

Blake's Vision of Slavery and Women's
Emancipation in
"The Vision of the Daughters of Albion"
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Abstract

"The Visions of the Daughters of Albion" reflects Blake's attitudes and ideas of slavery and freedom for women and the human kind in general. Blake's poem is a direct condemnation of the English social rules, religious codes, political restrictions, and hypocritical morality of the people. He is a radical thinker who has lived in an age of revolutions seeking to stir the frigid norms of traditions. He calls for women to be free and equal with men and that they should have more cultivated and courageous minds. Blake hails to the causes of the slaves out of his belief in brotherhood.

There are three major characters in the poem : Oothoon is *"the soft soul of America,"* who has been raped by Bromion in order to enslave her. She stands for revolution and freedom, but she has reached a state of innocence after experience. Theotormon is the frustrated lover who could not accept Oothoon's love for him, because he thinks that she is impure. He represents traditionalism in the way of thinking. Bromion is the hypocrite moral law in which Oothoon lives in including the Church practices. He is also the slave owner. So Oothoon's task is to increase the women awareness of the evils that surround them. The whole poem is built on an allegory through which Blake presents the entire historical and cultural scene of his time.

Introduction

"The Visions of the Daughters of Albion" reflects Blake's attitudes and ideas of slavery and freedom for women and the human kind in general. There are three major characters in the poem; namely, Oothoon, *"the soft soul of America"*(1, 1.3) who stands for revolution and freedom. She has been raped by Bromion in order that he enslaves her, but she has reached a state of innocence after experience. Theotormon, on the other hand, is the frustrated lover who could not accept Oothoon's love for him, because he thinks that she has become impure. Whereas Bromion is the hypocrite moral law which Oothoon lives in, and he is also the slave owner.

Blake's vision is associated with the slaves of Africa and with the unjust laws of marriage and inequality in England at his time, thus this poem is *"explored ...in the light of Mary Wollstonecraft's (1759-1797) Vindication of*

the Rights of Woman.”(1792) (Erdman: 1966,90). Wollstonecraft says in her book: “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). In other words, she believes in “free love, contending that partners should be able to satisfy one another sexually and that premarital and extramarital sexual activity was not inherently sinful.”(Sadock: 1976, 53). There were other pamphlets before Wollstonecraft’s book, for example, under a pseudonym of Sophia, two pamphlets were written; *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: 1994, 68) Blake could have read these pamphlets and they may have influenced him, for he wanted to show the imprisonment of women by the false moral laws of the society.

In the same year of the publication of Blake’s poem *The visions ...* 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), but it was not certain whether Blake wrote his poem before or after the publication of this romance which dealt with an imaginary society where marriages as institutions never exist, and where women were free to choose their lovers. This romance affected the reading public, even Shelley sent a letter to its author, saying:

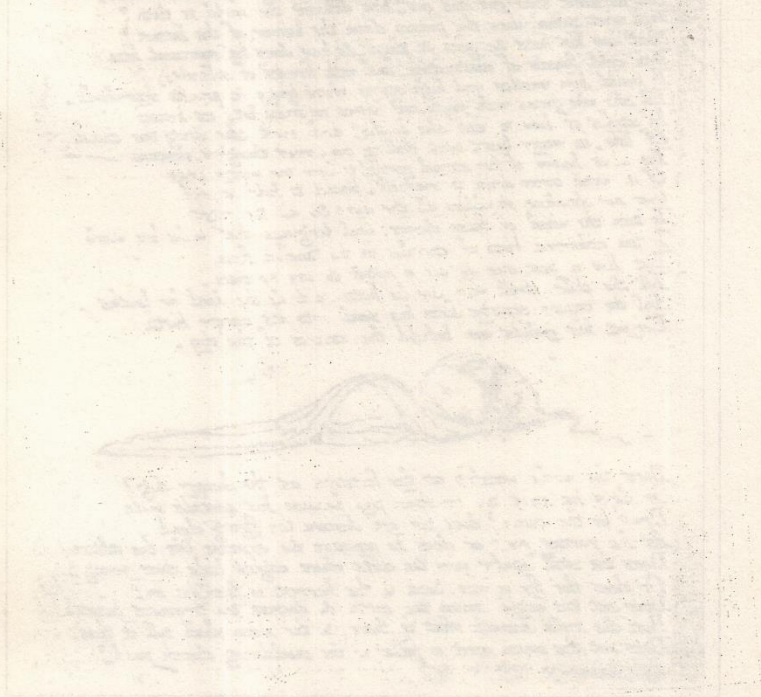
Your Empire of the Nairs ... succeeded in making me a perfect convert to its doctrines. I then entertained no doubts of the evil of marriage. Mrs. Wollstonecraft reasons too well for that; but I had been dull enough not to perceive the greatest argument against it, until developed in The Nairs.

