

1994, 68) Blake could have read these pamphlets, as there are traces of influence in his poem. At the same time, Blake's poem is interpreted in the remarks of Mary Wollstonecraft's (1759-1797) *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). (Erdman: 1966, 90) In Wollstonecraft's book, she mentions that: "if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp, invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature." (Wollstonecraft: 1955, 25) The writer believes in the doctrine of free love, implying that sexual relations out of the marriage institution are legal and never sinful. (Sadock: 1976, 53) Blake wants to show the imprisonment of women by the moral laws of the society. In the same year of the publication of Blake's poem in 1793, another work of literature was written by James Henry Lawrence entitled *The Empire of the Nairs or the Rights of Woman, an Utopian Romance* (1793). It is not certain whether Blake wrote his poem before or after the publication of this romance which deals with an imaginary society where marriages as clearly acknowledged legal institutions never exist, since women are shown to be free in choosing their lovers. This romance affected the reading public; even Percy Shelley sent a letter to its author saying:

Your Empire of the Nairs... succeeded in making me a perfect convert to its doctrines. I then entertained no doubts of the evil of marriage. Mrs. Wollstonecraft reasons too well for that; but I had been dull enough not to perceive the greatest argument against it, until developed in The Nairs.

(Jones: *Letters* Vol .1, 1964, 323)

Blake's poem could be viewed as an attack against the Abolition Society, whose "trimming announcement in February 1792 that did not desire 'the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British colonies but only sought to end the 'Trade for Slaves.'" (Erdman; 1966, 95) Thomas Paine

had already finished his *The Rights of Man* (1791) in which he called for democracy and brotherhood. Besides, the Anti-Slavery Society adopted in England in 1787 their famous motto "Am I not a man and a brother?" (Prickett: 1981, 55) The poem is also "an attack against William Wilberforce's proposition in the Parliament that 'women's love is sin..." (Erdman: 1966, 95) Blake had also manipulated Ossian's ballad *Oithona*, where the heroine who was been raped prefers death to dishonour. This poem is a protest against Oithona, because Oothoon's argument is that she refuses to accept the idea of a fallen woman. Finally, in the early 1790's, Blake was busy with the engravings for a book called *A Narrative, of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes... of South America, from the year 1772 to 1777*, by Captain J.G. Stedman, published in 1796. (Gardener: 1962, 158) In the book, Stedman fell in love with a young beautiful slave called Joanna, whom he married later. The critic, David Erdman, draws a revealing biographical parallel between Blake's poem, and the love affair of Stedman, as Theotorman, and Joanna, as Oothoon.

The Visions

The poem starts with an epigram "*The Eye Sees more than the Heart Knows,*" which is in a way ironic, as it reflects Blake's idea of the limited awareness of the human heart especially when confronting a unique experience void of traditionalism. It further shows "*the perception used by the characters throughout most of the poem.*" (Peterson: 1973, 253) The point is that morality and traditional thought are relative and man is far away from perceiving truth and his true nature. This is the motto of the poem, a conflict between the heart or the desire and the eye or what is seen. In other words, the "*Heart must 'Know' before there can be a human freedom,*" (Erdman: 1966, 91) and an awareness of the

possibilities of democracy and liberty must come first. The poem can be interpreted allegorically, as it is called the “visions.” It consists of many visions and does not confine itself to one meaning. The argument gives the brief story of Oothoon:

*I loved Theotormon
And I was not ashamed
I trembled in my virgin fears
And I hid in Leutha's vale!
I plucked Leutha's flower,
And I rose up from the vale;
But the terrible thunders tore
My virgin mantle in twain.*

