapers, as sources of information, on the common people. The newspapers from English archives will be presented to evidently indicate the transition of pro-discourses into anti-revolutionary discourses in the first chapter.

The radical activity, however, did not yield and responded with even more extreme actions. They organized a public meeting near Copenhagen House, attended by several thousand people, at which Richard "Citizen" Lee sold his Handbill "King Killing," in which he suggests killing a tyrant is a duty of a revolutionary and three days later stones were thrown at the state carriage carrying George III to the opening of parliament (Sinclair 12), indicating that not all radicals that supported the Revolution were innocent. In response, the government introduced the Treasonable Practices Act and the Seditious Meetings Act (1795), designed not only to silence and suppress the radical activity but also punish them extremely. The Attorney General, John Scott, had noted that "in the last two years there had been more prosecutions for libels than in any twenty years before" (74). The consequences of the extreme acts were noticeable for England. "Throughout the French wars, there were probably fewer men executed in France than were hanged by law in England" (74) reports Bronowski, showing the magnitude of the violence in England.

It was during this period, starting from 1793, that William Blake, affected by this harsh oppression in England and executions of Louis XVI and revolutionaries in France, entered a new phase in his artistic life. The Reign of Terror Period in France dramatically affected Blake. From the very beginning of the Revolution to the Terror period, Blake always had an absolute trust on a pacifist revolution. *The French Revolution* was based on this very fundamental perception of the revolution as a pacifist force. However, the executions of Louis XVI and the revolutionaries, who initiated the early phases of the French Revolution, in the Terror period showed Blake that the pacifist revolution descended into bloody violence. All of his main expectations in *The French Revolution* such as the progression of the revolution through dialogues between the opposing sides and the king surviving the revolution, failed. So, the very idea of France imitating the bloodless Glorious Revolution of England also failed; and most importantly the idea of a

pacifist revolution failed for Blake. However, all these negative events could not lead Blake to despair. He was to initiate a completely new concept of revolution, cyclic revolution⁵.

Blake's transition from pacifist revolution to cyclic revolution is specifically marked in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which Blake, affected by the French Revolution, initiates the dialectic of contraries. The French Revolution taught Blake the fact that revolution itself cannot be the sole answer for success. The French Revolution, after the revolution in 1789, continued being revolutionary; and eventually resulted in bloodshed of Terror Period in 1793. The revolution, therefore, needs its counter-part, the order, to achieve the progression. The counter-parts, which in this case are order and revolution, need to work in cycles, one after another, to achieve progression. Blake's dialectic denies the conventional approach towards the dichotomies that promotes the "good" and degrades the "evil." Blake bases his dialectic not only on the events but also on fierce critique towards the philosophical works of Swedenborg and Lavater. The dialectic, therefore, is also Blake's own alternative to the conventional religious doctrines. Blake first focuses on the theoretical aspect of the contraries by criticizing Swedenborg's *The Visions of Heaven and Hell* and Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*; both of which, according to Blake, are dominated by these conventional religious doctrines. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is, therefore, Blake's most daring work that challenges not only the philosophers but also the very conventional doctrines manifested by Christianity. In this sense, Blake's dialectic is theoretically based on his critique towards the conventional religious doctrines. Blake, then, initiates his cyclic revolution in accordance with the dialectic of contraries. The revolutionary ideas and ideals are shaped by this very mechanism of the Blakean dialectic of contraries. Later prophetic works, specifically the continental prophetic books, are dominated by this very dialectic and the idea of cyclic revolution. This domineering mode of writing, which marks the change of perception of the revolution from pacifist to cyclic, is defined by Erdman as the "prophetic mode."

⁵The term, "cyclic revolution," was first coined by Northrop Frye in *Fearful Symmetry* (1947); and later adopted by many other Blakean scholars, including Harold Bloom, Morris Eaves, and Robert Essick.

The fundamental difference between the pacifist revolution and the cyclic revolution is that the first one perceives revolution within a stationary perspective, predominantly accepting revolution as pacifist and positive. The latter, however, presents revolution as a dynamic force that can alter into positive or negative energy depending on the cycles. If the order is corrupted, the revolution is then needed as a force to eradicate the corruption and initiate an environment in which a new order can flourish. The cycle of revolution, therefore, is needed when the cycle of order fails; and the revolutionary cycle always needs to be followed by a new order. So, order and revolution act in cycles for the progression. Blake underlines the cyclic cadence here, since a cycle of revolution being followed by another revolution, as in the experience of the French Revolution, leads to bloodshed. The cyclic revolution formula, in this respect, is based on the Blakean dialectic that offers a system in which the dichotomies are not fixed; but rather positive or negative depending on the conditions. The counter-parts of the dichotomies, according to the dialectic, need to replace one another for progression. Different from the pacifist revolution, the cyclic revolution, therefore, does not present the revolution as the sole way for progression. It is rather the cadence of the cycles, the order and revolution, which leads humanity to progression. This cyclic formula is the domineering demeanour within the “Prophetic mode” of Blake.

In the “Prophetic mode” writings; different from his previous work, *The French Revolution* in which he narrates the history of the French Revolution from his own perspective, Blake merges the historical revolutionary events with his own mythological world, in which the spiritual level of eternal contraries engage in a fight for their “own” truths. In Blake’s early works about the revolution, we observe that he focuses on the events just like a historian, which can be seen in his *The French Revolution*, for the events of the Revolution are narrated as history. This narration mirrors how Blake perceived the Revolution as a historical phenomenon. Blake once wrote: “The history of all times and places is nothing else but improbabilities and impossibilities; what we should say, was impossible if we did not see it always before our eyes” (Makdisi 1). The remark of Makdisi indicates that Blake points out the difference between the way people experience historical transformation and the way in which that transformation is recorded, indicating the gap between historical experience and history itself; that is, the tools and concepts, the paradigms and discourses, the rules and regulations of the laws according to which

historical experience is recorded and narrated (1-2). Blake's *The French Revolution*, therefore, can be accepted as a history book about the French Revolution from the perspective of an English radical. It holds vital importance, for it reflects the perception of the Revolution within the society Blake belonged. Thus, it enables readers to see the socio-cultural perception of Revolution among radicals in England. In other words, it is an attempt to record the Revolution within the radical revolutionary discourse. One key point about this work is that, different from his other works related to revolution, Blake wrote *The French Revolution* with the intension of publishing it, which failed due to the rigid oppression on his publisher, Joseph Johnson. The language of the poem is, therefore, more direct and easy to understand compared to his other works, since Blake desired people to witness the history of the Revolution and understand its ideals in a book, written with the revolutionary discourse. This early work, thus, indicates his enthusiasm to show the ideals of the French Revolution to the common people of England.

The counter-revolutionary discourse used in the news and in books at the time also interested William Blake. Blake uses the counter-revolutionary discursive language in such a subverted way that he ironically initiates a new revolutionary meaning out of counter-revolutionary language, which can be seen in one of his most famous poems, "Tyger." Though the poem has various interpretations, reading the poem in an analogy with the counter-revolutionary discourse of 1790s of England mirrors Blake's intention to place the word "tiger" in its 1790 context. *The London Times* of January 7, 1792 tells that French people are now "loose from all restraints, and, in many instances, more vicious than wolves and tigers" (Paulson 123). Of Marat, one of the key revolutionary figures of The French Revolution, *The Times* reports: "His eyes resembled those of *tiger* cat, and there was a kind of ferociousness in his looks that corresponded with the savage fierceness of that animal" (emphasis original 123). John Wilkes, a radical journalist, after his initial support of the Revolution, spoke of "this nation of monkeys and tigers," conflating the double caricature of French fashion and French savagery, and Sir Samuel Romilly, another disillusioned supporter, wrote in 1792: "One might as well think of establishing a republic of tigers in some forest in Africa, as of maintaining a free government among such monsters" (Paulson 123-124). Even Mary Wollstonecraft admitted that the Paris "mob were barbarous beyond the tiger's cruelty" (Paulson 124). Years later Wordsworth looked back on the Paris of 1792 and wrote:

A place of fear
 Unfit for the repose which night requires
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam. (*Prelude* 80-82)

In the light of Ronald Paulson's ideas, it is quite clear that the negative image of tiger representing French revolutionaries was quite common in the 1790s. Blake uses exactly the same word, "tyger," with entirely different meaning, attributing positive characteristics. Blake's dialectic is seen quite visibly here, for the tiger-lamb contrary is presented in an orthodox way in which the tiger, which is generally associated with negative connotations, appears as the will of the God. "Did he who made the Lamb made thee?" (20) is a rhetorical question to indicate what people consider as "good" or "evil" are equal creations of the God. Since, in his dialectic, Blake situates both counter-parts of the contraries equally important for progression, the tiger, here, indicates the vitality of the negative counter-part that is neglected. Blake's reading is based on his dialectic and cycle theory, in which both counter-parts of contraries act in cycles for progression. It is indeed true that Blake's expectations for the Revolution failed; however, Blake did not give up hope. The dialectic and cycle theory are the outcomes of his experience of the French Revolution.

The experience of the French Revolution and its consequences affected Blake in such a way that they ultimately led Blake to initiate his dialectic of contraries, which was first analysed by Algernon Swinburne in his *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, in which Swinburne observes that Blake deconstructs the categories of good and evil, Hell and Heaven, angel and devil. He is indeed the first to catalogue these inversions, but "he mistakenly reads Blake as being all and entirely on the side of the active and energetic, destructive, revolutionary" (Bloom 31) – "of the devil's party" (as Blake himself writes of John Milton). Blake does not simply abandon the concepts of good, Heaven and order, and embrace chaos, evil, and revolution. What he presents is the fundamental core of human nature that "humanity needs both the disorderly will and the ordering principles of reason" (Bloom 32). The progress of humanity, according to Blake, can only be achieved through unity of these two "opposing" forces.

This thesis will analyse the impacts of the socio-cultural events, specifically the French Revolution, on the development of the Blakean dialectic of contraries. In the first Chapter, the reasons behind Blake's pacifist revolution theory in *The French Revolution* will be

analysed. The impact of the sources of information about the French Revolution, ranging from political statements from the certain politicians to the works of political theorists, on William Blake will be shown. The newspapers from the archives will be given specific significance, for the change in their discourses is crucial to grasp the change in the French Revolution's perception by the English common people. The discourses of the newspapers, in this context, are highly influential in determining the perception of the revolution among the English masses. Then, the events in the French Revolution, which changed the course of the Revolution, will be presented as the dynamics that led Blake to change his perception of revolution from pacifist to the cyclic. The Blakean dialectic of contraries will also be analysed in accordance with these events. However, in order to indicate Blake's subversion of conventional religious doctrines, Blake's critique of the influential works of Swedenborg and Lavater will be presented. Blake's "cyclic revolution" and "the dialectic of contraries," therefore, will be explained in accordance not only with the events but also with the works, which, according to Blake, were dominated by the conventional doctrines. This Chapter will serve as the theoretical foundation upon which the analyses of the continental prophetic books, *America, a Prophecy* (1793), *Europe, a Prophecy* (1794), and *The Song of Los* (1795), will be based.

The second Chapter will deal with how Blake presented the socio-cultural atmosphere of his period, including the American Revolution, French Revolution, and peace negotiations of 1795 between revolutionary France and Britain, in his continental prophetic books through using his system of dialectic and the cyclic revolution theory. In *America, A Prophecy*, the reasons Blake portrayed the American Revolution as a failure, despite the success of revolution in America, will be discussed based on his cyclic revolution theory. Blake's perception of the progression, therefore, will be explained in accordance with the events of the American Revolution and their consequences. In the analysis of *Europe, A Prophecy*, Blake's critique of the conventional religious doctrines and the abuse of the religions by the power holders will be reflected. The positioning of the French Revolution and its significance within the history of the world in *Europe, A Prophecy* will be shown. Lastly, the impact of the peace negotiations of 1795 between revolutionary France and Britain on Blake will be reflected. *The Song of Los* will serve as the manifestation of Blake's system on universal level; and as an indicator of Blake's attitude towards the peace negotiations. Blake's strong critique towards the "unholy"

alliance of the “kings and priests” will also be reflected in this section. In this way, the continental prophetic books will be situated in their historical context along with the readings of the Blakean dialectic and cyclic revolution theory.

CHAPTER I

"THE PURIFYING VIOLENCE"⁶

In this chapter, the impact of the different phases of the French Revolution, the early phase, and the Reign of Terror Period on William Blake and his literary works will be analysed in analogy with the altering political discourses, related to the revolution, aired by the media. Thus, a chronological approach will be employed while focusing on Blake's early revolution-themed works, respectively the *French Revolution* (1791), and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), to display how the socio-political changes, both in France and Britain, affected Blake's thought; and enabled him to initiate the Blakean dialectic.

Blake's *French Revolution* will be the first material to be analysed socio-politically since it is directly linked to the pro-revolutionary discourses manifested specifically by the newspapers during the early revolutionary period, ranging from 1789 to 1790, exactly the period in which Blake penned down the poem. The newspapers, however, are not the only sources used by Blake. The richness of the content of the *French Revolution* is a direct result of the wide spectrum of the sources Blake used while composing the poem. The sources range from the political statements of the politicians during the period to the dinner conversations at Joseph Jonson's, from simple newspapers that every common Londoner could buy to the sophisticated political books of Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke. The revolution Blake portrayed in the *French Revolution* is the blending of these many information sources, and of course Blake's brilliant imagination. Thus, the motives that led Blake to compose the poem will also be illuminated. The use of the newspapers, as original documents from the British archives, will mostly be narrowed down to those published in London, for Blake spent almost his whole life in the capital and there were various stances towards the revolution in different cities, which may lead people to misread the discourses. Apart from that, the failure of Blake's foresight to the future of

⁶ *Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol II 37*

the revolution and the rise of the counter-revolutionary discourses in England will be presented. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* will serve as the manifestation of the Blakean dialectic of contraries, through which the complex dynamics within the prophetic books will be explained. In this section, Blake's critique of conventional religions will also be illuminated. The impact of the vehement socio-historical events; specifically the Reign of Terror Period, and heated political debates of the time, on Blake will also be taken into consideration.

The portrayal of William Blake's political orientations is generally presented in accordance with his literary works. The radicalism, harboured in his literary works, therefore, is often attributed to Blake himself. However, the newly discovered archival documents related to Blake's electoral vote indicate an unexpected aspect of him. Though "[s]uch records rarely reveal nuanced ideological positions," Fallon argues, Blake's vote for Charles James Fox in the 1790 electoral elections of Westminster, the only recorded participation of Blake discovered till now, indicates that "Blake's support for Fox suggests his politics were complex, not simply always radical" (63). The political debates of the time, 1790, both related to interior and exterior affairs, and politicians' views are beneficial to comprehend the reason behind Blake's vote for Fox and perceive his complex political demeanour.

The 1790 Westminster election was mainly dominated by three candidates; "the ministerial candidate, Admiral Samuel Hood, the opposition Whig, Charles James Fox, and John Horne Tooke, a leading figure in the reformist Society for Constitutional Information (SCI)" (Fallon 64). The last two candidates were generally associated with the dissenters; yet Blake voted for Fox, suggesting that Blake chose Fox's political pledges over Tooke's. One minor driving motive that led Blake to support Fox, according to Fallon, was "on pragmatic grounds; Fox's successful campaign to abolish the Shop Tax benefitted small businesses" (64). Blake led financially miserable days throughout his life; therefore it is not a surprise that his political choices are not only driven by political issues but also by pragmatic pledges as in the example of Fox's campaign to abolish taxes. However, the major reason behind Blake's support for Fox stemmed from political issues concerning the nation. Firstly, "Fox," according to Leslie G. Mitchell, "supported the nascent French Revolution, believing France was imitating England in

1688" (65). In this sense the French Revolution resembled the Glorious Revolution of England, in which the Tories and Whigs united against James II; and assured, without any violence, the sovereignty of the parliament and the King's obligation to govern with the parliament. The Glorious Revolution is, therefore, known as the Bloodless Revolution; and Fox's analogy of the French Revolution with the Glorious Revolution indicates that he also anticipated the revolution in France to be bloodless. Blake's endorsement of Fox, therefore, may hint that his perception of the pacifist revolution originated from Fox's political views. Secondly, Fox advocated the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; and criticized the acting of the established church in England as a party in the political arena, drawing connections between the French church and its English equipollency, for the church in France also functioned as a political power during the period (Fallon 64-65).

Blake's *The French Revolution* harbours Fox's many arguments that appeared earlier in the political campaigns such as the perception of the revolution as a pacifist event and the portrayal of the established church of France engaging in the politics and enthralling people with its ostensibly "God's" commands. Blake's perception of the pacifist revolution bears the traces of Fox's argument of French Revolution "imitating" Glorious Revolution of England, 1688. Yet, the very idea of the revolution before the French Revolution was restorative rather than devouring. What is represented as a pacifist revolution in *The French Revolution* is not only based on Blake's expectation but also the historical experience of the previous Glorious Revolution. Blake's portrayal of Orleans and Sieyes as the revolutionary forces pitted against the counter-revolutionary duo, comprising the Duke of Burgundy and Archbishop of Paris, also resembles the unity of the Tories, the royalists, and the Whigs against James II in the Glorious Revolution. The unity of contrasting political forces against a tyrant, ostensibly valid theme in 1688's revolution is depicted as the ruling principle within the poem. Thus, the unity of Orleans, a royal member, and Sieyes, the people, is notably analogous to the unification of Tory and Whig on common ground against James II. Blake's criticism towards the established church of France, personified in the Archbishop of Paris, also possesses quite similar arguments that may be observed in Fox's parliamentary speeches.

The French Revolution, written in 1791, is Blake's only work that has got closer to be published, which unfortunately failed due to the dramatic oppression to the dissenters by the state. The poem was intended to be the first of seven book series. Whether Blake gave up continuing the book due to the failure of the publication or oppression is still a mystery waiting to be solved. The vitality of *The French Revolution* itself and its story in this chapter lies in the fact that it mirrors "how Blake's manner might have grown, had Joseph Johnson printed the book a year earlier," since the oppression in England reached to dramatic levels in 1791, "had it found the readers whom it might then have found" (Bronowski 78).

The poem not only attempts to "analyse impartially the causes and the course of the world-altering events across the channel, which his countrymen regarded with such blind horror" (*A Blake Dictionary* 165) but also harbours Blake's expectation and foresight from the future of the revolution. Thus, it mirrors Blake's positive approach towards the pacifist future of the revolution, which unfortunately turned out to be quite contrary to Blake's foresight. Different from his prophetic books, in which Blake engages in the theme of the revolution through his mythological characters, Blake does not use any character from his mythopoeia. Instead, he uses historical figures and some fictional characters, generally embodiments of an idea or a side during the catastrophic event. Erdman argues that "Blake's *French Revolution* has unique importance as the only one of his visions or prophecies in which the historical particulars are clear and explicit" (150). Blake's use of language is also quite distinctive in this poem since "he wrote it more directly, in its orator's manner, than anything else which he wrote" (Bronowski 71). This writing style, uncharacteristic of Blake, results from the fact that Blake wrote it, intending that it would be published, to reach and break the mental chains of his countrymen.

All the prominent revolutionary ideas, ideals and counter-revolutionary dynamics are personified into either actual figures or fictitious characters to present the catastrophic event within a level of understanding that the casual Londoner could perceive easily. Major figures of the poem are: "[T]he Duke of Burgundy, the nobility hostile to the people, Sieyes, the People itself; the Archbishop of Paris represents the privileged Clergy; the Duke of Orleans, the liberal party among Nobles; La Fayette the Nation in arms" (Berger 333). All of these characters, personifications of ideas or sides, were aimed to be

helpful to situate the general context of the revolution within the minds of the fellow citizens, alien to the event across the bay. Thus, the story focuses on the characters and what they represent, which can be observed from the very fact that the characters have one hundred twenty-nine lines for their speeches in the poem dedicated to reflecting their opinions. The gravity of these speeches within the context of the poem is revealed especially when total lines of the poem, three hundred five in total, taken into consideration. Apart from that, the poem is centred on a sole matter of action; withdrawal of the national guards from the streets of Paris. Blake creates his story based on the actual events from the revolution; however, he manipulates the events. Erdman argues that “Blake’s manipulation of episodes emphasizes the primary demand for peace by making it appear that tyranny’s ‘war-breathing army’ must be removed before the forms of oppression symbolized by the towers of the Bastille can be demolished and before further social demands can be taken up” (149).

The actual events of the French Revolution covered by Blake in *The French Revolution*, Erdman argues, are first “the capitulation of the King on June 27, 1789, ordering the nobles and clergy to join the commons...however, he also surrounded Paris and Versailles with foreign mercenaries” (148). In return the revolutionary side, aggravated by increasing unemployment and a grain crisis, passed a motion by Mirabeau asking the king to return the mercenaries to the districts they had come from; and Abbe Sieyes declared “that in Britany troops were not permitted nearer than ten leagues to the meeting of the provincial Estates” (Erdman 148). “Louis replied vaguely, and in response to a second request he stated that the troops were needed to restore order at Paris and Versailles, and he severed a link of compromise by dismissing the cabinet liberals and exiling Necker” (Erdman 148). As a response to the King’s move, “[v]arious arsenals were raided for arms by a crowd which, on the 14th, turned to the ancient fortress of the Bastille for a further supply” (Erdman 148). Eventually, Louis, on 15th, again appeared to give in and order the removal of the armies from the streets of Versailles and Paris. The storyline of *The French Revolution* progresses through characters. Each analysis of the characters, therefore, will harbour the historical background of the actual person or event, with references to the newspapers, from which Blake was inspired.