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

Blake’s poem is an attack against “ the Abolition Society, whose trimming announcement in February 1792 that [the Parliament] did not desire ‘the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British colonies’ but only sought to end the ‘Trade for Slaves.’ ” (Erdman: 1966, 95) In 1717, William Southeby long before this wrote in America *An Anti-Slavery Tract* in which he called for equality. On the other hand, Thomas Paine had already finished *The Rights of Man* (1791) in which he propagated for democracy and brotherhood. At the same time, the Anti –Slavery Society adopted in England in 1787 their motto “Am I not a man and a brother?” (Prickett: 1981, 55) Furthermore, this poem is “an attack against William Wilberforce’s proposition in the Parliament that ‘women’s love is sin ...’ ” (Erdman : 1966,95). Blake used

many sources in his work, for example, he manipulated Ossian's ballad *Oithona*, where the heroine who had been raped preferred death to dishonour. Thus, the poem is a protest against Oithona, because Oothoon, in Blake's poem, refuses to accept the idea of a fallen woman.

Early in 1790's, Blake was preoccupied in making engravings for a book entitled "*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) Stedman fell in love with a young beautiful slave called Joanna, whom he married later, therefore, Blake's poem could also be the delineation of Stedman, as Theotorman, and Joanna as Oothoon. Concerning the origin of the names; Oothoon, Theotorman, Bromion, and Leutha, they are traced to Ossian's characters, namely, Oithona, Tonthormod, Brumo, and Lutha. "*But the oo-oo doubling may come from African words in Stedman.*" (Erdman: 1966, 94)



The Visions

The poem starts with an epigram "*The Eye Sees more than the Heart Knows.*" It is somehow ironic, because it reflects Blake's idea of the limited awareness of the human heart especially when it confronts a unique experience void of traditionalism, and "*it describes the perception used by the characters throughout most of the poem*" (Peterson: 1973, 253). The point stressed is that morality and traditional thought are relative and man is quite far away from perceiving truth and his true nature. This is also the motto of the poem, which is namely, the conflict between the heart or the what is felt and the eye or what is seen, as David Erdman says: "*The Heart must 'Know' before there can be a human freedom,*" (Erdman: 1966, 91) On the other hand, the poem can be interpreted in an allegorical way and this is why it is called the "*visions,*" that does not confine itself to one meaning and argument. The poem begins with the argument that 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, and her act of plucking a flower suggests "*falling deeply in love*" (Margoliouth: 1951, 93) with Theotormon. It may also suggest the desired experience of freedom and achieving equality. Though Bromion '*tore [her] virgin mantle in twain,*' and destroyed the virginity of Oothoon, he did not make her impure. Bromion's main aim is to enslave Oothoon, because '*Leutha's vale*' is a reference to "*Blake's place-name for the French Colony.*" (Erdman: 1966, 96) It was called, Santo Domingue Plantations of the Emigrés, in which negroes revolted in the year 1791.

Plate I

Blake says that the women of England are enslaved, thus 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*

(Plate 1, ll. 1-2)

The poet describes Oothoon who embodies the idea of freedom, just like America that is interpreted as "*the Golden World of Atlantean symbolism*" (Bloom: 1973, 51) It is also seen as the embodiment of democracy and

equality that resided in its utopian society. Blake claims that as long as false morality exists, all the daughters of England will remain slaves; that is a direct condemnation of the hypocritical English society. Furthermore, Oothoon is described as "*the soft soul of America*," but her freedom is not found, as Peter Fisher says, "*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) Oothoon has become an ideal which can be applied to any given time and place, for Blake describes her sexual experience as being free and not restrained at all:

*For the soft soul of America, Oothoon wandered in Woe,
Along the vales of Leutha seeking flowers to comfort her...*