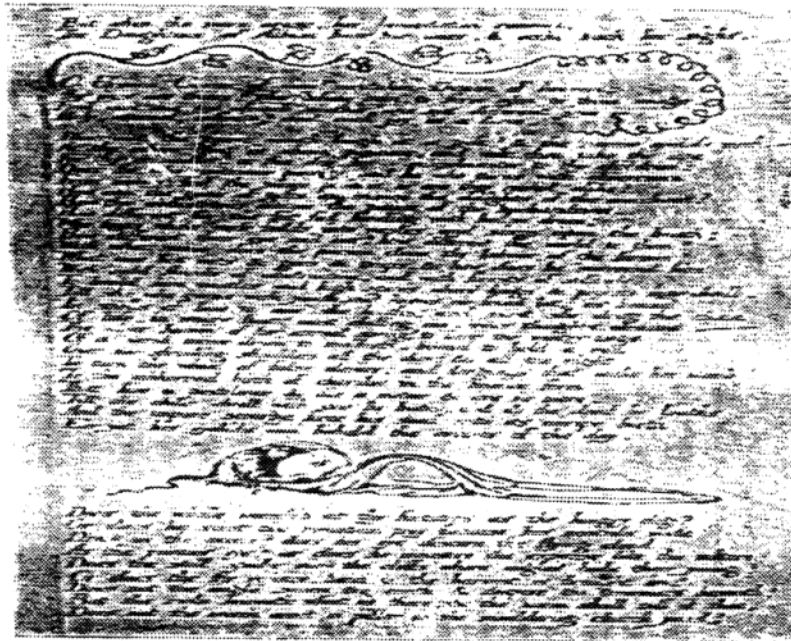
Oothoon is not ashamed of her love for Theotormon. Plucking a flower is an act that suggests “falling deeply in love” with Theotormon. (Margoliouth: 1951, 93) It may also suggest the desired experience of freedom and achieving equality. When Bromion ‘tore [her] virgin mantle in twain,’ he destroyed the virginity of Oothoon, but not her purity. In other words, Bromion wants to enslave her. ‘Leutha's vale’ is a reference to “Blake's place- name for the French Colony,” Santo Domingue Plantations of the Emigrés, where Negroes revolted in the year 1791. (Erdman: 1966, 96)

Plate I

Blake says that the women of England are enslaved, as they sigh towards America, longing for freedom:

*Enslav'd, the Daughters of Albion weep: a trembling lamentation
Upon their mountains; in their valleys. Sighs toward America.*

(ll. 1-2)



SPELLS OF LAW 1793.

Fig. (1) The engraving done by Blake shows the effects of the restrictive laws on the pure Oothoon.

Oothoon embodies the idea of freedom, for America is interpreted as “*the Golden World of Atlantean symbolism.*” (Bloom: 1973, 51) It was the embodiment of democracy and equality that resided in its utopian society. The general meaning of these two lines is that as long as false morality exists, all the women of England will remain slaves. This is a direct condemnation of the hypocritical English society.

As a matter of fact, Oothoon who is described as “*the soft soul of America,*” seeks a kind of liberty that is not found “*within the limitations of the state of nature. It is also beyond the scope of any society which is based on a moral order derived from that state.*” (Fisher: 1961, 208) She

has become an ideal which can be applied to any given time and place.
Blake describes Oothoon's sexual experience as being free not restrained:

*For the soft soul of America, Oothoon wandered in Woe,
Along the vales of Leutha seeking flowers to comfort her.*
(ll. 3-4)

The symbolic act of Oothoon seeking 'flowers,' is to say that she is afraid of the joys of liberty, but then turns to love, flowers. In another meaning, "she is looking for a further blossoming of the revolutionary spirit." (Erdman: 1966, 96) Oothoon plucks the flower, saying:

*Then Oothoon plucked the flower saying, I pluck thee from thy bed
Sweet flower, and put thee here to glow between my breasts
And thus I turn my face to where my whole soul seeks.*

(ll. 11-13)

As her 'whole soul seeks' Theotormon, she becomes liberated by her love to him, because "Oothoon [unites] innocence and experience in the free act of love." (Fisher: 1961, 207) She seeks her lover "Over the waves she went in wing'd exulting swift delight." Oothoon flies to Theotormon as a sign of her freedom and joy. She expects him to be happy, because "the soul of sweet delight can never pass away." It means that the spirit of freedom is irrepressible, and he should be "rejoiced at the good news of another rising republic, [but he] acts like those English abolitionists who were embarrassed by the thunders [Bromion's]- of the Anti-jacobians," (Erdman: 1966, 97) especially that Anti-Jacobians fought for "normal sexual relations." (Prickett: 1981, 54) This is a reference to a Parliamentary debate in 1789 between the abolitionists who gave excuses for slavery, and the Anti-Jacobins who stood entirely against any emancipation of slavery.