The opening line of the poem, “[t]he dead brood over Europe, the cloud and vision descends over chearful France⁷” (*F.R*⁸ 1) implies the upcoming events that are to change France forever. The word, “brood,” according to István D. Rácz, is a “word recalling the notion of contemplation” (40). Blake, here, focuses on the radical changes taking place in France and gives an account; the “mortal scepter,” which is the symbolic item to define the power of nobility over people, “no more to be swayed by a visible hand,” (*F.R* 5) reflecting not only the fading of the oppression of the nobility but also “a less autocratic, more collective mode of political sovereignty is being imagined and created” (Fallon 76). Blake furthers: “From my window I see the old mountains of France, like aged men, fading away.” (*F.R* 9). Blake, without a doubt, perceived the revolution as a refreshing force that was to change the old customs and negative attitudes towards the people of France, which is explicitly visible in King's speech.

Before analysing the King’s speech, it is necessary to first focus on the portrayal of the king, Louis XVI, by William Blake, which is crucial in understanding Blake’s perception of the revolution, since it is directly linked to the news of the revolution reperussed in England during the same period. In order to reflect the images of the dramatic event across the bay, the newspapers of the late eighteenth century from the British archives will be used to illuminate the discursive attitudes of the media (the change of the discourses in later years within the media will also be shown later in this chapter). In *The World*, dated Monday July 20 1789, the repercussion of the revolution is reported as follows:

A NATIONAL REVOLUTION, brought about in a period so short, has had no parallel in the History of the World: and though fatal to some, the lives that have been lost in this great accomplishment, are, in point of numbers, inconsiderable. (2)

The Revolution, though it is also indicated that it caused some casualties, is presented as an “accomplishment,” reflecting the reigning tone: embracement. The news, then, follows a report on the Bastille Rush as: “Here Friends long lost again met each other! Here

⁷ All the references to Blake's works are quoted from Keynes, Geoffrey, ed. *Blake Complete Writings*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969. The illustrations are taken from “blakearchive.com”

⁸The following abbreviations, *F.R*, *TMHH*, *America*, *Europe*, *SoL*, will be used for respectively *The French Revolution*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America*, *A Prophecy*, *Europe*, *A Prophecy*, *The Song of Los*.

Captivity regained its freedom – DESPAIR found instant consolation!” The takeover of the Bastille prison, here, is reported as the liberty of the people who were imprisoned due to the political orientations and their wistful meeting with “long lost” friends. The positive attitude is notably explicit with the presentation of the alteration; “Captivity” turning into “freedom,” “Despair” into “consolation.” Revolution is presented as a pacifist dynamic force rather than a devouring one. In another newspaper, *Kentish Gazette*, dated Friday 4 September 1789, the report presents a letter from Mirabeau, “one of the greatest figures in the National Assembly that governed France during the early phases of the French Revolution,” (Aers 119) in which he starts with the very first words of the Declaration of Rights; “Men are born and remain equal in rights,” followed by a controversial issue: religion. “There can be no liberty,” says Mirabeau, “without that of opinion, nor any liberty of religion without worship,” (2) reflecting the revolution’s mild stance towards religions. The embracement of the differences and tolerance towards old enemies, since the Archbishop of Paris was one of the first to be beheaded after the Bastille rush by revolutionary people, within the course of the revolution is noticeably stressed. It is quite clear that two fundamental features seen in the newspapers shown above are pro-revolutionary discourse and presenting the revolution as a pacifist force. Thus was the image of the revolution in the air in England during the period when Blake penned down his *French Revolution*, explaining the use of the positive and pacifist motives that Blake employed in the poem. Reading the text within the context of such discourses aired at the time will be beneficial to comprehend the poem in a manner in which Blake’s political demeanour is seen more clearly.

The king, Louis XVI, portrayed by William Blake is in accordance with the news of the time. Blake’s King has a pacifist attitude towards the revolution. The Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris try to persuade him to declare war on the revolutionaries by using both aristocratic and religious doctrines. Instead of responding the revolution with instantaneous violence, he chooses to stay calm. The King is also aware of his previous actions; and feels guilty: “Our flesh is corrupted, and we wear away” (*F.R* 76). Blake states:

The nerves of five thousand years’ ancestry tremble, shaking the heavens of
France;
Throbs of anguish beat on brazen war foreheads; they descend and look into their
graves.

I see thro' darkness, thro' clouds rolling round me, the spirits of ancient Kings
 Shivering over their bleachèd bones; round them their counsellors look up from the
 dust,
 Crying: "Hide from the living! Our bands and our prisoners shout in the open field.
 Hide in the nether earth! Hide in the bones! Sit obscured in the hollow scull! (70-
 75)

The King is aware of the vehement change that is taking place in France caused by the "Revolutionary upheaval," which ultimately, "unsettles the human framework supporting the traditional heavens, themselves imagined as the head of a body politic" (Aers 249). The word, "Hide," is repeated three times, reflecting the King's response to the upheaval very clearly. Retaliation, exhorted by the Archbishop as; "send forth thy Generals," (*F.R* 153) blurs the mind of the King, reflecting the fact that Blake's King is weak and easy to be manipulated by others. However, Blake's King is domineered by utmost pacifism, resulting from fear.



Figure 2: "Our End is Come" (1793)

David Erdman argues that Blake's portrayal of Louis XVI in *The French Revolution* is quite similar to Blake's painting, "Our End is Come," (Fig. 2) in the sense that the King stands in fear; and his nobles are folded around him while holding their swords (189-190). The portrayal of Louis XVI in *The French Revolution* is indeed analogous to the

King painted in “Our End is Come,” for the King in the poem is also surrounded by two figures, The Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris. The analogy even becomes more assuring when the swords are taken into consideration as these two figures in *The French Revolution*, The Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris, also try to persuade the King to annihilate the revolutionaries despite fearing the possible consequences.

The fear of revolution dominates the anti-revolutionary side. The King’s speech, “we are not numbered among the living... Let us hide; let us hide in the dust; and plague and wrath and tempest shall cease” (*F.R* 65-78) is a direct indication of fear. It is probably a reference to Louis XVI’s order on June 27, 1789, to the clergy and nobles to stop resisting against the commons. Blake’s Louis, in his conscience, is aware of the fact that they “are not numbered among the living,” the revolutionary side; therefore, sees “hiding” as the only method to survive for the clergy and nobles from “plague and wrath” (78). “Our bands and our prisoners shout in the open field... The prisoners have burst their dens” (76-77) is a reference to the Bastille storm, June 14, 1789. Erdman argues that “the Louis of history was confronted with the fact that, three days after his advice of capitulation, a crowd of citizens and royal dragoons released from prison a number of French Guards who had been arrested for deserting their barracks” (152). Unfortunately the King did not listen to his ghostly conscience. To replace the guards who had chosen to ally themselves with the living, “he had begun to order up troops of the regular army, especially Swiss, German regiments, and his vast mercenary armies “spread over the hills, Breathing red fires from man to man, and from horse to horse” (152).

Right after the King’s speech, Blake presents the anti-revolutionary Duke of Burgundy, the personification of the French nobility, who states; “Shall this marble built heaven become a clay cottage,” indicating that for French nobility France is a “marble built heaven.” The word, “marble,” is highly significant since it had been used as a luxurious building material for sculpture throughout the ages. France, therefore, is presented as a heavenly place built out of marble, representing the sublime of the heavenly aesthetics. For the nobility, the revolution is a perilous act of altering this heaven into “a clay cottage,” a suggestion of the lower class, reflecting their views of perceiving it as a calamity on the nation. Burgundy states: “The ancient forests of chivalry hewn, and the

joys of the combat burnt for fuel” (93) to describe the perilous impact of the revolutionary forces on the French nobles. Erdman draws attention to Burgundy’s use of “the ancient forests of chivalry,” which according to him, is “Blake’s term for the feudal aristocracy” (153) to indicate the place of aristocracy in the history of France. Burgundy symbolizes the war in Blake’s theme of peace-against-war; therefore, he tries to persuade the King to declare war against the revolutionaries instead of yielding to Peace. Blake uses Burgundy to explain the reason of the actual event of July 11 in which Louis the XVI ordered the mercenaries to take Paris and Versailles. In Blake’s version, according to Erdman, “the King is emboldened by Burgundy’s speech” (153). Louis is also affected by “the sight of his “armies. . . tinging morning with beams of blood” (*F.R* 111) that seems assuring to become victorious over the revolutionaries. This is the point (July 11) at which Louis ceased temporizing, dismissed the liberals from his cabinet, and sent Necker into exile. “Necker rise! Leave the kingdom” (*F.R* 113). In the manner of a stage villain’s aside to the audience the King says he is choosing war instead of peace. However, it should not lead us to read Blake’s King as bellicist, for his choice results from his weakness of being easily manipulated by others.

Necker appears as such an important figure in *French Revolution* that his exile by the command of the King proves King’s choice of war over peace. Blake may have gotten this idea from the newspapers published during the period in London, since they contained lots of news about Necker and his role in the French Revolution. In *The Times*, dated 04 August 1789, it is stated that “Mr. Necker’s return to Versailles to reassume his former situation as Minister of the counter, has changed the general aspect of affairs from the most profound sorrow to a universal joy, such as was never before known in France” (2). This indicates that for a common Londoner, under the influence of the newspapers, Necker was a positive figure welcomed by the French common people. In *The Times*, 08 July 1789, it is reported that “the rejoicing at Versailles and Paris...have been universal...and The heavens, in the language of Dryden, could hear no other names but those of Baily and Necker” (2). In the next day issue, 09 July 1789, of the same paper it is stated: “It is certain, that the King is extremely dissatisfied with Mr. Necker... The King likewise blames Mr. Necker very highly for taking so active a part in favour of the Commons” (2). So, the name of Necker was frequently seen in the newspapers during the period; and the portrayal of Necker, as seen in the examples above, is quite positive and

pro-third-estate. Blake's portrayal of Necker in *The French Revolution* is quite in accordance with the news. "The women and children kneel'd round him (Necker) and kissed his garments and wept" (123) indicates that Blake portrays Necker as the beloved figure embraced by the common people in much the same way as in the news. Therefore, the King's command to exile such a positive figure in the French Revolution directly indicates King's choice of war over peace.

One other major anti-revolutionary character, who also tries to persuade the King to declare war on the revolutionary side, is the Archbishop of Paris. The character is the personification of the clergy class in France, who possesses the longest speech within the poem, reflecting the magnitude of the character. He is portrayed as the arch-enemy in the "golden tower," (*F.R* 129) who abuses religion to constrain the liberty. It is vital to understand first that the criticisms towards religion in Blakean texts are characterized by two fundamental points: questioning the theological doctrines and the manipulations of these doctrines by the authority to control people. The latter is obvious in the poem, for the bishop depicts the people as "[d]escending beasts," who "look downward and labour and forget" his "holy law" (*F.R* 139). Blake, here, unveils the key problem of the established church: whether the holy law is determined by the clergy or the Almighty? Since the Archbishop vociferates it as "my holy law," Blake, here, points out the manipulation of the theological doctrines by the clergy. The Archbishop of Paris, who gives the account of this manipulation in France, is presented as the abuser of the "holy law," which functions as a dynamic force that enthrals the people. Since Blake aims to record the history of the revolution from his perspective with this poem and reach his countrymen to illuminate their minds, he specifically focuses on the Archbishop character to show his fellow people the web of the established church, woven with the manipulations of the clergy rather than the orders of God.

As the poem progresses, Blake presents the revolution through the perspective of the clergy, the Archbishop, who portrays the event as "[t]he mitre become black, the crown vanish, and the scepter and ivory staff of the ruler wither among the bones of death" (*F.R* 144). The revolution, according to the clergy, is a calamitous occurrence for the destiny of the French nation, since it maliciously affects the "mitre," and "crown" and "scepter," respectively the religion and the state. It is notably explicit that Blake presents the clergy

and ruling class, the royal family and the lords, as one single group in the revolution. Thus, the darkening of the “mitre,” implying the declination of the clergy, according to the Archbishop, is also the fall of the crown and the scepter, referring respectively to the royal family and the ruling lords. Archbishop’s dream in which he envisages the future of the revolution is also significant in the sense that it illuminates his thoughts on revolution and its possible future impacts. In the Archbishop of Paris’ dream, the revolution, dawn for the common people, appears as an atrocious event in which the nobility and the clergy are annihilated. Erdman argues that “having been warned in a dream of awful fate of church if the state is levelled, the Archbishop brings divine sanction to the use of armed force” (153). With the aim of preventing the revolution he envisaged in his dream, Archbishop exhorts:

Hear my counsel, O King! and send forth thy Generals; the command of Heaven is upon thee!
Then do thou command, O King! to shut up this Assembly in their final home;
Let thy soldiers possess this city of rebels, that threaten to bathe their feet
In the blood of Nobility, trampling the heart and the head; let the Bastille devour
These rebellious seditious; seal them up, O Anointed! in everlasting chains. (*F.R*
153-156)

The Archbishop, who according to Fallon is the “most vehement denunciation of the ancient regime” of France, (74) presents the “[k]ing,” the clergy, and the “[n]obility” as one single group that will be devoured by the “rebellious” and “seditious” revolutionaries, portrayed as the evils that “threaten to bathe their feet in the blood of the [n]obility.” Therefore, the King, under “the command of heaven” according to the Archbishop, should quash the revolutionaries by shutting their home, the national assembly, and command the soldiers to take control of their city, Paris; which also reveals Archbishop’s opinion related to the main plot of the poem: the withdrawal of the army from Paris.

The portrayal of the revolution from the counter-revolutionary side is presented to us with the characters of Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris. Blake, therefore, indicates that both the Duke and the Archbishop are sided with the “war” party in the theme of peace-against-war conflict. The King seems to be persuaded that the choice of war is more reasonable, since he states that “dark mists roll around me and blot the writing of God Written / in my bosom...tempest must fall” (113-114). Erdman argues

that the King accepts the peasant insurrections and municipal revolutions throughout France as evidence of blotting his divine power; therefore, they must be quashed (153). It is indeed evident that the counter-revolutionary side achieves to influence the weak King.

Against the counter-revolutionary side, characterized by the figures of Archbishop of Paris and Duke of Burgundy, Blake presents one of the most crucial characters in the poem, Abbes de Sieyes, to represent the revolutionaries. Sieyes is one of the key figures of the French Revolution. His “What is the Third Estate?” became the defacto manifesto of the revolutionary ideals in 1789. And, it gave momentum to the wind of the revolution in the early phase of the Revolution. Blake’s portrayal of Sieyes, the personification of third-estate people in France, is directly inspired by Sieyes’ early impact on the French Revolution. The introduction of “a dark shadowy man in the form of King Henry the Fourth” (*F.R* 165) right along the side of Sieyes bolsters the theme of war-against-peace. Blake situates two contrasting forces, the revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries, against one another. The semblance of revolutionary ideals, Henry and Sieyes, made “strong soldiers tremble and guards of the palace flee” (*F.R* 167). Erdman argues that “In the Assembly’s final draft of a message for the King (July 15) it was charged that the troops around Paris were impeding the grain supply, and Mirabeau proposed adding the ironic observation that Henry IV even when besieging Paris had secretly sent it grain while Louis XVI in the name of peace was reducing the city to famine” (154). Erdman also argues that “Blake must have been familiar with the legend frequently cited, as in Paine’s *Rights of Man*, that Henry had planned to abolish war in Europe by forming a republic of nations” (154). Blake’s treatment of the revolutionaries as the liberator of fetters, therefore, arises from the fact that Blake sees the revolution as the realization of the utopic world.

Blake, then, continues with the portrayal of the Revolution through the voice of the revolutionaries. The voice of Sieyes in the poem is the voice of the unheard third-estate; which is notably visible from the very first line of the character: “Hear, O Heavens of France, the voice of the people arising from valley and hill” (205). It implies that Blake wanted readers to realize first that Sieyes is the voice of the people, which is followed by

the statement regarding the condition of the third-estate and the wind of the revolution that will change it:

The millions of spirits immortal were bound in the ruins of sulphur heaven
 To wander enslav'd; black, depress'd in dark ignorance, kept in awe with the whip
 To worship terrors, bred from the blood of revenge and breath of desire
 In bestial forms, or more terrible men; till the dawn of our peaceful morning,
 Till dawn, till morning, till the breaking of clouds, and swelling of winds, and the
 universal voice;
 Till man raise his darken'd limbs out of the caves of night. (*F.R* 213-218)

Sieyes' portrayal of the pre-revolutionary France's third-estate is quite striking. People were "enslaved," "depressed in dark ignorance," and "kept in awe with the whip," reflecting not only the negative conditions of the third-estate but also the reason, other people holding the "whip," behind these bitter conditions of people. Blake's Sieyes does exactly what the actual Abbe Sieyes did in his "What is the Third Estate," demonstrating the negative conditions of people first and then analysing the reasons that caused these very perilous consequences. Sieyes' speech succeeds the counter-revolutionary Archbishop of Paris and Duke of Burgundy, who portray the revolution as a devouring monster of the French culture and order. The speech, therefore, can be regarded as the revolutionary sides' response against the Archbishop and the Duke. Sieyes envisages that the grave conditions of people will be followed by the salvation of the people through the revolution. The revolution, according to Sieyes, is the "dawn," the "morning," and "the breaking of clouds," which István D. Rácz defines as "metaphorical images of surreptitious natural phenomena" (40) that also appears in Blake's later prophetic books in which Blake engages with the theme of the revolution again. "Turning from human history to nature," according to Northrop Frye, "we see that revolution, in the sense of a renewal of energy and the power to live," which is "cyclic" (168). The use of the natural images, therefore, indicates Blake's view of the revolution as a natural cycle rather than a catastrophic event.

Blake, then, proceeds to give a vision of the revolution he foresaw in which 'the valleys of France' shall cry to the soldier: "Throw down thy sword and musket, and run and embrace the peasant" (*F.R* 220-221) and the "[p]riest...shall say: "No more I curse thee; but now I will bless thee," (*F.R* 225) reflecting the pacifist attitude of William Blake, which according to Rácz, "is the ruling principle of the poem" (39). Blake draws attention

to the pacifist nature of the revolution and underlines it throughout the poem. This pacifist attitude is most visible in the last lines of Sieyes' speech:

Hear the first voice of the morning: "Depart, O clouds of night, and no more
Return; be withdrawn cloudy war, troops of warriors depart, nor around our
peaceable city
Breathe fires; but ten miles from Paris let all be peace, nor a soldier be seen! (*F.R*
237-249)

Blake offers a peaceful solution to the matter of the withdrawal of the armies from Paris, which is the main plot of the poem. Revolution, for Blake, was not a force devouring the counter-revolutionaries, be it French national guards, clergy, nobility; it was rather a restorative pacifist force that was to establish a new order in which, regardless of their opinions, all sides would flourish, reflecting Blake's persistent claim on the pacifist nature of the revolution.

The pacifist attitude is followed by another character, Orleans, who embodies the pacifist characteristic more than anyone in the whole poem. The character is directly inspired by Louis Philippe Joseph d'Orleans, who despite being a member of the royal house of Bourbon, the ruling French dynasty, actively supported the revolution and later took the surname of "Egalite," one of the three mottos of the French Revolution along with "Liberte," and "Fraternite" (Doyle 68). It may seem indeed surprising that Blake who had almost never left London throughout his entire life should know about this specific figure from the Revolution; however, the name of Orleans was in the air in 1790-1791, the period during when Blake penned the poem, since newspapers were full of reports from the country across the bay. In a London newspaper, *The Bath Chronicle*, dated October 14, 1790, the name of Orleans appears with Mirabeau, one of the key figures of the French Revolution, and it is reported that "The National Assembly of France have acquitted...Louis-Philippe d'Orleans of the charges brought against," indicating England's deep attention on revolutionary France's interior affairs. In another newspaper, *The World*, dated Monday July 20 1789, "the popularity of Duke of Orleans," reports the paper, "increases more and more" after the fall of the Bastille. Thus, it is likely that Blake, as an intellectual, followed the news and grasped the context.