(Plate 1, ll. 3-4)

Oothoon seeks '*flowers*' to comfort herself, which is symbolic in order to suggest that she is at first afraid of the joys of liberty, but then she turns to love (flowers). On another level of interpretation, David Erdman claims that she is "*looking for a further blossoming of the revolutionary spirit.*" (Erdman: 1966, 96) Thus, 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.*

(Plate 1, ll. 11-13)

Her '*whole soul seeks*' Theotormon, as though she is liberated by her love for him. In other words, Oothoon unites "*innocence and experience in the free act of love.*" (Fisher: 1961, 207). Later, she seeks her lover, "*Over the waves she went in wing'd exulting swift delight,*" so she flies to Theotormon in a sign of her freedom and joy, and she expects him to be happy, because "*the soul of sweet delight can never pass away.*" This means that the spirit of freedom and love is irrepensible, and on another level of explanation, Theotormon 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 those abolitionists "*stood for normal sexual relations*" (Prickett: 1981, 54) This was an obvious reference to the debate of 1789 that happened in the British Parliament between the abolitionists who gave excuses for slavery, and the Anti-Jacobins who stood entirely against any emancipation of slaves.

Bromion who is the embodiment of tyranny and restriction, tries to enslave Oothoon by raping her in order 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.

(Plate 1, ll. 16-17)

Despite Oothoon's woeful cries, Bromion calls her a 'harlot', which shows how the laws or (Bromion) make women look bad, while in reality they are innocent and pure. Bromion's speech reflects his savage and ferocious nature, because he says:

*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*

(Plate 1, ll. 18-23)

The meaning is very condensed, for the 'jealous dolphin' either refers to the jealousy of Theotormon, or to "the ships of the English Navy." (Gardner: 1962, 161) which 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 Northern and Southern America, claiming that they are "stampt with my signet" which is a reference to the mark, that is made on the slave, and Blake borrowed this image from Stedman's story. Bromion refers to the women of England as 'obedient,' and 'they resist not, they obey the scourge,' which is the result of the imposed English tyrannical laws. Women have become passive because 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 is now impure. He sits beside Bromion's cave, afraid of 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.*

(Plate 2, ll. 3-5)

Theotormon is presented as a sea whose waves are rolled around himself because of his jealousy and fear. On the other hand, he 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, [where] 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.*

(Plate 2, ll. 1-2)

Thus, the British government embodied by Theotormon cannot even protect the slave-child in its country.



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

The difference between Oothoon and Theotormon is that the latter sits because of Bromion's terror, 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.*

(Plate 2, ll. 6-10)

Theotormon weeps 'secret tears' that is the "condemnation of slavery, poverty, and repression." (Gardner: 1962, 162) We also hear 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 flaw 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 miserable condition of England reached a state where "Children [were] bought with money."

Oothoon, who is now pregnant from Bromion, gives birth to a child of "the burning fires of lust." The fire may also be interpreted as "the sullen authority of Urizen" (Gardner: 1962, 162) who is the One law, and the Father of Jealousy. At the same time, he represents the tyranny and rigidity of the English laws. The reference to "the religious caves" in which children "shiver" is the Platonic cave, which means that children and slaves are unaware of their miseries. Religion, on the other hand, has a hand in this bad situation.

On another level of interpretation, Bromion is viewed as "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) Nevertheless, 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 Theotormon's Eagles to prey upon her
flesh.*

(Plate 2, ll. 11-13)

Oothoon cannot weep like Theotormon, because she knows that she is clean and innocent. She calls for Theotormon's 'Eagles' which are a symbol of "portion of genius that [is] the soaring boundless inspiration." (Gardner: 1962, 162) or elevated ideas, in order to make him have a wider perception and to acknowledge her purity, which is also related to the motto of the poem.