Bromion who is the embodiment of tyranny and restriction, tries to enslave Oothoon by raping her “to increase her market value.” (Erdman: 1966, 90)

*Bromion rent her with his thunders. On his stormy bed
Lay the faint maid, and soon her woes appalled his thunders hoarse.*

(ll. 16-17)

Despite Oothoon’s woeful cries, Bromion calls her a ‘harlot.’ This means that the laws, Bromion, make women look bad; whereas in reality they are innocent and pure. References to slavery and imprisonment are stressed in the following lines:

*Bromion spoke, behold this harlot here on Bromions bed,
And let the jealous dolphins sport around the lovely maid;
Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south:
Stampt with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun:
They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the scourge:
Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent.*

(ll. 18-23)

The meaning is very condensed, since the ‘jealous dolphins’ either refer to the jealousy of Theotormon, or to “the ships of the English Navy.” (Gardener: 1962, 161) Those ships used to carry slaves, and Bromion now possesses them, “Thy soft American plains are mine, and thy north & south.” He owns the African slaves of north and south America. Bromion refers to the slaves as being “stampt with my signet,” which is a reference to the sign that marks slaves. He further mentions that the women of England are ‘obedient, [since] they resist not, they obey the scourge,’ as a result of the imposed English tyrannical laws. They have become passive, for they “worship terrors and obey the violent.”

Plate 2

In this section, Theotormon is described as being very sad and jealous, because he thinks that Oothoon now is not pure. Theotormon is sitting beside Bromion's cave, and he is frightened by the terror of Bromion:

*Then storms rent Theotomon limbs; he rolled his waves around.
And folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair
Bound back to back in Bromions caves, terror & meekness dwell.*
(ll. 3-5)

Theotormon represents "the British government," (Gardner: 1962, 162) which cannot protect Oothoon from the unjust marriage laws in England. Bromion and Oothoon are "Bound back to back in Bromions caves, terror & meekness dwell" and this is the condition of the enslaved women.

*Now thou maist marry Bromions harlot, and protect the child
Of Bromions rage, that Oothoon shall put forth in nine moons time.*
(ll. 1-2)

The British government embodied by Theotormon cannot even protect the slave-child of its country. The difference between Oothoon and Theotormon is that the latter sits by the terror of Bromion, whereas the former seeks to liberate herself from his chains.

*An entrance Theotormon sits wearing the threshold hard
With secret tears; beneath him sound like waves on a desert shore
The voice of slaves beneath the sun, and children bought with money.
That shiver in religious caves beneath the burning fires,
Of lust, that belch incessant from the summits of the earth.*
(ll. 6-10)