The character, d'Orleans, before whom even the Archbishop "changed into pale," (*F.R* 176) takes the scene and bolts his speech: "Fear not dreams, fear not visions, nor be you

dismay'd with sorrows which flee at the morning! / Can the fires of Nobility ever be quench'd, or stars by a stormy night?" (*F.R* 180-181) The most significant aspect of this character and his speech is the fact that it harbours Blake's foresight from the future of the Revolution, in which the "dream" and the "vision" of the Revolution will not be perilous for the people, but rather will be heavenly for every single citizen, including all three estates of the nation. Just like "a stormy night" cannot quench the light of the "stars," "[t]he fires" of the "nobility," according to Blake, will not be "quenched" by the Revolution. Orleans furthers his argument:

Is the body diseas'd when the members are healthful? can the man be bound in
sorrow
Whose ev'ry function is fill'd with its fiery desire? can the soul, whose brain and
heart
Cast their rivers in equal tides thro' the great Paradise, languish because the feet,
Hands, head, bosom, and parts of love follow their high breathing joy?
And can Nobles be bound when the people are free, or God weep when his children
are happy? (*F.R* 183-186)

Through Orleans, Blake portrays the revolution not as a destructive force but rather as a restorative dynamic that will give momentum to the healing of the nation, which of course directly linked to the eighteenth century's concept of the revolution that harbours restoration within itself. However, this was to be altered by the French Revolution in the coming years ahead. The revolution Blake foresees shelters benefits for the people and nothing malicious for the nobility, which is especially underlined by the quote above. "Is the body diseas'd when the members are healthful?" indicates that when the members, which in this case is the people, are "healthful," the body, "nobility," will not be "diseas'd," signifying the absence of possible negative impacts. Erdman argues that "Blake's Orleans is reversing the rhetoric with which the Archbishop justified a political hierarchy of head, heart, and servile members" (155). The destruction of the hierarchy, therefore, is not the annihilation of the system that brings order; but rather an initiation of a new order through which body, the political system, will be restored (Connolly 75-76). Blake continues this argument by focusing on the clash between nobility and people: "[C]an Nobles be bound when the people are free, or God weep when his children are happy?" The rhetorical questions, here, signify Blake's utter and sheer trust in the revolution and confidence over pacifist future of the revolution. Blake's pacifist attitude especially glitters in the character of Orleans, since Philippe d'Orleans, an actual figure of the revolution, was the living

proof that the nobility can peacefully find a new place in the new order of France. Erdman also draws attention to Blake's absolute trust in the pacifist future of the Revolution, and states that Blake "in early days had entertained the hope that the French King and Dukes and Archbishop might put off terror and contempt and resist the temptation to put on the girdle of counterrevolutionary war" (159).

The pacifist attitude of the King is most obvious in the conclusion of the poem: the withdrawing of the troops from the streets of Paris. After the speeches of revolutionary side, in the form of Sieyes and Orleans, the King agrees to withdraw the troops from Paris. The King, after hearing the speech of Abbe de Sieyes, commands: "Bastille, depart! And take thy shadowy course; / Over step the dark river, thou terrible tower, and get thee up the country ten miles" (*F.R* 249-250). Thus, the main issue in the poem is concluded; and the will of the people superseded the voice of the Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris, respectively the nobility and the clergy. What is achieved by the revolutionary side, according to Erdman, is "the decay of ecclesiastical authority over men's minds, and the relaxation of monarchical authority over their bodies" (157). The power of people overcomes the feudal aristocracy, "the ancient forest of France," and order is restored within a new form.

Blake's portrayal of the characters is crucial to grasp how he perceived the revolution. Blake first presents the counter-revolutionary characters, The Duke of Burgundy and Archbishop of Paris; and their perception of the Revolution. Then, the revolutionaries, Sieyes, Orleans, and their perspective on the revolution are demonstrated. Blake, here, aims to show his readers different approaches towards the revolution within France. The Duke and the Archbishop, representing the high class, present the revolution as a monster that will devour the French culture while Sieyes and Orleans argue that the revolution will restore the country's bitter condition. Blake's use of Orleans is significant here, for Sieyes was the proof that revolutionary ideals, once perceived, can persuade even the royal-blooded individuals. Necker is also significant in this sense, Blake underlines the fact that Necker is highly embraced by the French common people. Therefore, the revolutionaries are presented as a force that desire change for goodness rather than the destruction of the high-class or French culture. Blake's presentation of different approaches towards the revolution and the individuals from different classes of the society

suggests that the revolutionaries are pacifist and seek peaceful solutions. The King here is the decision maker, yet he is easy to be manipulated by others. Throughout the poem, the King alters his decision about the withdrawal of the armies from Paris twice, which indicates that a nation's destiny cannot be left to a single individual. Blake's conclusion to the poem is dominated by pacifism. The main problem of the poem, the withdrawal of the troops from Paris, is solved through dialogues rather than violence. The King consents to the will of the revolutionaries after hearing the revolutionary speeches. Thus was the hope and prediction of Blake; however, the future was to prove him wrong.

Contrary to Blake's foresight, the Revolution turned into a bloodshed starting with the Reign of Terror period, in 1793. Philippe d'Orleans, whom Blake used as the living proof of the pacifist order that was to be established after the Revolution, contributed to the chaos and voted for the executions of many revolutionaries and even his own royal blood, Louis XVI, during the Terror period (Doyle 68). This bitter reality also reflects that Blake failed to foresee the future of the King too, for the poem anticipates a future in which the King survived the revolution and found a new place in the new order of France. The failure of Blake's foresight of the revolution's future is most obvious with the character, Orleans, who glittered with the beams of peace and pacifism. During the early stages of the Revolution till 1792, Orleans was one of the most promising members of the National Assembly. Yet, contrary to Blake's expectations, he betrayed the very ideals of the Revolution and become the executioner of the revolutionaries, thus the revolutionary ideals. Ironically, he himself was perished by the guillotine on 6 November 1793 (Doyle 68).

The image of the Revolution in England's newspapers, beginning from 1792, changed entirely after the course of the revolution altered into bloodshed. The pro-revolutionary discourse that had been once employed to manifest the pacifism of the revolution was replaced by the counter-revolutionary discourses that cursed the revolution and revolutionaries. The change of the discourses within the newspapers is directly related to the political matters of England. In the early phase of the French Revolution, newspapers were dominated by the pro-revolutionary discourses. The underlying reason for that was the very fact that England had been at war with France for almost hundred years at the time. The Revolution, therefore, was thought to be the end of their enmity. However,

beginning from 1792, the revolutionary France imprisoned the royal family and declared war on Prussia and Austria, and became a threat. Britain began military preparations in 1792 and declared that war was inevitable unless France gave up its conquests (Lecky 101-103). The image of the French Revolution within newspapers, therefore, changed. In the *London Times*, dated Monday, September 10, 1792, an account of Mr. Lindsay, an eyewitness of the revolution, is reported:

The city had been a scene of bloodshed and violence without intermission since Sunday noon, and although it is difficult and indeed impossible to ascertain with any precision the number that had fallen victims to the fury of the mob during these three days, we believe the account will not be exaggerated when we state it at TWELVE THOUSAND PERSONS—(We state it as a fact, which we derive from the best information, that during the Massacre on the 2d instant, from SIX to EIGHT THOUSAND Persons perished). (1)

The Revolution and the revolutionaries were started to be portrayed as vehement monsters. In the issue of the same paper, dated September 12 1792, the very opening line of the paper draws the line between the pro and anti-revolutionaries in England; “As those who are most likely to give a just relation of the late horrid transactions in France, dare not write;—and those, who do write, make it their business to conceal the circumstances as much as possible.” It is evidently clear that the news started to attack not only the revolutionaries in France but also the English dissenters that supported the revolution. As a result, many political and philosophical figures were forced to flee the country to save their lives. The dissenters, who are thought to be pro-revolutionary, were accused of treason. The same news then follows a report regarding the ferociousness of the revolutionaries:

When anybody is assassinated, his body is directly stripped by the people, and sometimes they fight for the spoil; and then the weakest party is always killed, as being thieves. I saw four executed in this manner by nine others, with whom they refused to partake of some stolen Assignats which they found on some Priests they had assassinated. These nine were afterwards attacked by 20 other Brigands, who hanged them as thieves, and went to a wine merchant and bought wine with the money. This is one of the many examples of the probity of the French mob, so much talked of, which certainly is not greater than their humanity, and it is in this manner that the generous French Nation administer justice to thieves. (2)

These were the common images of the revolutionaries, “thieves,” “murderer of priests,” that echoed in the newspapers in this vehement year of 1792.

The counter-revolutionary discourse, however, reached an extreme level in 1793. The Reign of Terror period (1793), in which many members of the French dynasty were executed, showed that the Revolution was a danger. The Revolution, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, that England was familiar with was no more. Britain took extreme measures against the revolutionary France and the very idea of the revolution, resulting merely from two reasons: the threat of the revolutionary France on British nation and the threat of the flourishing of such idea, the revolution, that could cause the same events at home. *London Times'* January 25, 1793 issue indicates evidently the first reason and Britain's stance:

The vengeance of Europe will now rapidly fall on them; and, in process of time, make them the veriest wretches on the face of the earth. The name of Frenchman will be considered as the appellation of savage, and their presence shunned as a poison, deadly destructive to the peace and happiness of Mankind.
(1)

The date of the report, January 25, 1793, is highly significant since it was published exactly four days after the execution of Louis XVI. The news was quick to cover the events taking place in France, reflecting the fact that British media closely followed the French Revolution. Britain expelled the French ambassador following the king's execution, and on 1 February France responded by declaring war on Great Britain (Lefebvre 19).

Thus was the environment in which Blake lived and wrote. The pacifist revolution he foresaw failed. He desired the wind of the revolution to reach England; yet when it had, it was not the one he expected. Blake's *French Revolution* is highly important within all Blakean text to perceive the changes in his artistic life. Blake's artistic evolution from narrating history into a prophetic mode in which he envisaged the history is hidden within the failure of the French Revolution. It was true that the French Revolution failed and it was also true that he failed to foresee the future of it. The pacifist revolution he thought that would reign in France unfortunately resulted in bloodshed. Yet, he never lost his hope in the revolution. It was this very failure of the French Revolution that was to enable Blake to initiate his own dialectic and come up with a new theory of cyclic revolution, in which he embraced both counter-parts of the contraries; and presented them acting together in cycles to achieve the progression. The failure of the French Revolution taught him the fact that revolution, one counter-part of the chaos and order dichotomy, alone is

not enough for progression; thus, chaos and order are both needed in cycles for the progression. This approach, initiated as a response to the failure of his perception of pacifist revolution and the failure of the early phase of the French Revolution, is the fundamental of the Blakean approach that will echo in his next book, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, written likely between 1790 and 1793, is Blake's theoretically complex work that manifests his dialectic of contraries. Peter A. Schock argues:

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790-1793) programmatic expression of much of his interconnected political, moral, and metaphysical thought in the early 1790s: the conviction that apocalypse, manifest in the French Revolution, is imminent, the idea of expanded sense of perception, the dual principles Blake calls the "Contraries," and an unconventional ethics based on energy and infinite desire. (441)

The debate over the printing date of the book is significant within the argument of what it represents, since the book harbours the transition of Blake's perception of the revolution from pacifist to cyclic. Joseph Viscomi deduces that the book was probably printed in 1790; yet Blake's reference, "the eternal hell revives," (*TMHH* 3:2) to the French Revolution, is directly taken from Edmund Burke's *Reflections on The French Revolution*, published in 1791 (Paulson 126). It is probable that Blake may have started the work in 1790, for "[t]he reasoning," dialectical approach of the book, "begins as in *Tiriell* and *The Book of Thel*," which were written in 1789 (Bronowski 67). However, the impacts of the socio-cultural events, from 1790 to 1793, on the text are unquestionable, for the transition of the revolution's perception from pacifist to cyclic results from these events.

Blake, according to Bronowski, was inspired by two important books, Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man* and Emmanuel Swedenborg's *The Visions of Heaven and Hell*, which according to Blake, harboured the conventional doctrines of the established church; therefore is fiercely parodied throughout *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (67). Blake's annotations on these books date to exactly 1788 and 1789, the initial period of the French Revolution. Blake's annotations are generally characterized by his criticism towards the reigning discourses within these books, which are based on the conventional religious doctrines. He assumed that the very bitter conditions that led to the revolutions resulted from the very set of rules drawn by these doctrines. Such concept of "good" and "evil" in

these books are, therefore, the very sources of the grave conditions of the people during this period. Reading Blake's criticism of Lavater and Swedenborg through analogy with the socio-cultural events of the period is significant, since these events are the forces that enabled Blake to grasp the errors of the conventional doctrines.

In his "Blake's Politics in History," John Mee states that "only concrete evidence for Blake having direct contact with any dissenting religious group is his signature on a document circulated at the General Conference of Swedenborgians during Easter week 1789" (137). Bronowski also indicates that "Blake's friends Flaxman and Butts belonged to the following of Swedenborg" (66). So, it is evidently clear that Blake was once a follower of Swedenborg and had a circle of friends following the theological doctrines of Swedenborg. However, after 1789, Blake started to question the Swedenborgian doctrines. Morton D. Paley underlines the fact that two problems within Swedenborgian circle, the support of concubinage and the opposition against the French Revolution, made Blake recede from the movement; and provided an impetus for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (65-66). The first problem was "Swedenborg's controversial vision of an overtly sexual heaven and his tolerance of concubinage" (Mee 137). Throughout his life, Blake has always been an abolitionist, which can be seen in his various poems including, "The Little Black Boy," and "Chimney Sweeper," both of which date back exactly to 1789, the year Blake started to question the Swedenborgian teachings. Secondly, the Swedenborgian circle feared and opposed the French Revolution; and even "expelled two ardent abolitionist and supporters of the French Revolution, Augustus Nordenskjöld and Carl Wadström" (Mee 138).

Blake believed that Swedenborg's error lay in the fact that he was not able to grasp the nature of evil; thus, accepted the conventional morality in which everything was classified as good or evil (*A Blake Dictionary* 298-299). Blake's dialectic, however, offers a new approach towards this very conventional morality. Bronowski indicates that there are two notes that Blake took in the margins of Swedenborg's *Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, stating: "Good and Evil here are both Good & the two contraries Married," and "Heaven & Hell are born together" (67). These two notes, according to Damon, indicate that Blake "translated Swedenborg's ideas into his terms" (299). The title of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* springs from this criticism towards

Swedenborg's work, *The Visions of Heaven and Hell*, in which the good and evil, thus heaven and hell, are separated from one another completely; on the contrary in Blake, they are married. The Blakean dialectic of contraries, therefore, is founded on an unorthodox approach towards dichotomies, through which he desires to initiate a new form. For Blake, the contraries do not necessarily oppose one another in a conventional sense, but rather complete each other through oppositions. Norman Nathan also draws attention to this particular relation between contraries and states that "contraries are not to be interpreted as negations, but rather as necessary entities which form a whole unit...and it takes two things to make a third thing; contraries are necessary if there is to be any progress, any life" (52).

The impact of the French Revolution on the development of the Blakean dialectic is undeniable. This is most obvious when it comes to his approach towards revolution, in which chaos and order together need to be active for progression. In *The French Revolution*, inspired by the early phase of the revolution, Blake presented the pacifist revolution as the force that would bring harmony; yet the Reign of Terror period proved him wrong. The revolution in France continued being chaotically revolutionary, thus devouring not only the early revolutionaries that initiated the Bastille Storm and Tennis Court Coup but also the very revolutionary ideals. This failure taught Blake that one counter-part of the contraries is not enough for progression. When the order is corrupted and oppressive towards people, it needs to be shaken by the chaotic revolution. Yet, this chaos, according to Blake, needs to be replaced by another order for the progression. This is the fundamental of the Blakean dialectic of contraries, in which the contraries should not overcome one another, but rather act in cycles, which proves that Blake never lost his belief in the revolution after the failure of the American and the French Revolutions; just altered his perception of revolution from pacifist to cyclic. Damon defines it as the "healing of the dreadful dichotomy of official Christianity," and the "inauguration of a new period of human thought" (399). This is also the dynamic system within the prophetic books, through which Blake "records the formula for all revolutions" (*A Blake Dictionary* 43). Blake merges his own dialectic of contraries with his personal mythopoeia; therefore, he, different from *The French Revolution* poem, engages in the theme of the revolution by using his own system.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, in this context, is the manifestation of the Blakean dialectic. “Without Contraries,” declares Blake, there “is no progression” (*TMHH* 3:6). He further states: “Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to human existence” (*TMHH* 3: 6-8). The necessity of contraries is stressed for the progress, contrary to the theological doctrines presented by the sacred books. Blake deduces that “contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil; and “Good is the passive that obeys Reasons” while “Evil is the active springing from Energy,” thus “Good is Heaven” and “Evil is Hell” (*TMHH* 3: 9-11). Blake presents the religious texts as the source of the traditional approach towards contraries. What is called good or evil, in this respect, is determined by the religious sources. The problem within religion’s conventional framework, however, is the alignment of various contraries under the transcendent contraries of good and evil. Blake here indicates that passivity, reason and Heaven are categorized as good, while activity, energy, and Hell are presented under the group of evil. Jones argues that “since good is privileged over evil within this framework, each half of any set of contraries classified as good would also be privileged over its counter” (66). However, this framework of “good” and “evil” not only affects the set of contraries listed under them but also all things associated with these set of contraries. Therefore, this framework, which may seem quite minor at first, reaches to an immense scale of notions. Consequently, it leads to the glorification of contraries listed under the group of “good,” and decadence of those under “evil.” Jones further points out that “the privileging of good over evil curtails dialogue because the “evil” side of any issue, argument, or debate is automatically discredited” (65-66). Blake’s critique, here, is significant since it mirrors how a minor issue may impact immense scales.

In the next plate, “Plate 4,” titled “[t]he voice of the Devil,” Blake strikes his radical critique towards the dichotomic approaches within the “sacred” texts;

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That Man has two real existing principles, viz. a Body and a Soul.
2. That Energy, call’d Evil, is alone from the Body; and that Reason, call’d Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies. (*TMHH* 4: 1-4)

These are the footsteps of a new system. Blake, before manifesting his daring dialectic, first makes the critique of those before him. The claim of “[e]nergies,” sins, will lead people to their doom is, therefore, presented as an “error,” reflecting Blake’s attempt to create a new system by deconstructing another first. Damon argues that “Blake believed that the material body was an illusion or error – a part of the soul, but not an essential part” (318). With the voice of the Devil, Blake intends to demonstrate the errors in the doctrines and definitions covering the body and soul relationship. Blake’s aim here is to present the dogma-based falsities of the conventionalized portraiture of body and soul (*Blake on Self and Soul* 60-61). The first error, according to Blake, is the principle of man having body and soul as distinctive existing parts of existence. Blake’s main critique here is the dichotomic approach towards body and soul; which, he believes, leads to the second error; the wrong interpretations of good and evil. Jones argues that “as separate abstract qualities, one abstraction can be privileged over the other; the contraries that are aligned with the good, soul and reason are privileged over the body and energy, which are aligned with evil” (66). The third error, is the torment claimed to be awaiting those who follow their “energies.” The dogma-based conventional separation of body and soul canalizes people into the interpretation that following desires of the body, the source of evil, will lead them to their eternal doom. Related to the last error, Vassiliadis points out that “God seen as a tormentor is again a thought which is rejected by the Devil” (15). The figure of the Devil, therefore, is not the traditional evil that promotes wickedness but rather tries to restore the image of God that the conventional doctrines damage indirectly. All three errors, in this context, are inter-connected to one another; since the first leads to the second, and the second leads to the third. The main source of the three errors, however, is the very dichotomic approach of conventional doctrines.

Blake’s villainous voice, after criticizing these errors, offers the contrary readings of the three errors:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call’d Body is a portion of Soul discern’d by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight. (*TMHH* 5-8)

The very first statement negates the dichotomic approach; and argues that what makes us perceive the Body different from the Soul is nothing but the five senses. Blake's critique here emphasizes not only the dichotomy of conventional doctrines but also their sheer predication on the five senses, which Blake defines as the "abyss" (*TMHH* 6:7). He further declares energy, aligned by the conventional doctrines with the "evil," as "Eternal Delight." He celebrates and glorifies the energy that has been degraded by the conventional doctrines. "The Devil's response," according to Jones, "produces both a critique and an alternative point of view, opening a dialogue with the religious view and undermining its monologic authority" (66-67). The alternative dialogue is the birth of the very Blakean dialectic that is to be echoed in his prophetic books.

As the text progresses, Milton's *Paradise Lost* is presented by William Blake as a source from which he was inspired to initiate the dialectic of contraries. Blake explains that "[t]he reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a Poet and of the Devil's party without really knowing it" (*TMHH* 6: 15-16). So, Milton's embracement of the devilish other within the Bible, without really knowing it, was the very force, according to Blake, that liberated Milton from fetters. Following the footsteps of Milton, Blake deduces that the figure of Satan is a necessary part of God's creation; thus existence of life. However, Blake also presents the errors he finds in *Paradise Lost* and Milton's argument of evil; and attacks them. "Blake," according to Harold Bloom, "makes a double attack, on the one hand rhetorical and ironic, on the other argumentative and prophetically serious" (80). For Milton, Blake states that "[t]hose who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained" (*TMHH* 5:1). Blake's comment reflects that Blake believed the followers of the enthralling theological doctrines lack the necessary desire and passion. It consequently leads them to end up as followers. Milton, according to Blake, is among them, which makes him "write in fetters" when it comes to the angels. Bloom argues:

Paradise Lost, Blake judges, is written out of Milton's despair of his earlier apocalyptic hopes, and is a *Song of Experience*, a poem that accepts the fallen world's restraint of human desire. Milton is willing to restrain the desires of Satan and Eve, or see them punished for not accepting such restraints, because his own desires for knowledge and for the complete fulfilment of his imaginative potential have become weak enough to be restrained. Reasoning from nature usurps the place of imaginative desire and governs Milton's visionary powers, though they are unwilling to be so governed. By degrees, Milton's exuberance of invention becomes passive, until it is

only the shadow of the power that creates the opening books of *Paradise Lost* and the past prophetic glory of *Areopagitica*. (80)

In the light of Bloom's remark, it can be argued that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in this context, is Blake's own response to the subject of "good" and "evil." Inspired by socio-cultural events of his time, specifically the French Revolution, Blake initiates his dialectic; which, following the footsteps of Bloom, is also Blake's "prophetic attack" on Milton; and his own alternative version to the conventional readings of "good" and "evil."