"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) as 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 severly smiles, her soul reflects the smile;
As the clear spring mudded with feat of beasts grows pure & smiles.*

(Plate 2, ll. 14-19)

The reason why Oothoon allows the 'Eagles' to tear her body is to "let Theotormon, who is an adult version of the English child, see what is beneath [her] skin." (Erdman: 1966, 98) In other words, Oothoon possesses the same pure image of Theotormon, and there is no difference between a slave and an English man, or a woman and a man, thus, it is a call for equality, as David Erdman says: "[Like] 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 lover to rise above accusations of adultery." (Erdman: 1966, 99) But the women of England are still passive, they just watch:

*The Daughter 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...*

(Plate 2, ll. 20-23)

Oothoon tries to persuade her lover to break the dominions of Bromion's laws, and 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) Similarly, Oothoon is calling for the revolutionary spirit.

Theotormon has no wide perception, so he sits weeping and thinking that Oothoon's spirit is defiled and is bound forever, therefore he is enclosed in his five senses and Oothoon is urging him to widen his perspective.

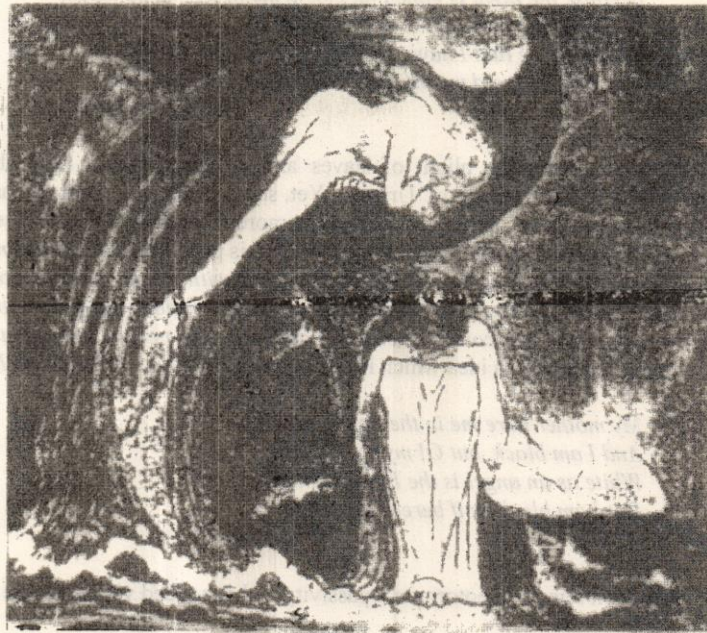


Fig. (3) Oothoon is hovering above Theotormon and persuading him in vain . We could see the sun of revolution rising, although Oothoon is chained up in her foot only. (Blake's engraving)

Oothoon refers to the East as a place for purity and liberation unlike the West where one finds chains and restrictions, as she says:

*... and 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...*

(Plate 2, ll. 25-28)

She insists that the spirit of revolution is ripe and ready to begin, because the 'Eagle' will 'shake the dust' of the spirits and 'awake the sun' of freedom. Eagles are associated with perception, therefore Oothoon is calling for a new stage of mind in Theotormon's beliefs:

... 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.
(Plate 2, ll. 28-32)

Oothoon shows the plight of slaves and even of all human kind who are enslaved by the doctrine of Urizen. Yet, she believes that everyone has the right to see and to perceive the world in more than the five physical senses. David Erdman elaborates, saying that Oothoon is pure "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) an idea which 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)

Oothoon rejects Theotormon's passivity and one-sided vision, as she says:

That Theotormon hears me not! to him the night and morn
And both alike: a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears.
(Plate 2, ll. 37-38)

Theotormon's condition is due to his lack of perception, and to his acceptance of the One law of Urizen.

Plate 3

Oothoon continues her speech about man's understanding which is a call not only for slaves or women but for all human beings:

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.
(Plate 3, ll. 7-9)

Oothoon denies the credibility of Urizen's One law, because she knows, as Northrop Frye says, that "every living thing has a unity and integrity of character, and because it has that there is an infinite variety of life which no

law can approximate." (Frye: 1970, 239) Urizen has one rigid law just like the "one law for the lion and the ox" (plate 4, l. 22) Oothoon thinks in another way, for she tries to find beauty and love in life that is why she is different from the others:

*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 Theotormon's breast.*

(Plate 3, ll. 17-20)

Oothoon's soul is not debased, and she rejects any defilement of her freedom and innocence. The worm in the fruit of life is part of life, just as any aspect of Oothoon's existence, therefore man has to accept the sweetness and bitterness of life. Theotormon wonders, saying:

*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.*

(Plate 3, ll. 22- 25)

He is aware of his subjection to the One law, but he does not act. 'Sorrows' that 'swim' upon 'mountains' refer to "the ancient high authority, [and] the lofty philosophical justification of tyranny." (Gardner: 1962, 163) Man is always bound by repressive forces from outside, but he has to resist in all of his life and not to be tied by them.

