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## A Crucial Line in Visions of the Daughters of Albion

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## A NEW PIECE OF TAYLORIANA James King

A manuscript notebook closely related to Thomas Taylor has been acquired by the Division of Archives and Special Collections, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University. The notebook, "The only fragments which remain of the Writings of the Philosopher Celsus," seems to be the working notes for the Celsus portion of Taylor's 1830 *Arguments of Celsus, Porphyry, and the Emperor Julian, Against the Christians . . .* (the cover title reads *Fragments of Porphyry, Julian, &c. against the Christians*). The notebook (3 3/4 x 5 3/4 inches, 104 pages, undated with no watermarks) contains a translation of all of Celsus's anti-Christian writings, as preserved by Origen; the Celsus section of Taylor's book contains only a portion of Celsus's attack against Christianity, frequently interrupted by Taylor's commentary.

Although the notebook is not in Taylor's hand, it might well be a translation prepared on his behalf or Taylor's working notes as transcribed by an amanuensis. Two circumstances make the

latter case the more likely. First, aside from Taylor, there is no significant interest in Celsus's religious writings in the 1820's and 30's. Second, the manuscript was found in the stockroom of the late Donald Berry of Eltham. In the same location was recently discovered the 1929-30 commonplace book of W. G. Meredith (1804-31), which contains the first positive evidence that Blake knew Taylor (see my "The Meredith Family, Thomas Taylor, and William Blake," *Studies in Romanticism*, 11 [1972], 153-57). Although one must exercise caution in determining the extent of the dependency of *Arguments of Celsus* on "The only fragments . . .," the notebook is a piece of evidence of real interest to students of Taylor.

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## A CRUCIAL LINE IN *VISIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ALBION* Roland A. Duerksen

Perhaps the most elusive while also the most significant line in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is plate 2, line 5: "Bound back to back in Bromion's caves, terror and meekness dwell." Blake's full-plate illustration for this and the succeeding two lines depicts two human figures chained back to back in a cave. They are a rugged male with fear-distorted face and an utterly dejected female. Nearby, at the cave's entrance, another male figure (clearly identified in the text as Theotormon) abjectly sits, hiding his face in his folded arms. The generally-accepted interpretation is that the bound figures are Bromion and Oothoon.<sup>1</sup> Neither the characterizations of these two nor the narrative progression of the poem, however, seems to support this reading.

An alternate and, in my opinion, more plausible interpretation is that the two bound figures are, indeed, terror and meekness. Thus juxtaposed, masculinity terrified and femininity meekly submissive constitute the very principle upon which Bromion maintains his position as slave-holder. Throughout the poem Bromion is tyrannical and blatantly assertive. Quite the contrary of a prisoner subdued and shackled in his own habitat, he has exercised his power to bind terror and meekness together, thus subjecting them totally to his will and purposes.

As indicated by plate 2, line 22, and the illuminated portion of plate 4 (where the chain

about her ankle appears loosened), Oothoon is free to hover about the hopeless, weeping, deafened Theotormon at the entrance to the cave, presenting the case for liberation as persuasively as she can. In the light of this liberated activity on her part, the explanation that Oothoon is bound meekly back to back with Bromion appears incongruous with regard to both characterization and narrative continuity. The binding of terror and meekness in Bromion's caves becomes, then, symbolically the oppression of mind and spirit from which Oothoon seeks to liberate the enslaved daughters of Albion--and from which Blake seeks to liberate us.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (New York: Henry Holt, 1946), p. 249; Stanley Gardner, *Infinity on the Anvil: A Critical Study of Blake's Poetry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), p. 51; Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 112; S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence, R. I.: Brown Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 308, 437; and David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, rev. ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), p. 236.