Blake's unorthodox approach, however, should not lead us to misread the Blakean texts as the pro-devilish or pro-satanic works. Vassiliadis argues that "Blake is not to be seen as an anti-Christ or a satanic person in general who fights against God, as understood in the traditional sense" (16). Algernon Charles Swinburne, the first scholar ever to engage the prophetic books, fell into this error in his *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (1868). His interpretation of Blake's dialectic of contraries is simply the inversion of orthodox moral categories; the concepts of "good" and "evil" replacing one another. Swinburne's flaw results from the fact that he did not have access to all prophetic books at the time. His argument was solely based on early prophetic books in which the energetic devilish characters appear as positive and the angels as negative. It is indeed true that the concepts of evil and hell are quite opposite to the conventional doctrines; however it is not the celebration of the evil over the good, or hell over heaven.

The hell portrayed by Blake is relevant to the main aim of the book as a whole; subversion of the truths manifested by the conventional theological doctrines, specifically Swedenborg's *Two Visions of Heaven and Hell*, and offering new perspective on the contraries, good and evil. The Hell is a place "delighted with the enjoyments of Genius, Which to Angels look like torment and insanity" (*TMHH* 6:1-2). There is also "a printing house...in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation" (*TMHH* 15:1-2). Blake's focus here indicates that the Hell he portrays harbours something that the Angels have yet to comprehend; in others words the conventional doctrines fail to perceive. Vassiliadis argues that "Hell is not seen as a place of punishment, but as a source of unrepressed feelings, creative energy, personal spiritual progression...therefore, hell stands in opposition to the more or less regulated and authoritarian perception of heaven" (16) What Blake aims to accomplish with the visit of Hell is to materialize the abstract nature of the criticism he made towards the conventional doctrines of the good or evil.

The visit, therefore, enables him to portray the materialized account of his version of Hell, in which an alternative account of evil, royal to Blake's personal dialectic of contraries, reigns freely. It also enables the readers to witness a fuller, and truer picture of the Blakean dialectic. Right before the "Proverbs of Hell," Blake also states: "I collected some their proverbs" (*TMHH* 6:8). Blake uses the word, "collect," on purpose to give the readers the idea that the proverbs are productions of his visions rather than his imagination. The proverb section, therefore, is one of the fundamental parts within the book that makes *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* a prophetic book, since they are the productions of Blake's envisaging.

Blake's embracement of the negative counter-parts of the contraries is most obvious in "The Proverbs of Hell" section within *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. "The effect of the proverb," according to James King, "is an interruption of the narration and the description, since proverbs stand for definitions, commands and performatives" (82). This section is highly characterized by Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, which, according to Bloom, is "the imaginative seed of not only the "Proverbs of Hell" but also the whole of Marriage, and of Blake's ideas of good and evil to the end of his life" (84). On the aphorisms of Lavater, Blake annotates:

Every man's leading propensity ought to be call'd his leading Virtue & his good Angel. But the Philosophy of Causes & Consequences misled Lavater as it has all his Contemporaries. Each thing is its own cause & its own effect. Accident is the omission of act in self & the hindering of act in another; This is Vice, but all Act [from Individual propensity] is Virtue. To hinder another is not an act; it is the contrary; it is a restraint on action both in ourselves & in the person hinder'd, for he who hinders another omits his own duty at the same time. (Keynes 84)

Blake's critique of Lavater focuses on Lavater's approach towards the free will of humanity, which may lead to vices. Lavater's approach stems from the conventional doctrines, which offer set of rules to live by. The free will, in this context, is denying these set of rules; which accordingly leads people into their doom. Blake opposes to this idea that an individual's personal restraint on his/her own actions or other's, through obeying the set of rules manifested by the conventional doctrines, will lead people into virtue. The act of free will, according to Blake, is actually sublime of God. Bloom argues that "act stems from the only wealth, from life, but restraint is an omission of intellect, and springs from the poverty of lifelessness, the absence of the exuberance of mind delighting in its own forming powers" (85). Lavater sides the act of free will with the

negativity and evil, while Blake celebrates it; and promotes it as delight of forming powers. So, what is excluded by Lavater, the act of free will, is embraced by Blake.

The embracement within the proverbs is manifested as it follows:

The pride of peacock is the glory of God.
 The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
 The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
 The nakedness of woman is the work of God. (*TMHH* 8:2-5)

“The pride,” “[t]he lust,” and “[t]he wrath,” three of the seven deadly sins, are presented as respectively “the glory,” “the bounty,” and “the wisdom” of God. It underlines not only Blake’s deconstruction of the sacred texts but also manifesting a new approach, through which Blake illuminates the overshadowed fact that these states are created by God; thus they manifest the sublime of God. “The nakedness of woman” holds significance here, for Blake, in his annotation on Lavater, wrote: “the origin of this mistake in Lavater & his contemporaries is, they suppose that Woman's Love is Sin; in consequence all the Loves & Graces with them are Sin” (84). “Nakedness,” in this context, can be associated with the act of free will of people, which Lavater excludes while Blake embraces. Blake’s approach towards what is evil, the Nakedness,” in the sense of conventional moralities, is shaped by the idea that it is also the work of God. This proverb is highly significant, for it mirrors how the Blakean dialectic of contraries is shaped by the perception of the material world as the will and the work of God. This is also the fundamental reason why the word, “dichotomy,” is preferred over “dualism” in this thesis. Dichotomy, etymologically, means “a cutting in half” (*Etymology Dictionary* 90). The contraries within *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, are presented as the two halves of the will of God. The Blakean dialectic of contraries is, therefore, based on the re-interpretation of the concepts of good and evil as the works of God’s will.

Within the Blakean dialectic, the contraries, which are conventionally opposite to one another, are presented together, as seen with the example of “wrath” also being the “wisdom.” The dichotomic states, according to Blake, are actually in a harmonic opposition, which is the ruling principle in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. He approaches to the oppositions not in a dichotomic sense, since for him “Opposition is true friendship” (*TMHH* 20) only through which progression can be gained. One other proverb from “The Proverbs of Hell,” “[t]he road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom,” (14)

again offers quite an unorthodox view, since it promotes “excess,” which, according to the doctrines of Christianity, is dangerous. Presenting “excess” as a path to reach wisdom indicates Blake’s revolting challenge against the doctrines. The last proverb in "Plate 10" is highly crucial to grasp this domineering approach in the "Proverbs of Hell;" questioning the unquestionable. “Truth,” Blake exhorts, “can never be told so as to be understood, and not believed,” (20) indicating what is presented by the established church or the state to people as "truth," is used to make people believe in their own discourses. Truths, therefore, should not be treated as ultimate realities of world, for they are nothing but shadows of subjectivity of people controlling the power. The proverb, therefore, encourages readers not to surrender to the truths of others, which in this case is the truths of the established church and the state, but rather to question them.

Blake’s approach, here, is not only characterized by his critique towards the doctrines of religion but also the abuse of these doctrines, by the established church, to enthrall people, specifically the third-estates. Within *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the figure of established church, therefore, appears as the ultimate source of corruption within the society. Blake constantly attacks on the established church and attempts to draw attention to the fact that order, when got corrupted, is even more malicious and abusive than chaos itself. “Prisons,” Blake stresses, “are built with stones of law, brothels with the bricks of religion,” (*TMHH* 10) indicating the power of social norms, determined by the established church, in assigning what is good or bad. Thus, Blake questions the very order initiated by the "law" and "religion," respectively the state and the established church, that shut their eyes to some of the greatest calamities during this period such as slavery, child labour, and oppression of the state on free thinking. Blake concludes that the dominant values within society, presented by the power holders, need to be questioned and challenged. The embracement of the negative counter-parts of the contraries within *The Marriage of Heaven Hell* directly results from the consequences of the sole embracement of the positive counter-part of the contraries within societies, which ended up as the corrupted order that constrained the body and enthralled the mind of people.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is arguably one of the most significant works of Blake in the sense that it builds the foundation upon which Blake’s later revolutionary-themed continental prophetic books are based. Affected by the socio-cultural conditions and

events of his time, Blake attacks the very conventional doctrines which he sees as causes of the grave conditions of the people; then initiates his own dialectic of contraries. The gravity of the range of the mythological characters and their significance along with the complex story arcs within the continental prophetic books are direct productions of this very Blakean dialectic flourished in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. It, therefore, holds great vitality within all Blakean texts, since it functions as the root for the later prophetic books. This, the Blakean dialectic, is also the very force that enabled Blake to enter into the “prophetic mode.”



Figure 3: "Plate 24," *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790.

Blake concludes the work by stating: "I have also The Bible of Hell, which the world shall have whether they will or not," (*TMHH* 22-24: 32) which is followed by the illustration of Nebuchadnezzar. Blake presents his own dialectic as "The Bible of Hell," against the established Church's "corrupted" religious doctrines. Beneath the illustration of Nebuchadnezzar, Blake inscribed: "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression." According to Bloom, Blake here gives reference to the biblical prophecy: "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat

grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel 4:33). Blake, here, prophesizes that his "Bible of Hell" will fulfil; and if people are not to mark his words, they will end up like Nebuchadnezzar. Bloom argues that "we are left with the memory of the Voice of the Devil, crying aloud in the desert places of a repressive society, and reminding society that it tempts the fate of Nebuchadnezzar, a fall into dazed bestiality, if it will not heed the warnings of vision." (96). Blake, then, attaches his first visionary work to the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

In the appendage to the *TMHH*, Blake presents his first prophetic work, "A Song of Liberty." Blake's engagement of the revolution within a prophetic mode appears for the first time, reflecting his transition from narrating the history into envisaging the prophecies. The appendage provides introduction to Blake's upcoming continental prophecies. "A Song of Liberty," according to Damon, harbours, though they are not named, the "first telling of the birth of Orc; his rejection by Urizen; the consequent fall of Urizen; his promulgation of the Ten Commandments; and Orc's proclamation of revolution" (*A Blake Dictionary* 383). Orc and Urizen will be the main mythological figures representing respectively energetic chaos and order in later prophetic books. In the "Song," the fires of Orc is defeated by Urizen, and he is cast into darkness. However, "the falling fire makes an ironic appearance on earth as the Revolution, the active springing from energy that seems diabolical to orthodox society" (Bloom 97).

Blake envisages:

1. THE ETERNAL FEMALE groan'd! It was heard over all the Earth.
2. Albion's coast is sick, silent. The American meadows faint!
3. Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers, and mutter across the ocean. France, rend down thy dungeon!
4. Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome!
5. Cast thy keys, O Rome! into the deep, down falling, even to eternity down falling,
6. And weep.
7. In her trembling hands she took the new-born terror, howling.
8. On those infinite mountains of light, now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea, the new-born fire stood before the starry king! (*TMHH* 25:1-8)

The first line indicates the repercussions of the revolution throughout the world. "Albion," England, and America are presented as, respectively, "sick," and "faint," indicating the magnitude of the need for the change. Then, France is told to "rend down" its "dungeon,"

a symbol used to imply the enthrallment of liberty, while Spain to "burn the barriers of old Rome," which is the Catholic Church that has been ruling since the Roman Empire. Blake presents the problems first; the "dungeon" of France is the French monarchy while the "barriers of old Rome" in Spain is the established Church. These are the systems of orders, according to Blake, that enthrall people. Blake, then, presents the solution: "the new-born terror," which, according to Damon, is Blake's revolutionary mythological character, Orc (*A Blake Dictionary* 383). Blake's portrayal of Orc is crucial to comprehend Blake's perception of the revolution as a universal cyclic phenomenon. It is the "terror" that will bring energetic chaos to alter the corrupted order. The figure of chaos, therefore, appears as positive; yet it is needed only when the order is corrupted, indicating Blake's cyclic formula in which dichotomies should replace one another in necessary conditions for the progression. Right after the birth of Orc, Blake makes him "stood before the starry king," Urizen, the mythological character representing the order within Blakean mythopoeia. Urizen, then, "promulgates his ten commands," the conventional doctrines of Judaism and Christianity, to respond Orc. Bloom argues that "[t]he Ten Commandments are set here in the most negative of contexts, and their close association with Empire marks the passage as one of the most antinomian in Blake" (98). Blake, here, indicates the abuse of religious doctrines to guard the corrupted orders within the world, reflecting once again the function of the established Churches. "A Song of Liberty," therefore, is the footsteps of Blake's continental prophetic books, in which he questions the state, and the established Church through using his own dialectic and mythopoeia. The vitality of this appendage lies in the fact that it is Blake's first text in which he approaches to the revolutions with his own system.

Before continuing with the prophetic books, however, presenting an overview of Blakean mythology and mythological characters would be very beneficial to grasp the content of these texts in their relation to Blake's system of thought, for Blake's mythopoeia is immensely titanic and laconic at the same time; and easy to be lost within its altering strata. Blake once stated: "I must create a system or be enslav'd by another man's" (*Jerusalem* 10:20). Thus, this system, consisting of the Blakean dialectic of contraries and his mythopoeia, is a liberating force for Blake. In this system, contrary to the conventional discourses, the dichotomies do not appear in terms of fixed good or evil dichotomy. The goodness and wickedness of the mythological characters, therefore, are conditional and

situational that alter throughout the books. Two main figures that clash with each other within continental prophetic books are Orc, the energetic revolutionary chaos, and Urizen, the domineering force of order, with whom Blake aims to reflect that one counter-part of dichotomies is not enough for progression. The counter-parts need to work in cycles, according to Blake, to achieve harmony and success.

Blake also presents “emanations,” which are “the feminine portion,” or “counterpart,” of “the fundamentally bisexual male,” (*A Blake Dictionary* 141) to indicate the multiplicity of possible features within these mythological characters. In "Introducing to The Blake Model," Adam Komisaruk presents an illuminating chart that shows an interesting function of the emanation characters (92). The main mythological characters, Orc and Urizen in our case, are not only opposed by the forces of one another but also by their own emanations, respectively Ahania and the Shadowy Female, indicating the magnitude of the questioning process within Blake's mythology (Komisaruk 92-95). Enitharmon is another female character, specifically in *Europe, A Prophecy*, that represents the origins of the reason that dominated the world for centuries. Blake merges these mythological characters and actual events in the history of the world while engaging in the theme of the revolution that echoes in the continental prophetic books, chronologically *America, A Prophecy*, *Europe, A Prophecy*, *The Song of Los*.

From *The French Revolution* (1791) to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, (1793) Blake went through not only a political change but also a theological one. Blake's political transition from pacifist revolution to cyclic revolution stemmed these changes. The bloody events of Terror Period led Blake to question his perception of the revolution; and consequently resulted in the initiation of the Blakean dialectic that harbours the cyclic revolution formula. Therefore, Blake's *The French Revolution* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are respectively the products of the early phase of the French Revolution (1789), and The Terror Period (1792-1793). Transition within the Revolution, therefore, is the fundamental driving motif behind Blake's perception of the revolution. The newspapers played key role in the transition of Blake's perception of revolution, for they served as vital sources of information for the poet. The copies of the same newspapers from different years, the indicators of the change of discourse from pro-revolutionary to anti-revolutionary, within newspapers were also in accordance with William Blake's

changing perception of the revolution. The initiation of the Blakean dialectic of contraries is also demonstrated with references to the critical sources, Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, that affected Blake while composing *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Both works, *The French Revolution* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, are highly significant for Blake's later revolution-themed works, for they mirror the very dynamics that gave momentum to the continental prophetic books. Therefore, in the following chapter, the continental prophetic books will be analysed in accordance with Blake's newly developed political demeanour, the cyclic approach, and the system of the Blakean dialectic of contraries.

CHAPTER II

THE SYMPHONY OF CHAOS AND ORDER

In this chapter, the continental prophetic books, *America, A Prophecy* (1793), *Europe, A Prophecy* (1794), *The Song of Los* (1795) respectively, will be analysed in regard to the Blakean dialectic. Blake's reading of the historical events of the American Revolution in *America, A Prophecy*, the change within the French Revolution and political atmosphere of England from 1792 to 1793 in *Europe, A Prophecy*, and the impact of the war-time period on English people along with the matter of 1795 peace negotiations in *The Song of Los* will be illuminated with specific references to the events and the actual figures of the period.

America, A Prophecy, the first prophetic book of the continental prophecies written during Lambeth period⁹, was first printed in 1793. Publishing such revolutionary text, with his name appearing on the first page for the first time, was "an act of defiant courage in 1793, when the counter-revolution was building up, and the government (on May 21) had passed its act against Wicked and Seditious Writings" (Erdman 197). In the light of Bronowski's remarks, it is clear that William Blake was also aware of the gravity of possible consequences of his work, since, in his notebook dated June 1793, he jotted down: "I Shan't live five years, And if I live one it will be a Wonder" (Keynes 187). Blake's insecurity, seen above, mirrors not only the political pressure upon dissenter views by the state during the period but also Blake's inward embracement of *America, A Prophecy* as a revolutionary text, which can be supported by the palpable fact that it is also the first book that was given the title of "Prophecy" by Blake. Foster Damon explains the use of "Prophecy" as follows: "He was no longer attempting to dramatize history, as in *The French Revolution*; instead, he was recording the formula of all revolution, utilizing the American material without regard for chronology" (43).

⁹ Lambeth period books are those written by William Blake between 1790 and 1800, during when Blake lived in the area of Lambeth.

In *America, A Prophecy*, Blake attempted to merge the historical events, though they are not necessarily situated within a chronological order, and his personal mythopoeia. There are contrasting arguments related to the interpretations of the mythological characters, which is connected to the ongoing pressure at the time. Bronowski argues that Blake's use of his mythological characters results from his underlying fear of the state and gives the example that "while he was etching *America*, Blake cancelled a plate in which he had written George III by name" (79). According to Bronowski the change is

deliberate, a disguise. Blake is here calling the forces of the French Revolution Orc, and the forces against the Revolution Rintrah and Palamabron the 'horned priest,' who 'tell Human race that Women's love is Sin.' Blake chose to give these forces such forms, because his mind worked in large and shifting abstraction. But he chose now to call these forms Orc, Rintrah, and Palamabron, because he dared not to call them Lafayette, Pitt, and George III. (79-80)

Bronowski's hypothesis presents Blake's complex mythopoeia as the mere result of Blake's fear of political oppression at the time. Yet, Erdman, contrary to Bronowski, argues that "in his bardic self, Blake remained bold" (139). Erdman also draws attention to the fact that Blake's works "did not reach the awakening citizens who were reading Paine and rushing together in republican societies," (139) reflecting the fact that Blake's works were never influential as revolutionary works of Paine's since they were unknown to the public. Whether the state was aware of Blake and his works is even not known till now. It might possibly be true that Blake altered his works in the period of turmoil and chaos, as seen with the example of George III's name being omitted. However, degrading Blake's system of thought and interpreting it as mere outcome of auto-censorship would be seeing only one aspect of the Blakean world, for the contents of Blakean texts not only harbour the social events and the historical people of his time but also cover the spiritual and idealistic realm of them. The spectrum of characters, observed in his prophetic works, vary so much that only minority of them have real life references such as King of Albion being used instead of George III. Bronowski's hypothesis, in this respect, fails to see Blake's dialectical approach in his mythopoeia; and tries to interpret the texts only with their references to the actual events of history. Harold Bloom also opposes the idea that Blake's *America* is mere outcome of the historical reading of the American Revolution.

The purpose of *America*, according to Bloom, is

to define the forces made manifest in the American Revolution, and to show the significance of that event in the spiritual history of man. He sees in the conflict between the English Government and the Colonies the commencement of the final

struggle between the primal 'Contraries,' Restraint and Passion or Desire, between 'the passive that obeys Reason' and 'the active springing from Energy.' (*William Blake* 159)

Bloom's remark is significant, for it mirrors and underlines the impact of the Blakean dialectic, initiated in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, on *America, a Prophecy*. His system of dialectic is a liberating force for him, since it enables Blake to approach the events and concepts not with conventional doctrines, but rather with his own dialectic of contraries, through which Blake presents the rightness of the sides of the revolution in terms of cycles instead of fixed good or evil dichotomy. This cyclic approach appears for the first time in *America, A Prophecy* as a prophetic book. The cyclic approach, therefore, echoes in the book; and the failure of the American Revolution is presented not only through the actual events but also with the failure of the cycles of the eternal forces.