Plate 4

Theotormon feels that life has lost its meaning and there is no point of going on in life like a dead person, as he continues his speech:

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

(Plate 4, ll. 1-2)

He expresses the despair of the lovers, the slaves, and the poor people who try to forget their miseries by drinking "Gin [which] was the drink of poverty." (Gardner: 1962, 163) Theotormon begins to philosophize his beliefs in life but he is afraid that such beliefs may carry him away. But 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.*

(Plate 4, ll. 13-16)

Bromion's speech is cynical and political, since it is "implicitly 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) At the same time, it is a satire against the Church and the priests who serve the purposes of slavers and kings. Bromion, for instance, covers himself with pious religious teaching in order to serve his aim in enslaving more people.

*And is there not eternal fire, and eternal chains?
To bind the phantoms of existence from eternal life?*

Hell is shown to be necessary to keep poor labourers afraid of it, and to hinder them from continuing their "eternal life."

Plate 5

Oothoon cries for joy and happiness which are the basic ingredients for a healthy life, saying:

*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.*

(Plate 5, ll. 3-5)

She recognizes the nature of Bromions' rhetorical speeches, and "asserts the essential uniqueness of every thing that lives." (Gardner, *Infinity on the Anvil*: 1954, 53) She wonders again:

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

(Plate 5, ll. 7-8)

Rich and authoritative people do not feel the same passions of the poor. In other words, Oothoon is ridiculing 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*

(Plate 5, ll. 17-20)

Oothoon shows the misdeeds of the priests who have a great role in enslaving people by religion, as David Erdman says: "*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) It further echoes what Blake has written 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 uses an ironic tone in a way to attack the injustice inflicted by those religious men. 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!*

(Plate 5, ll. 21-23)

She describes the "*loveless marriages,*" (Margoliouth: 1951, 95) by which women are enchained '*in spells of law,*' for they live without passion for their husbands "*Till the child dwell with one he hates, and do the deed he loaths.*" (Plate 5, 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.*

(Plate 5, ll. 39-40)

It is an attack against Urizen's law which stands high above men like the eagle and believes nothing lies inside those people.

Plate 6

Oothoon condemns the façade which Theotormon lives in, and reveals what the latter thinks about in a rather bitter tone:

*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)

She calls for honesty and could not believe herself to be a whore, since she is free from the limitations and restrictions of this society that is "secret," "artful," and "fearful," and she seeks free love; in the sense that, she loves according to her own nature and desire and not in a sham way, while Theotormon sits under the influence of Urizen.

Plate 7

Oothoon overtly curses the blind laws that tied her lover into a limited belief in jealousy and traditionalism:

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

(Plate 7, ll. 12-13)

The spirit of freedom, Oothoon, disdains Urizen and his tyrannical laws, and cries wholeheartedly: "Love! Love! Love! happy happy love! free as the mountain wind!" (Plate 7, l. 16). She seeks freedom by love and she gets 'free-Joy' which shows "mankind's desire for physical, economic, and spiritual freedom." (Gardner: 1962, 165)

Moreover, Oothoon rejects "jealously" and "weeping all the day," since 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.*

As a matter of fact, 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.*
(Plate 7, ll. 23-24)

Oothoon is obliged to save the girls if necessary and lead them to the way of freedom, since some of them are made of "silver," others of "gold," but, for Oothoon, they are all made of the same substance:

*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.*
(Plate 7, ll. 26-28)

She seeks 'lovely Copulation' with Theotormon to feel the joy which also reflects a sexual experience that is '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 on another level of interpretation, she becomes "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)

Moreover, Oothoon says "every thing that lives is holy," (Plate 8, l. 10) that is to say, there is no difference between a slave and an English man. 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 wailing while she remains optimistic which reflects her disappointment in Theotormon who sits doing nothing, and in her fellow women who are passive and not yet ready to take a positive action to break the chains that bind them. This 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 of the people. 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 belief in brotherhood.

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