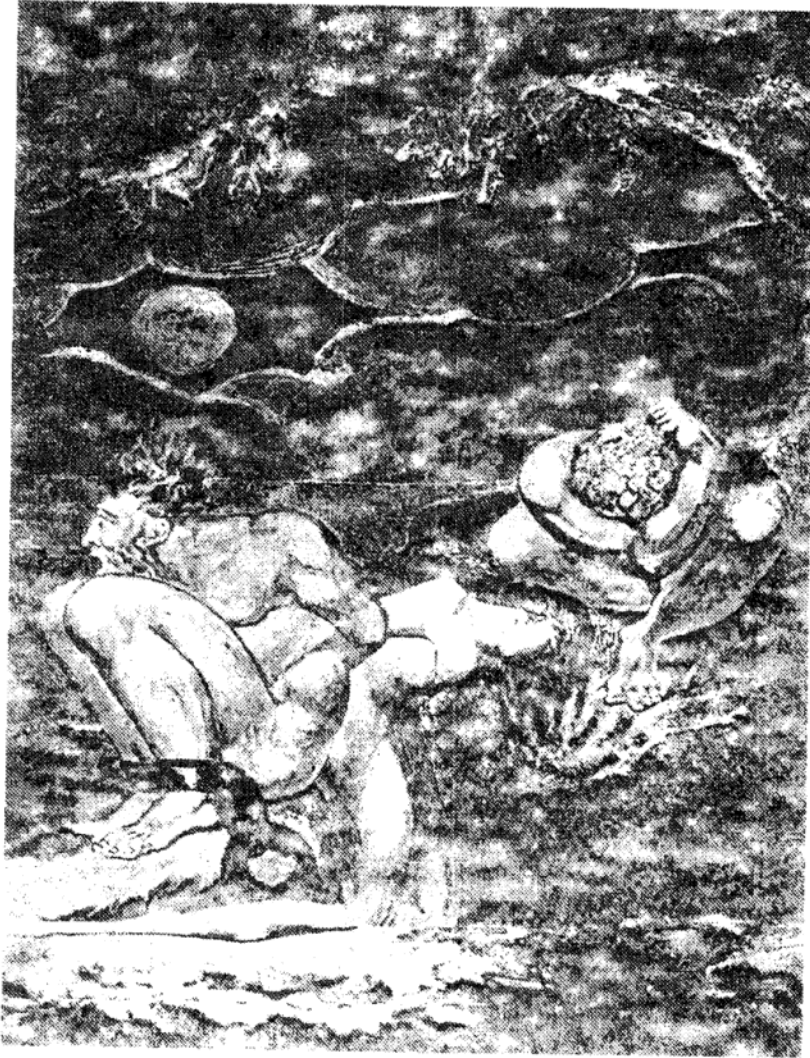


Fig. (2) Blake's engraving shows the frustrating effect of the marriage laws. Theotormon sits weeping alone, while Oothoon is bound back to Bromion.

Theotormon sheds 'secret tears' that is the "condemnation of slavery, poverty, and repression." (Gardner: 1962, 162) The reader hears the "voice of slaves beneath the sun" which refers to the slaves' dark skin and hard working. Blake is "directing the light of the French Revolution upon the most vulnerable flow in the British constitution, and in doing so he was contributing to the most widely agitated reform movement of the time." (Erdman: 1966, 90)

The children "bought with money" is a description of the condition of English children at that time. Oothoon who is now pregnant from Bromion, gives birth to a child of "the burning fires of lust." The fire may be interpreted as "the sullen authority of Urizen." (Gardner: 1962, 162) Urizen is the sole law, and the Father of Jealousy, as he represents the tyranny and rigidity of the English laws, whereas the "religious caves" in which children "shiver" could be a reference to the Platonic cave, making children and slaves unaware of their miseries and bad conditions. Bromion is seen to be "the moral law which continues in America in spite of the revolution, and he is also the possessive economy founded on slavery." (Frye: 1970, 241) Oothoon does not sit still:

*Oothoon weeps not: she cannot weep! her tears are locked up;
But she can howl incessant writhing her soft snowy limbs.
And calling Theotormons Eagles to prey upon her flesh.*
(ll. 11-13)

Oothoon cannot weep like Theotormon, because she knows that she is innocent. She calls for Theotormon's 'Eagles' which are symbolic of the "portion of genius" that soars with "boundless inspiration." (Gardner: 1962, 162) Oothoon suggests that Theotormon should have a wider perception in order to acknowledge her purity, although Bromion has defiled her physical body. "Once Theotormon can throw aside his

sense of sin and act, the defilement of Bromion is cleansed from Oothoon.” (Gardner, *Infinity on the Anvil*: 1954, 52) Oothoon says:

*I call with holy voice! kings of the Sounding air,
Rend away this defiled bosom that I may reflect.
The image of Theotormon on my pure transparent breast.
The Eagles at her call descended & rend their bleeding prey;
Theotormon severely smiles, her soul reflects the smile;
As the clear spring mudded with feat of beasts grows pure & smiles.*
(ll. 14-19)

The reason behind Oothoon allowing the ‘Eagles’ to tear her body is to “let Theotormon... see what is beneath [her] skin.” (Erdman: 1966, 98) It means that Oothoon possesses the same pure image of Theotormon, because everyone is equal and there is no difference between a slave and an Englishman, or a woman and a man, as Erdman clarifies:

*As Africa [Oothoon] she is urging the London
citizen to ignore colour differences. As America, she is
urging British law- makers to rescue her from the
muddy feet of the slaver. As a woman enslaved by
Marriage Act morality, she is imploring her love above
the accusations of adultery.*

(Erdman: 1966, 99)

Oothoon could be suggesting many ideas, that is why the poem is subject to many layers of interpretations. Despite the imploring of Oothoon, the women of England remain passive; they just watch:

*The Daughters of Albion hear her woes & echo back her sighs
Why does my Theotormon sit weeping upon the threshold;
And Oothoon hovers by his side, persuading him in vain:
I cry arise O Theotormon...*
(ll. 20-23)

Oothoon tries to persuade her lover to break the dominions of Bromion’s laws, as she wants him to liberate himself. “Theotormon is afraid of Oothoon’s spirit of complete freedom, in all its aspects, and cannot answer her call.” (Gardner: 1962, 162) In other words, Oothoon is calling for the revolutionary spirit.