The book, *America, A Prophecy*, is divided into two parts; "Preludium," and "A Prophecy." The "Preludium" part, also to be continued in *Europe, A Prophecy*, gives "a fragment of the myth of Orc: his reaching the age of potency, breaking his fetters, and embracing the Shadowy Female," (Damon 43) the nameless daughter of Urthona¹⁰. The age of potency, in this context, is highly significant, since Blake underlines that it took "fourteen suns," fourteen years, for Orc to reach maturity and break his fetters. This is also exactly the same period between the publication date of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762), in which he argued "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains," and the Declaration of Independence (1776-1777) (Erdman 239). Blake's analysis of the American Revolution, therefore, indicates that Blake also agreed to Rousseau's idea of man, innately free, yet socially in chains; yet he believed that it was to be changed by the ideals harboured in the Declaration of Independence. In Blake's mythopoeia, Urizen is the force that chained humanity from the very beginning while Orc being the liberating force; and the American Revolution, in this context, is the historical phase that reveals the spiritual maturity of human potential to liberate the fetters (Erdman 239-240). Addressed to Orc, the Shadowy Female states: "On my American plains I feel the struggling afflictions / Endur'd by roots that writhe their arms into the nether deep,"

¹⁰ "Urthona ("earth owner") is the northern Zoa, the creative Imagination of the Individual" (Damon 430).

(*America, A Prophecy* 2: 10-11) indicating that she is the embodiment of America and her embracement of Orc implies that “America has become mature enough to shake off its dependence on England” (Frye 180) as well as America’s desire to merge with revolutionary energy against the corrupted and abusive order created by Albion’s¹¹ angel, Urizen¹². The Shadowy Female’s speech indicates that the time, cycle, of Orc’s revolution has come for America, since America suffers from the corrupted order that allowed slavery, the abuse of people, and the apotheosis.

The latter part of the book, “*A Prophecy*,” merges the eternal clash between revolutionary energy, personified in Orc, and corrupted order, personified in Urizen, with the actual historical events and figures of the American Revolution. According to S. Foster Damon, Blake had direct references to the actual events, among which was the Boston Massacre of 1770; which had a reference in the first plate of the “*A Prophecy*” as follows: “the coast glowing with blood from Albion’s fiery Prince” (*A Blake Dictionary* 384). Just after the reference to the Massacre, Blake gives voice to one of the leading figures of the American Revolution, George Washington;

Washington spoke: “Friends of America! look over the Atlantic sea;
A bended bow is lifted in Heaven, and a heavy iron chain
Descends, link by link, from Albion’s cliffs across the sea, to bind
Brothers and sons of America; till our faces pale and yellow,
Heads depress’d, voices weak, eyes downcast, hands work-bruis’d,
Feet bleeding on the sultry sands, and the furrows of the whip
Descend to generations, that in future times forget. (*America, A Prophecy* 6-12)

Washington’s warning speech, though “it occurs in a non-historical meeting,” (Damon 43) is significant, for it expresses a personal account of prudence and caution against the threat of rising tyranny, personified in Urizen. Actual and mythological characters go hand-in-hand within the interwoven story structure of mythology and actual history to

¹¹ Albion is “the poetical old name for England” (Damon 33).

¹² There are two different theories related to the origin of the name, “Urizen.” According to Damon, the translation as “Your Reason” is plausible, since it is “a derivation quite characteristic of Blake, who continually used semi-conscious puns” (423). However, “Kathleen Raine and others prefer to derive it from the Greek (“to limit”), which is the root of the English “horizon” (423). The problem with the latter argument, however, is that it assumes Blake knew Greek, which is another debatable issue, since the only document available is solely Frederick Tatham’s letter to Frances Harvey dated 8 June 1864, in which Tatham claims Blake had numerous books from different languages, including French, Latin, Italian, Hebrew, and Greek (Bentley 243).

unleash the universal values of the revolution. The repressive Urizenic party includes the King of England, also presented as “the Guardian Prince of Albion,” and angels, “used ironically to denote acceptance of the normal moral, civil, and religious codes” (*William Blake* 160). The revolutionary party consists of “the souls of warlike men,” Washington, Franklin, Paine, and of course Orc, the leader of the revolution. The portrayal of Orc as a character is quite vagarious, for Blake presents two contrasting images of Orc. The first one, the revolutionary side’s view, is the liberator of mankind while to Urizenic party he is the “Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities, Lover of wild rebellion and transgressor of God’s Law” (*William Blake* 160). Just like Blake portrays the concept of the revolution from two contrasting perspectives, the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, in *The French Revolution*, the revolutionary spirit, Orc, in *America, A Prophecy* is also portrayed from two contrasting views. However, Orc, here, is accompanied by the actual figures of the American Revolution here. After the cautionary speech of Washington, Orc appears and furthers Washington’s speech into a new level by stating:

The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
 The grace is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
 The bones of death, the cov’ring clay, the sinews shrunk and dry’d
 Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing, awakening,
 Spring like redeemèd captives, when their bonds and bars are burst,
 Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field,
 Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air;
 Let the enchained soul, shut up in darkness and in sighing,
 Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
 Rise and look out; his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open;
 And let his wife and children return from the oppressor’s scourge.
 They look behind at every step, and believe it is a dream,
 Singing: “The Sun has left his blackness, and has found a fresher morning,
 And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear and cloudless night;
 For Empire is no more, and now the Lion and Wolf shall cease. (*America, A Prophecy* 6:1-15)

Orc’s speech indicates that people should not only awaken to the abuse and exploit of England but also should rebel and resist against them. In other words, the speech, started by Washington, an actual person, is finished by Orc, a mythological character; which reveals the fact that Blake not only tells the saga of American Revolution but also the spiritualistic strata of the events, drawing codes for the universal revolution in *America, A Prophecy*. The uses of natural imagery, “The morning” coming and “the night” decaying, is there to support the idea that the revolution is needed as a natural cycle to

change bitter conditions, created by the order. In his previous work, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake focuses on the problems within the established order, mainly within institutionalized religion and corrupted state; and offers his dialectic of contraries, through which he presents the cycles as solutions. The merging of the actual people and mythological characters in *America, A Prophecy* is the result of this approach.

Two plates later, Orc takes the scene again and answers who he is and his role for the revolution:

The Terror answer'd: 'I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursèd tree:
The times are ended; shadows pass, the morning' gins to break;
the fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands
What night he led the starry hosts thro' the wide wilderness,
That stony Law I stamp to dust; and scatter Religion abroad
To the four winds as a torn book, and none shall gather the leaves;
But they shall rot on desert sands, and consume in bottomless deeps. (*America* 8:1-17)

Orc, according to Bloom, identifies “his release and the subsequent start of the American Revolution with the resurrection of Jesus” (*Blake's Apocalypse* 123). Orc's disentanglement from his fetters is an act of self-liberation. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake implies his view on Orc as a liberator like Jesus; “I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments...Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules” (24: 22-24). Urizen, the symbol of the rules and the law, perverted the ten commands, and it is revolutionary Orc, who like Jesus Christ act from impulses, will end the reign of the perverted Ten Commandments (Roberts 110). Orc, in this context, therefore can be associated with Jesus Christ. Orc's speech indicates that he appears as a rebellious power who has capacity to revolutionize the corrupted order created by Urizen while Urizen is portrayed as the one who “perverted to ten commands,” indicating the exploitation of the religion by the authorities within the system. In return Urizen alarms: Sound! sound My loud war-trumpets, & alarm my Thirteen Angels,” (*America, A Prophecy* 8:1) which, according to Damon, represent the thirteen colonies of United States of America (43). However, “Silent the Colonies remain and refuse the loud alarm” (*America, A Prophecy* 10:4). Boston's angel, the leader angel of thirteen colonies' angels, states: “no more I follow, no more obedience Pay,” (*America, A Prophecy* 11:15) indicating how the colonies, affected by the revolutionary energy of Orc, “[s]haked their mental chains” (*America, A Prophecy* 13:3). The thirteen colonies represent the people

of America, and their embracement of Orc indicates that they also believe the cycle of revolution, chaos, needs to take place to alter the corrupted order.

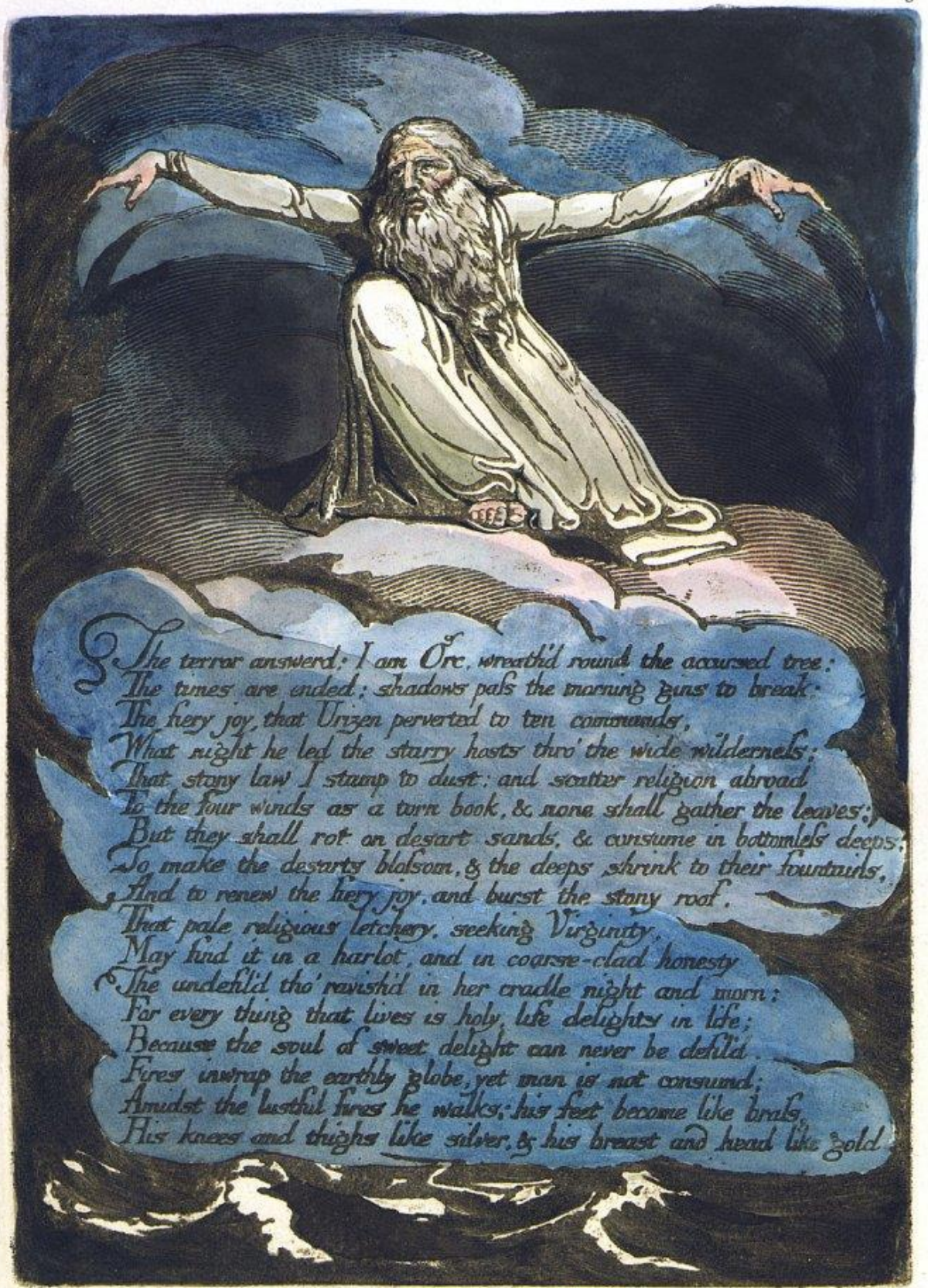


Figure 4: "Plate 10," *America A Prophecy* (1795 issue)

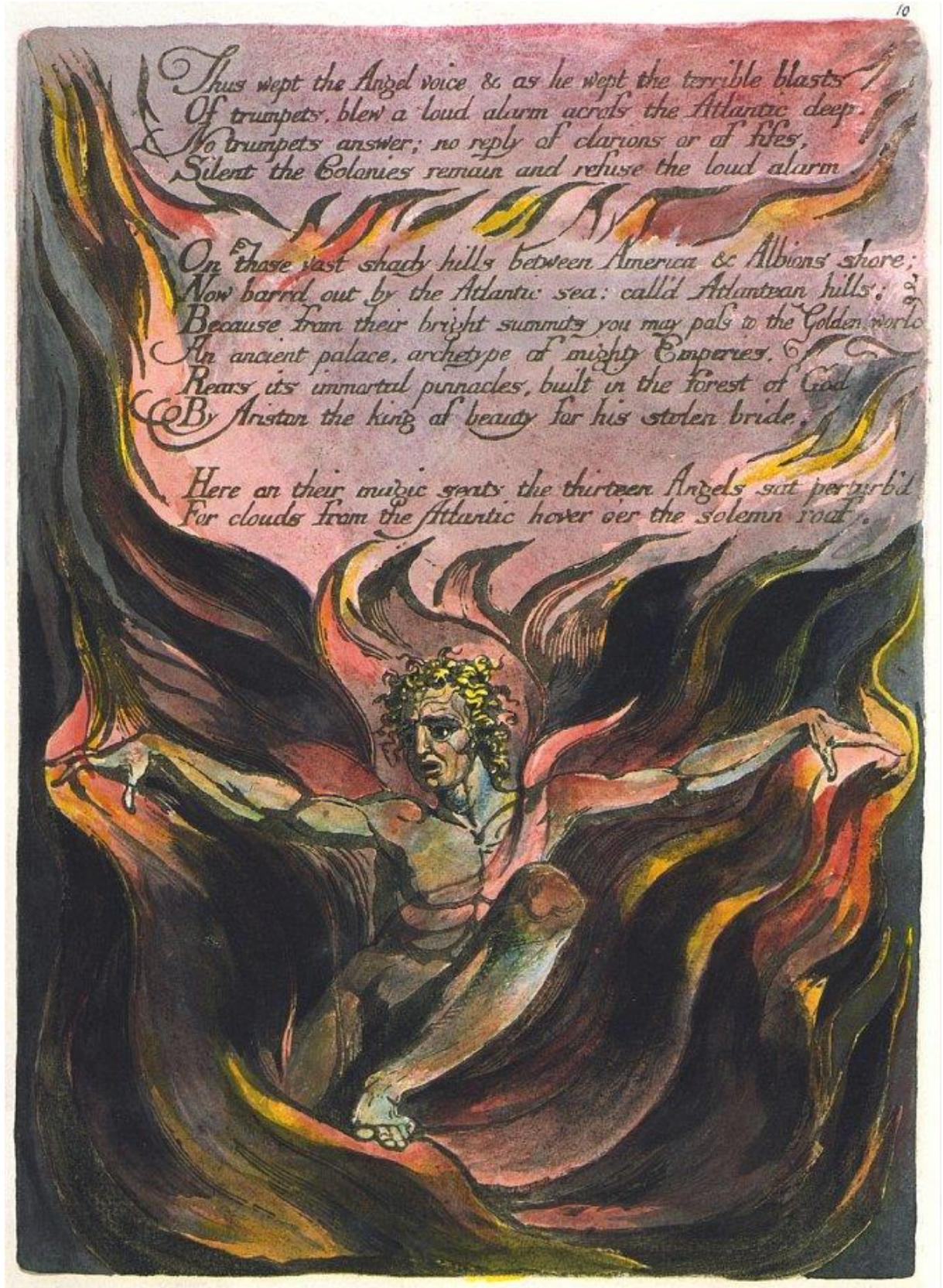


Figure 5: "Plate 12," *America, A Prophecy* (1795 issue)

Thus wept the Angel voice & as he wept the terrible blast
 Of trumpets, blew a loud alarm across the Atlantic deep.
 No trumpets answer; no reply of clarions or of fifes,
 Silent the Colonies remain and refuse the loud alarm.

On those vast shady hills between America & Albions shore;
 Now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea; call'd Atlantean hills:
 Because from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden world
 An ancient palace, archetype of mighty Empires,
 Rears its immortal pinnacles, built in the forest of God
 By Arcton the king of beauty for his stolen bride.

Here on their magic seats the thirteen Angels sat perturb'd
 For clouds from the Atlantic hover o'er the solemn roof.



Figure 6: "Plate 12," *America, A Prophecy* (1821 issue)

Blake ironically puts the speech of Orc under the figure of Urizen in “Plate 10,” (Fig: 4) and the weeping of Urizen above the figure of Orc in “Plate 12” (Fig: 5). The uses of the colours as symbols of revolution and order are quite eye-catching. Bloom explains that

one of the most constant features of the symbolism of the Lambeth books from *America* onwards is the association of the imagery of fire and flame with the spirit of ardent passion and desire, which is Orc, while the mythical embodiments of the contrary forces of moral and political tyranny, e.g. Urizen and Albion’s Angel, are represented as cold demons of cloud and mist. (*William Blake* 161)

Blake’s decision of putting contrasting figures above the speeches of these characters may result from the idea that illustrations that accompany the text are not necessarily in accordance with the content of the text. The purpose of these illustrations perhaps is to illustrate the reaction of the contrasting forces to the speeches below them. Figure 4 indicates that Urizen tries to quench Orc’s blazing revolutionary speech with his cold clouds while Figure 5 portrays Orc’s revolutionary fires’ struggle to torrefy the cold speech of Urizen (Stauffer 39). The symbolism of the mythological characters in terms of colours hints Blake’s perception of Orc and Urizen as respectively refreshing energy and enervating restraint. Blake describes the both sides of the American Revolution in detail in terms of both actual characters from history and his mythology; and specifies the characters and their sides before action in the text begins.

Figure 5 and 6 are the same illustrations from different years, 1795 and 1821 respectively. The transition in Blake’s use of the colours and the portrayal of Orc marks Blake’s altering views on the idea of the revolution, embodied in Orc. Figure 5 was produced after the Terror Period; and Orc, the revolutionary spirit, therefore was portrayed as the spirit reigning over the dark flames. The choice of colour, according to Viscomi, indicates Blake’s acknowledgement of the negative events that took place in France; thus the “darkened” revolutionary fires (90). The 1821 edition of the illustration, however, presents brighter flames and younger Orc. Blake, after witnessing the negative conditions of the post-war period in England, still believed that the revolution was the only way for progression (Viscomi 99-101). In this respect, the alterations within the illustrations are also the indicators of the transition that Blake went through.

After everyone chooses their sides, the war outbreaks. Blake gives the accounts of the citizens in the war too;

The angry shores; and the fierce rushing of th' inhabitants together!
 The citizens of New York close their anchors and unlade;
 The scribe of Pennsylvania vests his pen upon the earth;
 The builder of Virginia throws his hammer down in fear
 Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic,
 And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite
 But all rush together in the night in wrath and raging dire. (*America, A Prophecy*
 14: 13-19)

It is quite clear that people of America chose Orc as their side. "New York," "Pennsylvania," and "Virginia," major three colonies from the north to the south, reflect the embracement of the revolution by the American citizens. "Atlantic" stands for Britain; thus the clash between American citizens and Britain is portrayed as the clash of cycles of chaos, the desire of the Americans, and order, the command of Britain. This also indicates Blake's discontent with the then-current forces, the established church and the oppressive state that dominate Britain at the time. Blake's treatment of the angels as the military force of the counter-revolutionary side, Britain, indicates that the established religion is also anti-revolutionary. The angels, generally portrayed by the religious doctrines as positive figures, appear as a negative force that tries to annihilate the will of people.

Urizen responds to the fires of Orc and the revolt of Americans with sheer stance, by sending the plagues from the heavens. Americans, then, "cast their swords & spears to earth, & stood a naked multitude" (*America, A Prophecy* 15:5). Erdman sees this line as "ritual sacrifice of men and women to attain freedom, peace, and good harvests" (232). Blake showed that the Americans fought against the Urizenic forces with their best; however, against plagues of the angels, mere humans cannot oppose. What is underlined here is against a destructive force that cannot be defeated, Americans still do not yield and sacrifice their lives for the idea of freedom. Orc, however, continued clashing with his fire. "The doors of marriage," says Blake, "are open," (*America, A Prophecy* 15:19) indicating the possibility for the success. Blake's use of the word, "marriage," is vital here since Blake gives reference to the marriage that he explained in his *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. For Blake, progression could only be gained through the cycles of the counter-parts; thus with their marriage. Since the "doors of marriage are open," Blake

shows the possibility of the change within cycles; that Orc could overtake Urizen. Even the possibility of the marriage results with “the Priests, in rustling scales, / Rush into reptile coverts” (*America, A Prophecy* 15:19-20). Blake’s portrayal of priests as “in rustling scales” indicates his negative approach towards the established church and its relation to the corrupted order, because the marriage will give an end to this corrupted era. Blake, then, portrays the impact of the marriage on the revolutionary side;

For the Female Spirits of the dead, pining in bonds of religion,
Run from their fetters; reddening, and in long-drawn arches sitting,
They feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of ancient times
Over their pale limbs, as a vine when the tender grape appears. (*America, A Prophecy* 15:23-26)

It enables the female to embrace the long forgotten desires, due to the oppression of the established church since they are pined “in the bonds of religion.” These desires are depicted as “of ancient times,” reflecting not only the fact that it was once a part of humanity before the established religion but also the fact that women were also the victims of the oppression of the established church.

Urizen, however, supersedes the marriage, thus the change of the cycle, by intervening the fires of Orc through unleashing “his stored snows” and “icy magazines” (*America* 16:9). Blake here presents the clash of cycles of chaos and order, Orc and Urizen, with the metaphors of respectively fire and ice, explained by Frye as: “Urizen has the counter-revolutionary colour white and Orc is a revolutionary red; Urizen is therefore associated with sterile winter, bleaching bones, and clouds; Orc with summer, blood, and the sun” (*Frye on Milton and Blake* 342). Eventually, Urizen becomes victorious over Orc; and the alterations of cycles fail. Blake explains it as “Angels and weak men twelve years should govern o’er the strong / And then their end should come, when France receiv’d the Demon’s light” (*America* 16:14-15). The reference to France and “weak men” governing America for “twelve years” indicates that Blake gives reference to the Declaration of Independence in 1777 which took place twelve years before the French Revolution, 1789, reflecting that the quenched fires of Orc will be reborn in France, when “France receiv’d the Demon’s light.”

Blake’s approach towards the American Revolution and its aftermath may seem quite unexpected, for the Americans became victorious over the Britain in the revolution, yet

Blake portrays it as a failure. This results from the fact that the cycle, according to Blake, could not take place there. The major reason behind this is the fact that after the revolution, America did not abolish slavery, which according to Blake was one of the greatest calamities of his time. Revolution as a cycle, for Blake, was an act of liberating force to break all the fetter of detaining dynamics, which harbours not only the worldly chains but also that of mental ones. Secondly, Washington's acts, though they may seem as the liberating forces of freedom, could not break these mental chains. Moreover, he himself became a mental chain since people apotheosised him. Therefore, the system of order that Blake found problematic in America continued its existence with a new form. This proves that Blake not only focuses on narrating histories in his prophetic books but also the spiritual dimension of events. The survival of slavery and the initiation of the apotheosis after gaining independence from Britain, according to Blake, were two fundamental problems that prevented the change of the cycle in America. Blake's unorthodox dialectical reading of the American Revolution indicates his cyclic approach towards the events. The chaos, as a cycle, could not create enough impact to alter America and the Americans. However, Blake stresses that the quenched fires of Orc will be reborn in France, since "France received the Demon's light," reflecting the continuation of the theme of revolution in *Europe, A Prophecy*. The interest of *America*, according to Bloom, lies

not in its range of ideas, as no new idea of value is developed, nor can it compare for vigour and quickness of mind with the *Marriage*. But perhaps better even than *The French Revolution* it shows how the outlines of events and personalities are modified and their aspects transformed as they were merged into the substance of Blake's dreams. As a foot-note to history its value is inconsiderable, but for the light it sheds on the workings of the mind of the mystic it is perhaps first among the non-lyrical works. (*William Blake* 162)

America, A Prophecy is Blake's first prophetic book that reveals Blake's interpretation of the events in terms of his dialectic. It is indeed true that Blake gives historical references throughout *America*; however what is most significant about it is the very Blakean dialectic approach towards the events, which is to be continued in the following continental prophetic books.

Europe, A Prophecy, is the second prophetic book that belongs to the continental prophecies, along with *America, A Prophecy*, *The Song of Los*. Written in 1794, precisely one year after *America, A Prophecy*, *Europe, A Prophecy* succeeds the theme of the clash

between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces. Europe is not only centred on the events in the French Revolution and England from 1792 to 1793 but also the spiritual realm of them. Related to the content of *Europe*, Erdman argues that

no where is Blake's symbolism more cryptic; nowhere do so many new characters appear in such fleeting contexts; nowhere is there such sly shifting from one level of discourse to another, such difficulty with ambiguities of punctuation and sudden change of pace. (194)

In *Europe*, Blake's mythopoeia and his history narration is indeed merged so intensely that it is a hard task to differentiate pure mythology from historical narration. Blake, just like in *America, A Prophecy*, focuses on the clash between the eternal forces of chaos and order, through which he subverts the dominant discourses, specifically the fallacies of the religion, in this book. However, he also gives lots of references to the political events of the period within the text and the illustrations.

The opening of *Europe, A Prophecy* "reveals the decline of the poet-prophet Los¹³ and rise of the priestly patriarchal deity Urizen" (*The Politics of Apotheosis* 138-139). Urizen is "unloos'd from chains" and all the "spirits of life" (*Europe*, 4:12) that belonged to Los are seized by the sons of Urizen while Orc also arises from "deep den" (*Europe*, 4:24). Blake, here, indicates that the clash between revolutionary Orc and restraining Urizen in *America, A Prophecy* is to be continued in *Europe, A Prophecy*. Then Enitharmon¹⁴ calls Rintrah and Palamabron¹⁵ to "have dominion" on earth. She orders;

Go! tell the Human race that Woman's love is Sin;
That Eternal life awaits the woems of sixty winters,
In an allegorical abode, where existence hath never come.
Forbid all Joy; and, from her childhood, shall the little Female
Spreads nets in every secret path. (*Europe* 5: 5-9)

Here, Enitharmon creates a religious fallacy that women's love is sin, which binds and fetters the liberty of people. However, she also promises a trophy, "Eternal life," at the end for anyone who endures to walk in that path. "Forbidding all Joy; and...shall the little

¹³ Within the context of early Blakean mythopoeia; it changes in Four-Zoas period, Los is the father of Orc and is "the prophet of eternity, who reveals the basic truths." (*A Blake Dictionary*, 259).

¹⁴ Enitharmon is the emanation of Los, who is also the mother of Orc. "Her name has been derived from the Greek anarithmon ("numberless") or from (z)enith plus (h)armon(y)" (*A Blake Dictionary* 144).

¹⁵ Rintrah and Palambron, two children of Los and Enitharmon, implement the orders of Enitharmon and follow the Urizenic order.

Female spreads nets in every secret path" indicates the reign of the "female will, which attempts to ensnare the male in a web of religion woven out of sexual repression" (Clayton 1). She, then, orders Rintrah to "bring the lovely jealous Ocalythron," indicating that Enitharmon promotes the jealousy, which is also a binding and fettering state, to rule within the world. Blake reflects how the truths presented by the conventional religious doctrines enthrall people by offering rewards.

All of the religious aspect of the text, till now, gets visibly crystallized in the next plate:

Enitharmon slept
 Eighteen hundred years. Man was a dream,
 The night of Nature and their haps unstrung!
 She slept in middle of her nightly song
 Eighteen hundred years, a Female dominion (*Europe* 9: 1-5)

Blake specifically uses "Eighteen hundred years" to indicate that the French Revolution took place almost eight hundred years after the birth of the Christianity, thus its doctrines. The binding orders of Enitharmon, therefore, are actually the binding theology of the official Christianity that ruled over the world till the outburst of the revolution, which is also vitally important since it indicates that Blake believed that the liberating power of the revolution could unchain the fetters tethered by Christianity. Humanity's reduction to Enitharmon's dream is unveiled as a phantasmagoria:

Shadows of men in fleeting bands upon the winds
 Divide the heavens of Europe
 Till Albion's Angel, smitten with his own plagues, fled with his bands.
 The cloud bears hard on Albion's shore,
 Fill'd with immortal demons of futurity:
 In council gather the smitten Angels of Albion;
 The cloud bears hard upon the council house, down rushing
 On the heads of Albion's Angels. (*Europe* 9:6-13)

Blake's *Europe*, here, turns into a historical narrative in which he describes the impacts of the revolution in France on England. The historical events, in this context, are portrayed through characters from the Blakean mythopoeia. The readers are given the knowledge that heavens of Europe divided, indicating that the liberating chaos, Orc, rushed to burn down the detaining harmony created by the order of Enitharmon, the doctrines of official Christianity. The cloud, "fill'd with immortal demons of futurity," (*Europe* 9:11) attacks Albion's shore, England's territory. The cloud, then, crushes the "council house," filled with Albion's angels. The fundamental issue here lies within the clash between what the cloud and Albion's angels represent. "The satiric aspect of history

as Enitharmon's dream," according to Bloom, "centres on the cyclic irony of eternal recurrence, a mere repetition of events that blurs all differences between Angels and Demons" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 152). Though it is "blurry," within the general context of the prophetic books, the demons and devilish characters are revolutionary figures desiring the change, while the angelic figures long for the steady and balanced order. In the previous plates of *Europe*, shown above, the order is achieved through the orders of Enitharmon, the will of the female. Albion's angels, therefore, are the guardians of these order, which became discursive truths for people. The clouds, when interpreted in analogy with Enitharmon's binding discourse, are the liberating forces that will unchain humankind from the fetters tethered by Christianity. As for the "council house," Blake's portrayal of the house in affiliation with the guardian angels indicates his individual thoughts on what the council stands for. Council itself is an illusion of freedom, for it is nothing but a mechanism that works for the survival of the system of order, which, according to Blake, detains the liberty of people. The depiction of the council house filled with Albion's angels, guardians of the corrupted and binding order, therefore, indicates Blake's view on council not as a mechanism that gives voice to the unheard people, but rather silences and enthrals them. Blake, here, unveils the bond forged between the established church and the state once again to indicate the very sources of enthrallment. Thus, the demolition of the council, while Albion's angels are situated within it, reflects the fall of both the doctrines of religion, since the angels are crushed, and discursive ideology of the state itself (Adams 89-90). Blake constantly gives references to "Albion," England, as the background of the events. Therefore, the events, revolutionary "cloud bearing hard on Albion's shore," the crushing of the council" are metaphorical images of the impact of the French Revolution on England. What is significant here is the fact that Blake presents the state and the established Church as the two main forces that are exposed to the attacks by the influential forces of the French Revolution, reflecting Blake's perception of these two dynamics as the sources of the problems within England.

In the next plate, "Plate 10," the crushed angels of Albion "rose from bright ruins...following the Fiery King," (*Europe*, 10:1-2) indicates that they survive with the help of the King. The image of King here is vitally important since it demonstrates the fact that the King does not want Albion's angels to fade away, for their existence strengthens his position as the King. The very order of Enitharmon that defies the liberty

of people, in terms religion and politics as seen above, is beneficial for the King, since the religion and the state, according to Blake, are two merged fundamental cores to detain the liberty of people.

Then Urizen is seen by Albion's angel;

[...] He Saw Urizen on the Atlantic;
And his brazen Book,
That Kings and Priests had copied on Earth,
Expanded from North to South. (*Europe* 11: 2-5)

It is indicated that Urizen's book had been copied by the kings and priests on earth, indicating that the world, till the eighteenth century, had been dominated by Urizen and his brazen book, his law. King and priest, respectively the state and the religion, are again used in the same parameter: enthralling people with fallacies that are shown as the models of truth. "The brazen book," according to Bloom, "is the Bible of Heaven, and the copies of it are the codes of kingdoms and churches, expanding from imaginative origins to systems of intellectual error" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 153). The influence of Bible "expanded" all throughout the earth, "from North to South," just like the brazen book of Urizen; and was manipulated by "kings" and "priests" for their sole purpose of controlling people. Blake, beginning from *America, A Prophecy*, continues to present the state and the established church as one single group. Blake's repetitive use of this group as the source of enthrallment of liberty is vitally important since it, according to Blake, is the fundamental force beneath the grave condition of the world during his period. Figure 7, the illustration of "Plate 11," also reveals the religious context of the text, since "[a]bove, obscured by clouds, sits Albion's Angel in the form of a fat canting priest, his book open upon his knees, the triple-crown of Pope" (*Blake's Humanism* 128) is on his head. The image of Pope's distinct crown on Urizen's head is specifically significant, as an analogy of using books, Bible in the case of Pope, and brazen book for Urizen, to control people is implied.



Figure 7: "Plate 11," *Europe, A Prophecy*

Urizen's response to the crushing of the council with his brazen book can also be interpreted as England's counter-revolutionary oppression towards the dissenters beginning from 1792.

For Urizen unclasp'd his Book, feeding his soul with pity.
 The youth of England, hid in gloom, curse the pain'd heavens, compell'd
 Into the deadly night to see the form of Albion's Angel.
 Their parents brought them forth, and Agèd Ignorance preaches, canting,
 On a vast rock, perceiv'd by those senses that are clos'd from thought—
 Bleak, dark, abrupt it stands, and overshadows London city.
 They saw his bony feet on the rock, the flesh consum'd in flames;
 They saw the Serpent temple lifted above, shadowing the Island white;
 They heard the voice of Albion's Angel, howling in flames of Orc,
 Seeking the trump of the Last Doom. (*EU* 12: 4-13)

Blake indicates the British attempt to oppress the revolutionary dissenters, “the youth of England,” within England. What is more significant here, however, is “the youth” being pushed forward by their parents, reflecting Britain's attempt to “shut the gates of the minds of the youth of England and to condition them for the terrors of the approaching Armageddon,” (Erdman 193) the war against revolutionary France. In *London Chronicle*, dated May 24, 1792, it is reported that “little encampment on Bagshot Heath” was formed for the study of new Prussian manoeuvres recently introduced into the British army, “not from the most distant idea of any armament being this time requisite on the part of Great Britain” (1). Blake knew that the British parliament and the king were ready to declare war on the revolutionary France even before the execution of the Louis XVI; and they were preparing for the “Last Doom.” *The Evening Mail*, dated 13 June 1792, reports that

the Military Evolutions to be performed at Camp at Bagshot proceed upon the supposition that an army of enemies, amounting to 20.000, had landed at Southampton. Upon that supposition a variety of skirmishes are to take place in different situations, calculated to afford a display of much dexterity and manoeuver. The whole to conclude on the 27th with a grand attack, at which their Majesties, and the Royal Family are to be present. (4)

All these military trainings were intended to prepare the youth of England for the war. Blake reflected this bitter reality as the “parents brought them,” the youth of England, “forth.” The newspapers were dominated by these kind of news related to military camps happening throughout the country, which also “overshadowed London city” prepared the minds of the English people for the war. “Thus was the howl thro' Europe,” (*EU*, “12: 21) states Blake to reflect the rise of the bellicist atmosphere in Europe. Blake also indicates that there were “howling shadows,” (*EU* 12: 22) revolutionary dissenters,

against howls of the war. However, “Palamabron show his lightnings” and “Rintrah hung with all his legions” (*EU* 12: 23-24) against anti-war company. The name of Palamabron, according to Erdman, is “Parliament’s Bromion” (201). In this context, siding Palamabron with a warlike party indicates that Blake saw Pitt’s parliament as bellicist. William Pitt, the prime minister, according to Erdman, is represented with the furious character, Rintrah, in *Europe, A Prophecy* (195). The attacks of Palamabron and Rintrah towards the anti-war propaganda, therefore, indicates the oppression of the parliament and the prime minister respectively (Erdman 190). Blake’s *Europe*, as a historical narrative, is a rich source in shedding light on the background of the eighteenth century. It was the revolutionary France that declared war on Britain; yet Britain, as Blake indicates, was already preparing for war even before the execution of the Louis XVI. Pitt himself, the day before the execution of Louis the XVI, told his High Chancellor that “war was a decided measure, that... it was inevitable, and that the sooner it was begun the better” (Harris 501).

Blake’s visual portrayal of Rintrah in the illustrations of *Europe* also indicates how Blake situated William Pitt in the political arena of the eighteenth century. Figure 8, “Plate 7,” shows that Rintrah is surrounded by not one queen but actually two queens; possibly the queens of France and England “Bearing scepters tipped with the fleur-de-lis,” according to Erdman, is “commonly used in English caricature prints as a French royalist symbol” (205). Rintrah, in this context, defends the queens of both France and England which indicates Blake’s approach towards Pitt as the defender of the royal dynasties instead of siding himself with the common people. Secondly, Rintrah is holding a crusader’s sword. Reading the illustration in analogy with Blake’s annotations on Watson may clear what the illustration actually aimed to indicate. Blake argued that Pitt’s actions were the “English crusade against France” (Keynes 385). Rintrah’s crusader sword, therefore, can be interpreted as Pitt’s so-called “holy war” against the revolutionary France. *The Observer*, dated 03 February 1793, reports a speech of a parliamentarian about “the present war against France was in the nature of a Crusade; for an Hon. Member had read in this House the speech of DUPONT, in which he avows atheism...and we were about to make war on them for the purpose of bringing them back to the true faith” (4). The parliament presented the war against the revolutionary France as the holy duty against the

atheism. Blake's illustration of Rintrah, Pitt, is in accordance with this very presentation of the war as a crusade.

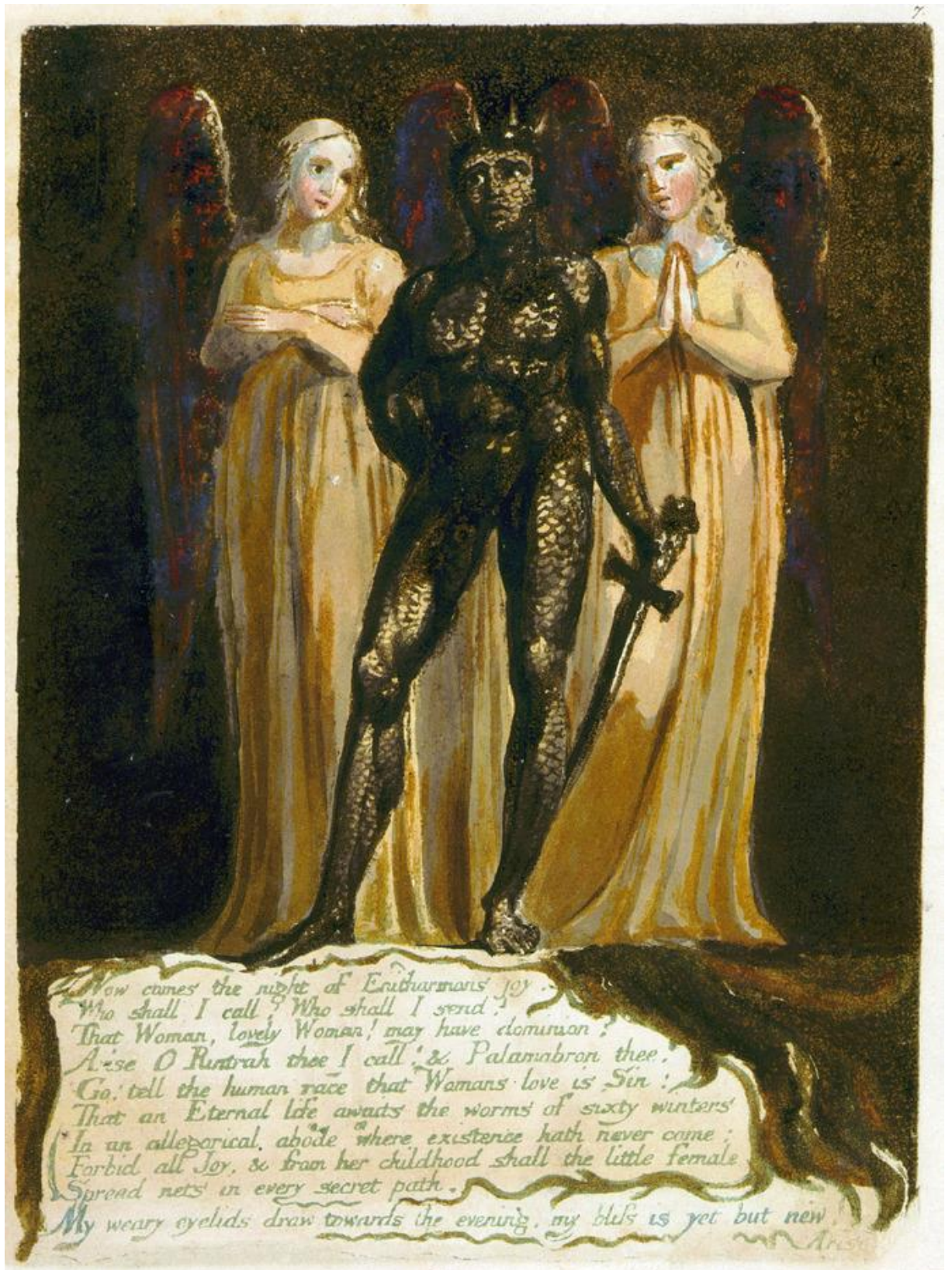


Figure 8: "Plate 7," *Europe, A Prophecy*

One other illustration in *Europe* that is relevant to the political events of the period is Figure 9, “Plate 3,” which shows a daggered figure lurking in a cave like place to backstab another figure. This, according to Erdman, is a reference to a speech in the house in which Burke threw down a dagger to the floor (202). On 28 December 1792, Burke delivered a speech on Aliens Bill; and threw a dagger to the floor and exclaimed: “This is what you are to gain by an alliance with France” and continued his war-inciting arguments (Lock 439). Blake’s treatment of this event in his illustration, however, is quite ironic. It is Burke himself who lurks with dagger in a cave, which according to Damon is a metaphor for the Parliament, and ready to stab an innocent pilgrim (59). Blake portrays Burke as a sneaky negative figure ready to backstab people for his own profits. This is a direct criticism towards the political order of England during 1794. Blake presents the counter-revolutionary force in England as totally negative. The counter-revolutionary discourse presented the revolutionaries as devilish figures; yet it is them that appear as evils in the illustrations of *Europe*, reflecting Blake’s perception of the counter-revolutionary side as malicious (Damon 61-62). Blake’s illustrations, therefore, mirror the counter-revolutionary dynamics in England. Both of the illustrations of Pitt, Rintrah, and Burke, lurking figure, indicate how intensely the mythology of Blake is merged with the political history of the eighteenth century.