Theotormon has no deep insight, so he sits weeping, thinking that Oothoon's spirit is bound forever. He is enclosed in his five senses, while Oothoon urges him to widen his perspective. She continues her speech:

*The Eagle returns
From nightly prey, and lifts his golden beak to the pure east;
Shaking the dust from his immortal pinions to awake
The sun that sleeps too long ..*

(ll. 25-28)



Fig. (3) Oothoon hovers above Theotormon, trying to persuade him in vain. We could see the sun of revolution rising, although Oothoon's foot is chained now alone. (Blake's engraving)

Oothoon insists that the spirit of revolution is ripe and ready to rule. The 'Eagle' will 'shake the dust' of the spirits and 'awake the sun' of freedom. Eagles are associated with perception, thus Oothoon calls for a new stage of thinking:

*Arise My Theotormon, I am pure.
Because the night is gone that clos'd me in its deadly black.
They told me the night & day were all that I could see;
They told me that I have five senses to inclose me up.
And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle.*
(ll. 28-32)

Oothoon describes the plight of slaves who are enslaved by the doctrine of Urizen. Yet, she believes that she is still pure. "I am pure," she says "as America she means that the night of oppressive ... [authority] is gone with the dawn of freedom. As Africa, she means the time is gone when people's vision was limited to their five senses and they could see only her dark skin and not her inward purity." (Erdman: 1966, 98) This idea is analogous to Blake's "Little Black Boy":

*My mother bore me in the Southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if berear'd of light.*
(ll. 1-4)

Theotormon's lack of understanding is due to his narrow perception and acceptance of the One law of Urizen, as Oothoon says:

*That Theotormon hears me not! to him the night and morn
And both alike: a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears.*
(ll. 37-38)

Plate 3

Oothoon discusses man's perception, which is a call not only for slaves but for all human beings as well:

*Ask the wild ass why he refuses burdens: and the meek Camel
Why he loves man: is it because of eye ear mouth or skin
Or breathing nostrils? No, for these the wolf and tyger have.*

(ll. 7-9)

Oothoon denies the credibility of Urizen's One law, as she is aware of the holiness of all living beings, and because she knows that "*there is an infinite variety of life which no law can approximate.*" (Frye: 1970, 239) For Urizen there is only one law, as the "*one law for the lion and the ox.*" (Plate 4, l.22) Oothoon continues:

*Sweetest the fruit that the worm feels on & the soul prey'd on by woe
The new wash'd lamb ting'd with the village smoke & the bright swan
By the red earth of our immortal river: I bathe my wings
And I am white and pure to hover round Theotormons breast.*

(ll. 17-20)

Oothoon's soul is undefiled, and she rejects any restriction of her freedom. Although it is apparently negative, the worm in the fruit of life is actually part of life, just as any aspect of Oothoon's existence. But Theotormon wonders:

*Tell me what is night or day to one o'erflowed by woe?
Tell me what is a thought? & of what substance is it made?
Tell me what is a joy? & in what gardens do joys grow?
And in what rivers swim the sorrows? and upon what mountains.*

(ll. 22- 25)

Theotormon is aware of his subjection to the One law, but he does not act. Woes swimming upon 'mountains' refer to "*the ancient high authority, [and] the lofty philosophical justification of tyranny,*" as Gardner claims. (Gardner: 1962, 163) Man is always bound by repressive forces from outside and sometimes from inside.