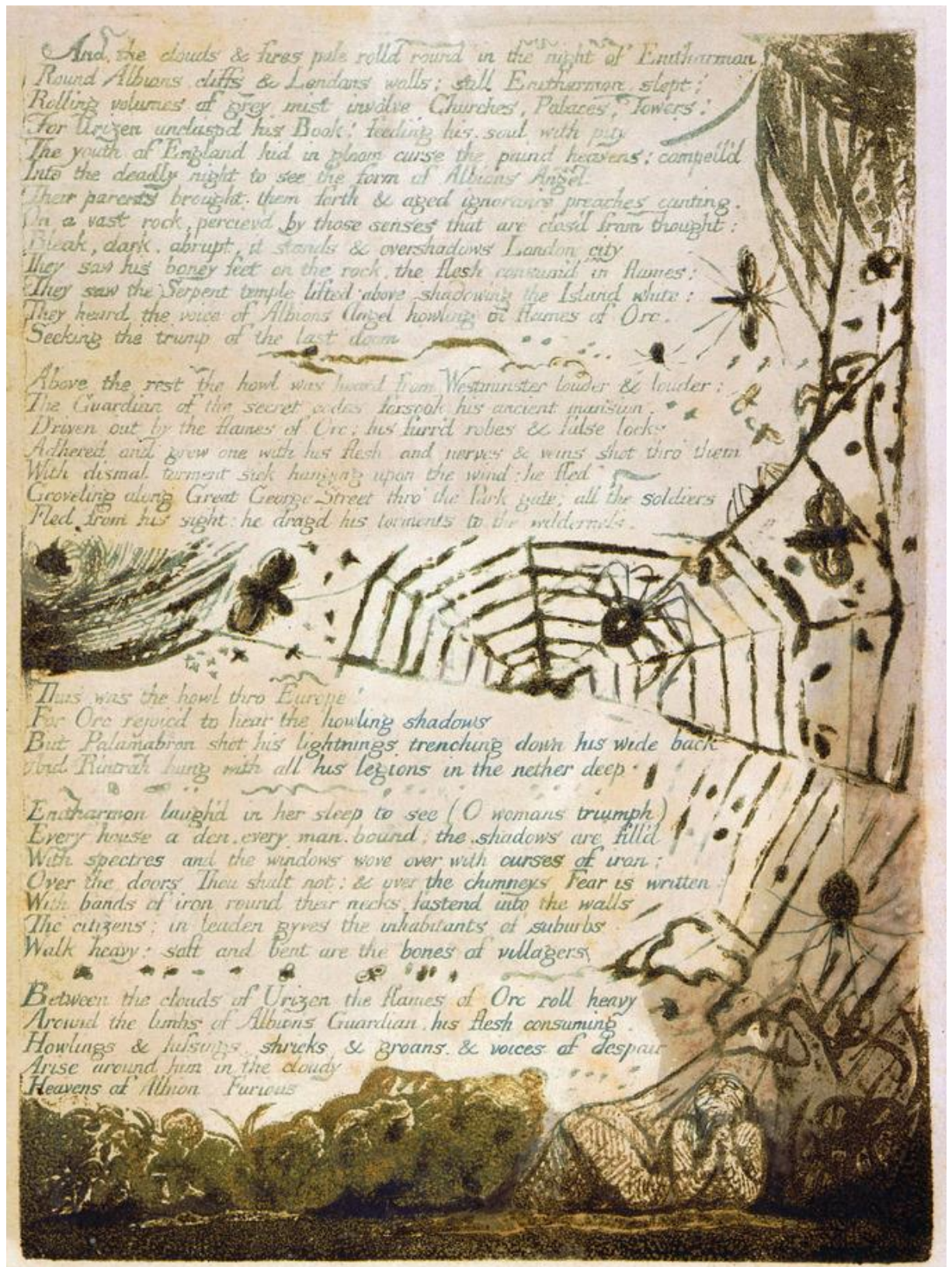


Figure 9: "Plate 3," *Europe, A Prophecy*

After presenting the furious attacks of Palamabron, the Parliament, and Rintrah, Pitt, Blake continues on demonstrating the negative impacts of these attacks on common Londoners:

Enitharmon laugh'd in her sleep to see (O woman's triumph!)
 Every house a den, every man bound: the shadows are fill'd
 With spectres, and the windows wove over with curses of iron:
 Over the doors 'Thou shalt not', and over the chimneys 'Fear' is written:
 With bands of iron round their necks fasten'd into the walls
 The citizens, in leaden gyves the inhabitants of suburbs
 Walk heavy; soft and bent are the bones of villagers. (EU 12: 25-31)

The fear of the revolution spreading to England made Pitt's government to "suppress opposition of all kinds" (Mee 134). What is significant here, however, is the fact that the negative impacts of the Parliament and Pitt, "[e]very house" turning into "a den," and "every man" getting "bound," give joy to Enitharmon, the embodiment of the established church within the Blakean mythopoeia. In other words, the negative actions of the Parliament, according to Blake, are welcomed by the established church. Blake, here, underlines how the established church collaborates with the Parliament on enthralling people during the oppression period. Figure 10, the illustration accompanying the text of "Plate 12," presents an image full of webs and spiders ensnaring the people. In the light of the text, it can be argued that Blake creates an analogy between the actions of the Parliament and the spider's web. Just like the creatures ensnared within the webs cannot move, the people of England are entangled by the actions of the Parliament. In the world created by the Parliament, according to Blake, "over the doors," are written "thou shalt not," reflecting the Parliament's desire to suppress people. Blake, therefore, portrays the oppression of the counter-revolutionary force on the dissenters in Figure 10. What is significant here is the fact that the counter-revolutionary force is also the established order. Blake's criticism of the oppressive counter-revolutionary side, in this respect, is also a rebuke to the order itself.

Figure 10: "Plate 12," *Europe, A Prophecy*

Blake, after portraying war-inciting atmosphere within the social and political arena of England, continues with the topic of war:

The red limb'd Angel siez'd in horror and torment
 The Trump of the last doom; but he could not blow the iron tube!
 Thrice he assay'd presumptuous to awake the dead to Judgment.
 A mighty Spirit leap'd from the land of Albion,
 Nam'd Newton: he siez'd the trump & blow'd the enormous blast. (*EU* 13:1-5)

“The red limb’d Angel” is Rintrah; thus William Pitt. The three unsuccessful attempts to blow the “iron tube” are Pitt’s three political crises that could have led to a war; chronologically 1787, when England made preparations against Prussia; Vancouver issue against Spain in 1790; and in 1791 Pitt voted to arm against Russia but withdrew his ultimatum after realizing the size of the opposition (Erdman 195). The war tube is eventually blown by Newton. Blake’s choice of Newton over Rintrah, Pitt, to declare war against the revolutionary France is significant. “So the creator of the rational, materialist, anti-Jacobin universe, Newton, evokes not a resurrection but the Armageddon which ends the eighteenth century” (*A New Kind of Man* 67). Newton here is the symbol of materialism and anti-Jacobinism that Blake sees as responsible for the turmoil of the eighteenth century. So, instead of presenting individuals as responsible for the war-fused atmosphere, Blake rather displays the very ideas, as dynamics, that gave momentum to the rise of the perilous atmosphere of the eighteenth century.

Blake’s criticism in this section is highly crucial since it mirrors not only the tyranny of the order on the dissenters but also the impact of the negative events of the Terror Period that made the order in England even more ferocious (Ackroyd 34). The failure of the revolution in France, in this respect, blazed the counter-revolutionary fire of the established order of England. In terms of the cyclic revolution formula, the failure of the revolution as a cycle exacerbated the corruption within order instead of restoring it. The flourishing of the diabolical counter-revolutionary oppression in England is, therefore, linked to the Terror Period of the French Revolution in 1793. In the light of Ackroyd’s remark, it can also be argued that the distortion in the cyclic cadence, as in the case of the failure of the revolutionary cycle in the grievous Terror Period, damaged the counter cycle, order. The overflowing oppression in England during this period, therefore, stemmed from the distortion caused by the Terror Period.

Enitharmon wakes up without knowing “eighteen hundred years were fled,” and calls “her sons and daughters,” from her union with Los. However, all of her children fled to their stations when “morning opened the easterns gate,” indicating that it is now Orc’s time, since morning is the time of the day associated with this mythological figure. Then the reader witnesses the revolutionary power of Orc:

And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his fury.
 The sun glow'd fiery red!
 The furious terrors flew around
 On golden chariots raging with red wheels dropping with blood!
 The Lions lash their wrathful tails!
 The Tigers couch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide,
 And Enitharmon groans & cries in anguish and dismay. (*Europe* 13:15)

The revolutionary flames of Orc spread over France, shown with the sun glowing "fiery red" and Orc's light of fury appearing on France. However, Blake, here, mirrors the blood-bathed events of the French Revolution with “[t]he terrors...raging with red wheels dropping with blood,” indicating the horrible things that were initiated under the name of revolution. "The tale of Orc," both in *America* and *Europe*, according to Damon, “is a revolutionist’s analysis of the contemporary American and French Revolutions; Blake shows their cause, outburst, initial success, and eventual failure, thus establishing the formula for all revolutions” (318). This formula, first initiated in *TMHH*, is based on the change of the cycles. The French Revolution continued being revolutionary after 1789 and, thus, paved the way for the Terror Period (1793) in which the revolutionary chaos was followed by another chaos instead of order. So, the change of the cycles failed; and one counter-part of the contraries, the chaos, continued its reign. The Terror Period ended up with the executions of the very revolutionaries of the early revolutionary period in France. After witnessing the bloodbath of the Terror period, Blake started to “distrust not only the English preparation to fight France but what has happened to France herself (*Blake’s Apocalypse* 160). What is quite ironic here is the fact that Blake, looking back from 1794, reads the Terror Period with his own dialectic, which he developed as a result of this event.

Different from *America, A Prophecy*, Blake, in *Europe, A Prophecy*, focuses not on the aftermath of the revolution, but rather the atmosphere both in France and in England that led to the war. The failure of the revolution is portrayed through the actions of Orc. Damon underlines that "Orc is only a stage, and no immediate answer to the problem" (A

Blake Dictionary 319). In *America, A Prophecy*, Urizen appeared as the force behind the failure of the change of the cycles; yet in *Europe, A Prophecy*, it is Orc itself along with the Palamabron and Rintrah, respectively the English Parliament and William Pitt. With these two books, Blake manifests his dialectic of contraries through using his own mythopoeia while engaging in the actual events of history. The examples of *America* and *Europe* reflect that one counter-part of dichotomies always fail to achieve progression. Neither the conventional order imposed by the established church or the state can provide solution to the calamities of the world nor the revolutionary chaos itself can become a solution. The Blakean dialectic therefore offers the change of cycles in necessary conditions as the key for progression, which will also be demonstrated in the last continental prophetic book.

The Song of Los, printed in 1795, is divided into two parts, "Africa" and "Asia;" and it completes the cycle of continental prophecies, all four continents, since *America* and *Europe* had been published earlier. The historical cycle of continents in Blakean mythology forwards as it follows: Africa, America, Europe, and Asia respectively. Blake tells the fundamentals of his mythology in "Africa," since it is the first cycle of the continental cycles. The significance of "Africa" within the continental prophetic books lies in the fact that in this chapter Blake reveals the birth of the events which ultimately gave momentum to the events he showed in *America* and *Europe*. Figure 11 presents Blake's engraved painting, *Europe Supported by Africa & America*, from 1792. It can be argued that the idea of the inter-active relation between the continents that Blake presents in *The Song of Los* actually dates back to even 1792. The illustration, however, indicates that two nude women, Africa and America, wear slave bracelets while the white one, Europe, wears a string of pearls. This is probably a criticism towards the slave politics of Europe during the period. However, Blake's portrayal of all three women embracing one another may indicate "sisterly equality" (Erdman 214). All the continents, with equal gravity, correspond to mythological phases in Blakean mythopoeia. "Africa," in this respect, is the story of the origins of the Blakean mythopoeia. Following that, Blake presents Orc's revolution in "Asia," for Asia is the successor cycle of Europe in terms of continental cycles; thus, the story of "Asia" follows the events Blake presented in *Europe*.



Figure 11: *Europe Supported by Africa & America* (1792)

“Africa” unfolds the origins of the Blakean mythopoeia and how contemporary world arised as the consequence of these events;

Adam stood in the garden of Eden:
And Noah on the mountains of Ararat;
They saw Urizen give his Laws to the Nations
By the hands of the children of Los. (*SoL* 3:6-9)

The portrayal of Adam in Eden and Noah in Ararat indicates peaceful order of everything, which was distorted by Urizen's law spreading all over the world and making “Adam shudder'd! Noah faded!” (*SoL* 3:10). Urizen's law, surely the corrupted religion, even bewilderes Adam and Noah, two fundamental figures of monotheistic religions, reflecting that Blake believed even Adam and Noah would not approve of Urizen's law that domineers the world. The negativity of shuddering of Adam and fading of Noah is followed by “black grew the sunny African,” (*SoL* 3:10) which, according to Susan Matthews, “prepare[s] us to read “grew” as an equally negative process,” which should be read as “a move away from the perfection of the eternal body” (*The Reception* 106).

One interesting aspect of this chapter, “Africa,” is Blake's constant references to the religions from all over the world. “Times,” says William Blake, “rolled on o'er all the sons of Har¹⁶, time after time,” (*SoL* 3:20) stressing that Urizen's law enthralled not specific tribes or nations but “all sons of Har,” all children of Adam. The vastness of religious references reflects Blake’s deep intellect on the history of grand religions of the world; ranging from Norse mythology to post-vedic Hindu religion, from Kabbalah to Old-Testament, from New-Testament to Islam, and of course merging all of them with his own mythopoeia, as well as his focus upon the general abuse of people by the enthrallment of the corrupted religions, which ultimately made; “The human race...to wither,” and “[s]eclude the places, fearing the joys of Love, And the disease'd only propagated,” (*SoL* 3:25-26) revealing the catastrophic impacts of the corrupted religions on humanity. What is propagated by these religions, according to Blake, is “the diseased,” while enthralling the joys of life. In the next plate, “Plate 4,” Blake furthers this argument by eliciting:

¹⁶ Har, generally, though early and late works differ, correspondes to aged Adam in Blakean mythopoeia

Thus the terrible race of Los & Enitharmon gave
 Laws & Religions to the sons of Har binding them more
 And more to Earth: closing and restraining,
 Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete.
 Urizen wept & gave it into the hands of Newton & Locke. (*SoL* 4: 13-16)

The repetitive use of negativity reappears here with “binding,” “closing,” and “restraining,” used to enucleate the characteristics of “Laws & Religions” that enthralled all the children of Adam till the takeover of “Philosophy of Five Senses,” with which Blake hints the empiricist science of the seventeenth century. However, the text should not be read as Urizen’s law and religion ended with the empiricist science; they are rather furthered by it. Wayne Glasser argues that Blake often pairs Newton and Locke as a couple “whose work,” Blake considered, “coordinated effort to debase humanity” that “elevated reason,” one of the fundamental characteristics of Urizen (*Locke and Blake* 4). Science, within the general context of Blake’s works, “is eternal and essential, but it turns bad when it cuts loose from Humanity and runs wild, abstracting, generalizing, and domineering” (*A Blake Dictionary* 366). Science, therefore, appears in two contrasting images within Blake’s works. First one, repetitively used in the continental prophecies, is responsible for the modern materialism that led people to lose bonds with humanity; therefore is negative. The latter, which appears in late prophetic books like *Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, is positive, for it preserves its bond with humanity. Thus, to avoid anachronism, the latter approach is neglected while analysing the concept of science in continental prophecies, since Blake’s approach towards science, specifically the seventeenth century empiricist science, was negative during the period in which he penned down the continental prophetic books. In “Africa,” therefore, science is portrayed in analogy with the Urizenic laws that enthralled humanity for centuries. Since Blake explains the causes of the enthrallment of human liberty that led to the American and French revolutions in this chapter, presenting science, along with religion and state, as the causes of the enthrallment indicates Blake’s negative attitude towards the seventeenth century science. Blake’s reference to Newton, “A mighty Spirit leap'd from the land of Albion, / Nam'd Newton: he siez'd the trump & blow'd the enormous blast,” (*Europe* 13:4-5) as one of the dynamics that led to the French Revolution in *Europe, A Prophecy* results from Blake’s very perception of the seventeenth century science as the source of fallacies that enthralled people, reflecting Blake’s early approach towards science. Newton,

according to Erdman, is treated as the “ideological creator of the Anti-Jacobin universe” (206) which led to the perilous calamities of the late eighteenth century.

The latter chapter of *The Song of Los* is “Asia,” which stands fourth, after Europe, in the cycle of the continents, since “Blake believed,” according to Damon, “that whatever happens in Europe affects Asia” (*A Blake Dictionary*, 151). Therefore, the tale of *Europe*, *A Prophecy* continues in this chapter, “Asia,” in which Blake focuses on the counter-revolutionary dynamics.

The flames of Orc in Europe, the revolutionary inferno of the French Revolution, spread through Asia, making the kings tremble upon its sight:

The Kings of Asia heard
The howl rise up from Europe,
And each ran out from his Web,
From his ancient woven Den;
For the darkness of Asia was startled
At the thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc. (*SoL* 6:1-6)

Blake positions the kings as the counter-force against the revolutionary spirit of Europe and presents the negativity of Asia with the words such as “Web,” “Den,” and “darkness,” reflecting the general condition of the continent. The fire of Orc is described as “thought-creating,” which indicates the revolutionary ideals that are harboured within these flames, for the very source of the revolution is the thought that enabled people to initiate their desires of change. The Kings are, however, the guardians of darkness that blinds the people of Asia. Blake’s theme of the clash between chaos and order comes to light here once again, since the revolutionary fires of Orc stem from chaos while the dark order of Asia is initiated by kings, who upon facing such sheer power, cries and threatens:

Shall not the King call for Famine from the heath,
Nor the Priest, for Pestilence from the fen,
To restrain! to dismay! to thin
The inhabitants of mountain and plain (*SoL*, 6:9-12)

The king, within the general context of Europe, is the divine father of a nation whose authority is granted by God. He always seeks the goodness of his people, since it is a holy duty given by the Almighty, and his actions are unquestionable. The very sentences that came out of their mouths, however, are threatening and seeking the benefits of their own while abusing their own holy powers. They even do not hesitate to bring famine, total

destruction, towards their people to preserve their position. “Asia,” according to Fallon, “brings the genealogy in Africa to the present, figuring food shortages and disease as means by which politicians, clergy, and loyalists seek ‘To restrain! to dismay! to thin!’ the body of the people” (186). There were lots of riots resulting from bread shortages beginning from the 1793 to 1795; and England was devoured by the famine (*British History* 235). After the initiation of the war against the revolutionary France, it was rather people themselves that suffered the grave conditions; among which were bread shortages and famines. Blake underlines this bitter reality that the war was promoted by the priests and the King; yet it was the people, including the poor soldiers, facing the calamities. In *The Evening Mail*, dated 30 July 1793, it was reported that “we never beheld troops suffer more...it may be a Camp of please to lookers on, but it is a very different affair to the poor soldiers” (2). So the bells of the war tolled for not only the citizens but also for the poor soldiers. To his notebook Blake jotted down that “the priests promote war & the soldier peace” (Keynes 397). Blake’s note indicates that he was also aware of the perilous conditions of the poor soldiers; and blamed priests who did not take part in combats yet promoted the wars.