Plate 4

Theotormon expresses the despair of the slaves and the poor people who try to forget their miseries by drinking “*Gin [being] the drink of poverty.*” (Gardner: 1962, 163) He clarifies:

*Wave shadows of discontent? and in what houses dwell the wretched
Drunken with woe forgotten, and shut up from cold despair.*
(ll. 1-2)

Theotormon philosophizes about his beliefs in life, but he becomes afraid of his very ideas which may take him away from his usual way of thinking. Theotormon was silenced by Bromion:

*Thou knowest that the ancient trees seen by thin eyes have fruit;
But knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
To gratify senses unknown? trees breasts and birds unknown
Unknown, not unperceived, spread in the infinite microscope.*
(ll. 13-16)

Bromion’s speech is cynical, because he implies that “*the promise of after- life in return for obedient misery on earth, the threat of eternal damnation for disobedience, and the inculcation of a dread of the unknown,*” (Gardner: 1962, 164) are the traditional beliefs amongst the ordinary people. It is a satire against the Church whose priests serve the purposes of slavers and kings. Bromion covers himself with a pious religious facade in order to continue enslaving more people:

*And is there not eternal fire, and eternal chains?
To bind the phantoms of existence from eternal life?*
(ll. 23-24)

Hence, Hell becomes necessary to keep poor labourers afraid so as to make them accept their lot and promise them of an “*eternal life.*”

Plate 5

Oothoon recognizes the false bases of Bromion's beliefs, as she resumes her speech:

*O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven:
Thy joys are tears! thy labour vain, to form men to thine image.
How can one joy absorb another? are not different joys
Holy, eternal, infinite! and each joy is a Love.*

(ll. 3-5)

Oothoon highly evaluates the significance of pleasure that is almost sacred for her. Besides, she concentrates on "the essential uniqueness of every thing that lives." (Gardner, *Infinity on the Anvil*: 1954, 53) She further comments:

*Does he who contemns poverty, and he who turns with abhorrence
From usury: feel the same passion or are they moved alike?*

(ll. 7-8)

The rich people do not feel the same sentiments as the poor do. Oothoon ridicules the One law of Urizen, because it means that "the joys' of the oppressor are really 'tears'...to speak of 'joy' and 'sorrow' [as] one law." (Erdman: 1966, 101) The meaning of experience and life differ from one person to another:

*With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?
What are his nets & gins & traps & how does he surround him
With cold floods of abstraction, and with forest of solitude;
To build him castles and high spires, where kings and priests may
dwell.*

(ll. 17-20)

Oothoon shows the misdeeds of the priests who have a great role in enslaving people by preaching false religious teachings. "The function of the priest is to supply the economic and ideological base of the whole superstructure of Empire from fortresses to Marriage Laws." (Erdman:

1966, 101) This idea echoes what Blake wrote in his poem "*The Chimney Sweeper II*":

*And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his priest and king
Who make up a heaven of our misery.*

(ll. 9-12)

Blake does not mean that religion in itself enslaves people, but rather its wrong application by religious people. On the other hand, Oothoon shows the destiny of most of the women in England:

*Till she burns with youth, and knows no fixed lot; is bound
In spells of law to one she loaths; and must she drag the chain of life,
in weary lust!*

(ll. 21-23)

She describes here the "loveless marriages," (Margoliouth: 1951, 95) that make women enchained 'in spells of law,' forcing them to live without passion for their husbands. "*Till the child dwell with one he hates, and do the deed he loaths.*" (l. 30) Oothoon continues her argument about the individuality of every living creature:

*Does not the eagle scorn the earth & despise the treasure beneath?
But the mole knoweth what is there, & the worm shall tell it thee.*

(ll. 39-40)

This is an attack against Urizen's law that is one sided like the eagle's view of earth from above. The eagle misses the truthful meaning of the ground, unlike the mole that is in direct touch with it. Blake emphasizes the significance of experience in life, because man depends on it in his decisions. Indirectly speaking, Theotormon has to have a deeper knowledge of Oothoon in order for him to know her right worth and love, as Oothoon says:

And does my Theotormon seek this hypocrite modesty!

*This knowing, artful, secret, fearful, cautious, trembling hypocrite.
Then is Oothoon a whore indeed! and all the virgin joys
Of life are harlots: and Theotormon is a sick man's dream
And Oothoon is the crafty slave of selfish holiness.*

(Plate 6, ll. 16-20)

Oothoon, who could never be a whore, calls for honesty, whereas Theotormon sits mindless under the influence of Urizen. In her quest for free love, she prefers to be free from the limitations and restrictions of this society that is “*secret*,” “*artful*,” and “*fearful*.” She loves according to her own nature and desire and not in a sham way.