One other vital aspect of this speech is the fact that while the Kings call for “Famine,” the priests call for “Pestilence.” Blake reveals the corrupted bond merged between the state and religion. He, therefore, presents these two dynamics, the Kings and the priests, as the counter-revolutionary forces that desire to quench the “thought-creating” revolutionary fires. Blake’s critique of the political arena of the eighteenth century is not limited to the King and the priests;

Shall not the Councillor throw his curb
Of Poverty on the laborious,
To fix the price of labour,
To invent allegoric riches. (*SoL* 6:15-18)

In his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, Burke argued that “the body of the people must be thought their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice” (249). Councillor is either Burke himself or a Burkean figure that deludes people with “eternal justice” (Erdman 262). Blake’s treatment of the characters, the King, priests, and Councillor, indicates that the calamities of the period stemmed from not the people but the ruling powers. Blake then presents how the Kings thought their perilous acts of

suppressing the people, “[t]urning man from his path,” and “[r]estraining the child from the womb” (*SoL*, 6:23-24) would lead to “the pride of the heart” to fail and “the lust of the eyes” to be “quenched” (*SoL*7:3-4). What is underlined here is

the diversion of man from his real needs: he is turned from his path, his cycle of reproduction is disturbed, his essential food is denied him...The Kings of Asia see no purpose in their subjects having senses: better by far to quench them early, and they will then feel no discontent with their lot. (*Romanticism and Ideology* 310)

The oppression, however, is inefficient, since the Kings of Asia seek help from Urizen. It is probably a reference to 1795’s bread riots. The King, George III, was pelted with the stones by the angry mob due to bread shortages in 29 October 1795 (*British History* 235). The Parliament’s response was rigid: passing the Treasonable Practices Act and the Seditious Meetings which legislated the law that

if any person or persons whatsoever...¹⁷shall, within the realm or without compass, imagine, invent, devise or intend death or destruction, or any bodily harm tending to death or destruction, maim or wounding, imprisonment or restraint, of the person of...our sovereign lord the King, his heirs and successors ...or any of them, shall express, utter or declare, by publishing any printing or writing, or by any overt act or deed, being legally convicted thereof upon the oaths of two lawful and credible witnesses upon trial, or otherwise convicted or attainted by due course of law, then every such person and persons so as aforesaid offending shall be deemed, declared and adjudged to be a traitor and traitors, and shall suffer pains of death,...as in cases of high treason. (*Treason Act 1795* 36)

Blake portrayed the intervention of the Parliament as follows:

Urizen heard them cry!
And his shudd’ring waving wings
Went enormous above the red flames
Drawing clouds of despair thro’ the heavens
Of Europe as he went:
And his Books of brass iron & gold
Melted over the land as he flew,
Heavy-waving, howling, weeping. (*SoL*7:9-16)

Blake’s Urizen is an enthralling force that restrains the desires of people. Just like Urizen, the Parliament restrains and suppress people by legislating new laws. Though Damon argues that the book of Urizen is restraining religious conventional books in general context (424), I believe Urizen’s book, in this context, is a reference to the laws initiated

¹⁷ This part and later ellipses indicate the words repealed by Statute Law Revision Act 1948.

by the Parliament in 1795. Blake presents Urizen's book as the force that ended the revolutionary campaign and, in the context of 1795, the Treason Act was the force that suppressed the riots.

Eventually, the revolutionary fires are quenched in Asia. Though it may seem the clash is concluded too swiftly, compared to *America*, and *Europe*, it should not be forgotten that in this chapter, "Asia," the revolutionary side lacks a revolutionary heroic figure, just like Orc in *America*, and *Europe*. The revolutionary rebellion, here, flourishes as a result of the propagation of the revolutionary fire in France that Orc sparked. Thus, Urizen quashes the rebellion in a breeze, since there is no revolutionary figure that would oppose him. After legislation of the Treason Act, the riots were totally eradicated since it prohibited assemblies of more than fifty people (*British History* 236-237). Just like Urizen annihilated the revolutionary force with his "books of brass iron & gold," the riots were suppressed by the Treason Act of 1795. Blake, here, presents how the counter-revolutionary force dominated England in 1795. About France and Orc the readers are informed:

Orc raging in European darkness
 Arose like a pillar of fire above the Alps
 Like a serpent of fiery flame!
 The sullen Earth
 Shrank! (*SoL* 7:26-30)

Orc continues to fight in Europe, indicating the determination of revolution. The continent, Asia, according to Sheila Spector, stands for the "pre-adamaic existence;" thus, Urizen, the ruler of Asia, from pre-adamaic times to the eighteenth century, "is the symbol of pre-existent evil...predating the creating of mankind" (*Wonder Divine* 90). Orc's determinant struggle, therefore, is not only against the fallacies of the eighteenth century but also to that of predating mankind. Orc's depiction, "a pillar of fire above Alps," according to Spector, reminds of "a saviour" (90). The image of "saviour" is clearly stressed within next lines:

Forth from the dead dust rattling bones to bones
 Join: shaking convuls'd the shivring clay breathes
 And all flesh naked stands: Fathers and Friends;
 Mothers & Infants; Kings & Warriors:
 The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes
 Her hollow womb, & clasps the solid stem:

Her bosom swells with wild desire:
And milk & blood & glandous wine. (*SoL* 7:31-40)

The image of dead rising from tomb, here, is highly significant since it results from the rise of Orc in Europe. It, according to Fallon, is the “human resurrection” from the death brought by the Urizenic ideas, the fallacies created by the state and the established church, that have enthralled people beginning from pre-Adamaic time (186). Yet, “The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes / Her bosom swells with wild desire,” indicates the gradual positive transition from the Urizenic ideals to those of Orc’s. What was once killed and buried by the Urizenic ideals start to “shriek with delight” and “swell with wild desire” with Orc’s intervention.

The final line of “Asia,” “Urizen Wept,” (*SoL*7:42) according to Fallon, is an ironic reference to Jesus’ weeping after Lazarus’ death, since “Blake alludes to the resurrection of Lazarus but whereas Jesus wept as a prelude to revival, Urizen weeps at his own fate” (187). What is revived here is the very liberty once annihilated by the Urizenic ideals. Jesus’ weeping resulted from his empathy with the humanitarian reasons; yet Urizen weeps due to the liberation of the deeds that his reason enthralled, rendering him weak within world. Blake concludes his prophetic books with the lamentation of Urizen. This, initially, may seem Orc’s victory over Urizen; yet Jesus’ weeping triggered the resurrection of Lazarus, indicating the fact that Urizen weeping may be followed by another event. Blake concludes the prophetic series in an uncertain way. The future of the earth, therefore, is portrayed as ambiguous at the end of the prophetic books, which is connected to the political atmosphere of 1795.

1795, the year that Blake penned down “Asia,” was ambiguous, since France signed treaty of Basel in 5 April, 1795; and the hope for a peaceful revolution was kindled. In *The Times*, dated 28 May 1795, one month after the treaty of Basel, it is reported that “[t]he French Peace with Prussia, and Sweden’s recognition of the French Republic, tended in like manner to increase their strength, by sustaining their reputation in Europe” (2). The news indicate not only the transition from negative approach to the French Republic to the positive but also the recognition of their power. The same paper also presents the motion of Mr. Wilberforce, a member of the House, in which he states:

That it is the opinion of House, that the present circumstances of France ought not to preclude the Government of this Country from entertaining Proposals for a

general Pacification, and that it is for the interest of Great Britain to make Peace with France, provided it can be effected on fair terms, and in an honourable manner. (2)

The possibility of peace, in 1795, was on air for the first time in the discussion of the house and also on the reports of the papers. The use of the discursive language is here highly significant, since it also presents some examples of the conversion of the discourses from counter-revolution to pacifist; yet the counter revolutionary discourse was also present. In *The Times*, dated 27 January, 1795, it is reported that “[i]f a Counter-Revolution was to be hoped for in France, he,” Mr. Wilberforce, “conceived it would be much more probable in the time of peace than during the war” (4). So, the peace was also considered as a chance that could give momentum to the counter-revolutionary dynamics to flourish in France. It was this very atmosphere that impacted *The Song of Los*. The book, as the conclusion to the prophetic books, was the very child of the times it was produced. Just like the end of “Asia,” the world was in total chaos; there was hope for peace yet also danger for even more malicious chaos. The future was to show that the latter was to engulf the world with its flames.

Blake’s continental prophetic book series is Blake’s reading of the late eighteenth century’s political atmosphere with his own Blakean dialectic and mythopoeia. In *America*, Blake indicates that his reading of the American Revolution is not based on historical approach but rather on his dialectic. The American Revolution was achieved; yet Blake presented it as a failure due to the fact that the revolution in America failed in terms of his idea of cyclic revolution, according to which the revolution and chaos should replace one another in necessary conditions. Yet, the problems in America continued their existence in a new form. The change of cycles, therefore, failed. In *Europe*, Blake presented the events from 1792 to 1793 both in France and England within the perspective of his dialectic approach. The problem in the French Revolution, according to Blake, was again the failure of the change of the cycles. After the revolution of 1789, France continued its revolutionary demeanour which led to the Terror Period that turned the revolution to a bloodshed. The main problem in France, according to Blake, was the fact that revolution, as a cycle, was not followed by the order, the counter cycle. In the case of England, Blake demonstrated the negative impacts of the sole reign of the order, as a cycle, with references to the king, George III, and Pitt’s government and many other

political figures of the period. With these two books, Blake indicated that neither the revolution nor the order can achieve the progression solely. It is only through their “marriage” that progression can be achieved. In *The Song of Los*, Blake presented the impact of the war period on English common people with references to the riots; and Parliament’s response with references to the laws legislated during the period. However Blake left the conclusion of the continental prophetic series totally dark. Nothing is concluded about the war between Orc, the revolutionary force, and Urizen, the symbol of order. This mainly resulted from the fact that 1795 was an ambiguous year that could give birth to chaos or harmony. Peace was reachable; yet war was also not that distant. Blake’s continental prophetic books are significant works to perceive the political context of the late eighteenth century. Blake “did not live through the revolutions,” he “lived them” and reflected his experience through his continental prophetic books.

CONCLUSION

William Blake, influenced by the socio-cultural events of the eighteenth century, went through numerous political and theological transitions throughout his life. He was “such a poet as no age before his could have made, and no age since has made” (Erdman 118). Blake was indeed the product of the turbulent age of the revolutions. He perpetually forged his perceptions of the revolution on the anvil of his visionary mind throughout the years. Like a Promethean figure, he courageously reflected his readings of the events and harshly criticized the dynamics that led to the perilous calamities of the period in his works.

The impact of the various phases of the French Revolution on Blake and his works are not single but rather diverse. The impact of the early period of the French Revolution (1789-1792) on Blake echoes in *The French Revolution* that portrays the revolution as a pacifist force. Since Blake wrote the poem knowing that it was published, he presented the core of the revolution and demeanours of the sides of the revolution in a context that every Londoner could comprehend. Blake fiercely criticizes these two fundamental classes, the nobility and the clergy, and presents them as the sources of the problems that led to the perilous atmosphere of the eighteenth century. Blake's criticism, here, is totally directed towards these two institutionalized forces that are against the concept of the revolution. The major argument here is the fact that Blake's perception of the revolution and his presentation of the underlying causes of the revolution are in accordance with the positive atmosphere of the period. The revolution in France, during this period, was quite promising since the King was alive and consented to the will of the common people of France rather than the volition of the nobility and the clergy. Blake's *The French Revolution* is dominated by this positive atmosphere. His perception of the pacifist revolution was the product of this atmosphere.

In 1792, the revolution in France entered a new phase. France's heavy defeats in 1792 paved the way for the reign of Jacobins led by Maximillian Robespierre in 1792. It was followed by the executions of the Louis XVI and royal members and the revolutionaries, Danton, Camille, held responsible for the defeats and the corruption within the bureaucracy. This period, later to be named as the Terror Period, marked a black stain in

the history of revolutionary France. This incident proved that the revolution turned out to be totally different concept from 1789's revolution. The pacifist revolution Blake portrayed in *The French Revolution* did not exist anymore. Blake, however, never lost his hope in the idea of revolution and initiated a new concept of revolution called "cyclic revolution" in his dialectic theory in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The problem in the French Revolution, according to Blake, was the bitter fact that the revolutionary France continued being revolutionary after the revolution in 1789. It should have been replaced by a new order. The Blakean dialectic offers a cycle of cadence in which counter-parts of the dichotomies replace one another in necessary conditions and situations for progression. The cyclic revolution, therefore, harbours the cyclic alteration of the counter-parts of the dichotomies, chaos and order in this case, for success.

In this context, the dialectic theory and cyclic revolution formula is the product of the Terror Period, since Blake developed this theory and formula as a response to the bloody events. The changing perception of the revolution proves how the perception of the revolution for Blake evolved throughout the different phases of the revolution. The transition from the pacifist revolution to cyclic revolution, therefore, stems from changes within the French Revolution. The fundamental difference between the pacifist revolution and the cyclic revolution is the first one accepts the revolution as an absolute peaceful positive force while the latter presents the revolution as a cyclic force that is positive and needed only when the order is corrupted; and it needs to be replaced by a new order later. The cyclic revolution formula stems from the Blakean dialectic, according to which the content of the dichotomies are not fixed; and the counter-parts of the dichotomies need to replace one another for progression. The basic idea of revolution in the cyclic revolution, therefore, is not fixedly positive or negative but rather conditionally positive or negative. Blake's continental prophetic books are dominated by these dialectic theory and cyclic revolution formula.

The series of the continental prophetic books harbour Blake's prophetic commentary on the events of the period along with the attempt to situate them within the strata of the spiritual history of humanity. Blake, therefore, merges the historical events and his mythopoeia in his continental prophetic books. *America, A Prophecy* is a good indicator to illustrate how Blake perceives the events spiritually. Blake presents the American

Revolution as a failure; instead of telling the actual history of the revolution and presenting its success. The reason behind this is the fact that the revolution in America did not obviate Blake's perception of the cyclic revolution. The perilous problems in the pre-revolutionary America, apotheosis and slavery, survived the revolution; and continued their existence within a new form. In this respect, the cycles failed to replace one another. The revolution in America is historically achieved; yet spiritually failed in terms of cyclic cadence.

Europe, A Prophecy harbours Blake's reading of the events, both in France and England, from 1792-1793 through using his own mythopoeia and dialectic. Blake's use of the dialectic, here, enables readers to perceive the events during this period both in terms of their gravity within the historical spectrum and their magnitude on the spiritual dimension of the human history. The book involves Blake's harsh criticism not only towards the established Church of England and the oppressions of the state but also to the unfortunate events happened in France in 1793. Blake's presentation of the perilous conditions in England indicates that the absolute reign of order leads to oppression while the absolute reign of revolution leads to the violence. In this respect, Blake underlines his cyclic formula that one counter-part of the dichotomies cannot solely lead to the progression. Both the order and revolution are, therefore, needed in cycles for progression.

The Song of Los, the last of the continental prophetic series, presents Blake's perception of the impact of the wartime period and 1795 peace negotiations on English common people. The ambiguous atmosphere of the period related to the future of the French-British relations is reflected in the text. Blake gives specific references to the events of the period in England while also presenting the maliciousness of the kings and clergy towards the people in the spiritual history of humanity. The prophetic series is concluded in ambiguity since none of the revolutions of the era, according to Blake, achieved the change of the cycles. All the sources of fallacies, the oppressive states and the established Churches, continued their existence and even a new destructive revolutionary monster was born after the Terror Period. Despite all the negative dynamics, there was also hope for the peace. This is the fundamental reason behind the ambiguous ending of the continental prophetic books.

Blake was part of the English common people; therefore his sources were those that the

common people could reach. In terms of cultural studies, Blake's sources are also valuable data to understand the perception of the events by the English common people. Blake's prophetic books, in this respect, are the products of these sources of the common people. The impacts of the sources, ranging from cheap and reachable sources like newspapers to the political works of the philosophers of the period, from the political pledges of the politicians to the dinner conversations at Johnson's, on Blake are directly linked to the content of the prophetic books. Blake's electoral vote to Charles James Fox in 1790 indicate that Blake's perception of the pacifist revolution is also inter-connected to the political statements of Fox (Fallon 63-66). In this context, the political debates of the time, 1790, both related to interior and exterior affairs, and politicians' views were influential on Blake's complex political demeanour. Especially in *The French Revolution*, actual historical figures reported in the sources during the period and their fictionalised versions within the poem indicated the fact that Blake's portrayal of the characters are totally in accordance with the positive atmosphere of the period reflected in the sources. Blake's perception of the pacifist revolution, therefore, stemmed from the sources during the early phase of the French Revolution, since the sources also presented the revolution as a pacifist force.

The positive attitude towards the French Revolution, however, changed after the Terror Period; and the revolutionary France's declaration of war on Britain in 1793 even exacerbated the negative attitude. The sources which once portrayed the revolution as a pacifist force then started to employ the counter-revolutionary discourses that underlined the bloodshed of the Terror Period; which eventually led Blake to question his perception of the pacifist revolution. In this respect, the impact of the changing atmosphere of the period, from positive to negative, on the transition of Blake's perception of revolution from "pacifist" to "cyclic" is highly influential. The portrayal of the negative aspects of the revolution, beginning from 1792, played a crucial role in the development of the Blakean dialectic, since Blake realized that his perception of the pacifist revolution failed. Therefore, a new system upon which he was to base a new concept of revolution, cyclic revolution, was needed. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in this context, is the work that marks the development of the Blakean dialectic as a result of the failure of the pacifist revolution. The change of the discourses within the sources, therefore, had direct impact upon the content of Blake's works.

Different information sources related to the revolution revealed three different perspectives of the French Revolution. The first one is primary sources like Sieyès' "What is the third estate?" to present the revolution from the perspective of a French revolutionary. The perilous conditions that led to the revolution, in this respect, presented the viewpoint of the individuals who suffered these conditions. Secondly, the political works of Paine and Burke introduced how the revolution was conceptualized by the writers in England; which also underlined the existence of two contrasting approaches, welcoming and hostile, towards the revolution in England. Thirdly, the newspapers from different periods are presented to indicate how the revolution was portrayed after the filtering of the discourses. The English state had direct impact on the transition of the discourses, since the revolution in France became a threat towards the English monarchy. The counter-revolutionary news, therefore, replaced the pro-revolutionary news. What is aimed here to grasp to what extent Blake's perception of the revolution was in line with these information sources. The sources, in this respect, reflected socio-cultural perceptions of the revolution from different angles of the society; and indicated the fact that even in the same period people perceived the revolution quite differently.

Blake's perceptions of the revolution were after all different from one another. The change that the revolution went through in various phases of the revolution, and Blake's failure to anticipate these changes led him to initiate his own dialectic as a response to these events. The change in Blake's perception of the revolution from pacifist to cyclic also marks the various impacts of the different periods of the French Revolution. The positive atmosphere of the early period of the revolution led Blake to develop the perception of the pacifist revolution and the Terror Period proved that this idea of revolution was destructive. This experience is the force that gave momentum to the development of the Blakean dialectic theory that harbours the cyclic revolution formula in itself. So, Blake's two different perceptions of the revolution were the products of different phases of the French Revolution. In this respect, the claim that the French Revolution created an impact on Blake is true yet incomplete; since the influence cannot be diminished to one single event and the impacts of the different phases of the revolution differ from one another. What enabled Blake to initiate his own dialectic is not merely the events from 1789, but rather series of events from 1789 to 1793.

The illustrations of the continental prophetic books are also valuable supplementary sources that reflect the political atmosphere of the late eighteenth century. The illustrations provide the readers with a new perspective to monitor the content of the texts from a visual medium. Throughout his life, Blake altered the illustrations of the continental prophetic books in different printing editions. The alteration in the illustrations are in line with Blake's changing views. The portrayal of the same illustrations differently in the following printing editions, therefore, marks Blake's altering views on the topic illustrated (Viscomi 90). In this respect, the illustrations are the mirrors that reflect the transition Blake went through throughout this life.

There are also other conclusions as the by-products of the main hypothesis. In *Age of Revolution*, Bronowski puts forwards the hypothesis in which he argues that Blake's mythopoeia in the continental prophetic books as the mere outcome of auto-censorship, since the oppression of the state alarmed Blake to use mythological characters instead of figures from actual history (79-85). Bronowski's hypothesis, in this context, also presents the continental prophetic books as the historical readings of the late eighteenth century. However, especially in *America, A Prophecy* section, it is indicated that Blake's mythopoeia cannot be diminished into the historical readings; it is also an attempt to situate the events into the spiritual history of humanity by using his own dialectic system and cyclic cadence formula. In this respect, Blake's subversion of the outcome of the American Revolution in *America, A Prophecy* is presented as a counter-argument to indicate that Blake does not necessarily narrate history in his prophetic books, but rather reads the events according to his own dialectic. Secondly, in the light of the recent discoveries by Fallon, the claim that Blake had been an extreme radical throughout his life is questionable. Blake was indeed part of the common people of his period. He was affected by the pledges of the politicians of his period, especially Charles James Fox; and his political choices were not always radical but sometimes based on practical grounds like voting for someone who pledged to abolish the taxes on small businesses (Fallon 63). Blake's political extremity begins after the oppression period in Britain start in 1793 as a reaction to the terror events in France.

Throughout his life, Blake never fixed his opinions or perception on any matter except the desire to convey his visionary commentary on the fallacies that led people to

enthrallment. He “had what no real artist can be without, an intense desire to communicate” (Frye 3). Even after the continental prophetic books, Blake, in his bardic self, continued his prophetic books, this time focusing on the very dogma of the religions. The influence of the dialectic, however, still echoes in his later prophetic books.

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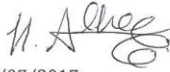
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