Plate 7

The spirit of freedom, Oothoon, disdains Urizen and his tyrannical laws, as she resumes:

*Father of Jealousy, be thou accursed from the earth!
Why hast thou taught my Theotormon this accursed thing?*

(ll. 12-13)

Oothoon denounces the traditional social ideas, by crying “*Love! Love! Love! happy happy love! free as the mountain wind!*” (l. 16) She seeks freedom by love, as she gets ‘*free-Joy*’ which shows “*mankind's desire for physical, economic, and spiritual freedom.*” (Gardner: 1962, 165) She rejects “*jealously*” and “*weepings all the day*,” because such things are the result of “*self-love that envies all.*” If this state goes on, a “*frozen marriage bed*” will be the outcome. Another reflection of this situation is found in Blake’s “*London*”:

*But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.*

She urges her fellow women to take a positive step towards freedom:

*But silken nets and traps of adamant will Oothoon spread,
And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold.*
(ll. 23-24)

Oothoon is obliged to catch the girls if necessary and lead them to the path of freedom. Some girls are made of “*silver*,” others of “*gold*,” though they are all the same for Oothoon:

*In lovely Copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon:
Red as the rosy morning, lustful as the first born beam,
Oothoon shall view his dear delight.*
(ll. 26-28)

Oothoon now seeks ‘*lovely Copulation*’ with Theotormon, as she wants to feel the joy of a sexual nature, being ‘*red as the rosy morning*.’ The state of innocence has become “*the condition when body and soul are one*.” (Murry: 1964, 121) Oothoon feels ecstasy and begins to sing with passion. She “*is a woman and also a continent longing for fruit in her fertile valleys. To say that she wants to be loved, not raped, is to say, economically, that she wants to be cultivated by free men, not slaves or slave-drivers; for joy, not for profit*.” (Erdman: 1966, 89) Oothoon believes “*every thing that lives is holy*,” (Plate 8, l. 10) since there is no difference between a slave and an Englishman. The poem ends with the illiberality of Theotormon who is still bound by the laws of prohibition:

*Thus every morning Wails Oothoorn, but Theotormon sits
Upon the margined Ocean conversing with shadows dire.
The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs.*
(Plate 8, ll. 11-13)

The poem is concluded with Oothoon’s mourning though she remains optimistic. It reflects her disappointment from Theotormon, who

"sits... with shadows dire," and her despair of fellow passive women who are not ready yet to take a positive action in order to break the chains that bind them. It also shows Blake's belief that women should have more cultivated and courageous minds, although Oothoon has tried to increase their awareness of the evils that surround them.

Blake's poem is a direct condemnation of the English social rules, religious codes, political restrictions, and hypocritical morality. He is a radical thinker who has lived in an age of revolutions seeking to stir the frigid norms of traditions, by calling for women to be free and equal with men, and hailing the causes of the slaves out of his utter belief in brotherhood.

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William Blake's Vision of Slavery and the Emancipation of Women in His "The Visions of the Daughters of Albion"

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William Blake (1757-1827) reflects in "The Visions of the Daughters of Albion" his concept of slavery and freedom specifically for women and generally for the human kind. There are three major characters in the poem: Oothoon who is "the soft soul of America," (1,1.3) stands for revolution and freedom. She has been raped by Bromion who wants to enslave her, but she reaches a state of innocence after experience. Theotormon is the frustrated lover who could not accept Oothoon's love, because he thinks that she has become impure after being raped. Finally, Bromion is the slave owner, being a representation of the hypocrite moral law in which Oothoon lives in. Concerning the origin of the names: Oothoon, Theotormon, Bromion, they have been traced to Ossian's Oithona, Tonthormod, and Brumo. "But the oo-oo doubling may come from African words in Stedman." (Erdman: 1966, 94)

Blake's vision is associated with the slaves of Africa and with the unjust laws of marriage in England during his time. William Sotheby wrote in 1717 *An Anti-Slavery Tract* in America in which he calls for equality. Blake might have been influenced by Sotheby, especially in his defence of the rights of people. There were other pamphlets written, for example, under the pseudonyms of, Sophia, two pamphlets had been circulating among the reading public, *Woman Not Inferior to Man* (1739) and *A Short Modern Vindication of the Natural Right of The Fair Sex and Women's Superior Excellence to Man* (1740). They are considered "the only prose works written ... of an identifiably feminist argument." (Jump: