



September 1976

Blake's "Auguries of Innocence"

Janet Warner

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq>

Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 12, no.3, September 1976, p.126-138

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Quarterly by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

Blake's "Auguries of Innocence"

by JANET WARNER

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour*

THE FIRST FOUR LINES of Blake's "Auguries of Innocence"¹ are probably among the most widely quoted of his verses, and the title itself as well known as "The Tyger," and yet it is surprising that few scholars have attempted to discuss the poem in its entirety. In fact, it has been the usual practice of critics to ignore the structure of the poem on the grounds that it has *no* total form.²

Editors from Rossetti to the present have tried various re-arrangements of Blake's lines in order to give the poem what they consider greater thematic unity: Sampson thought it "a number of disconnected proverb-couplets"³ and most recently Erdman has referred to its "desultory sequence."⁴ This difficulty in accepting Blake's arrangement is interesting because Blake himself seems to have had no doubts about the poem's structure. The poem exists in fair copy in the Pickering Manuscript, where the absence of deletions or emendations suggest that Blake was quite confident of its arrangement.⁵ The cause of the editors' and

1. Quotations from Blake are from *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, David V. Erdman (Garden City, New York, 1970).

2. I have not found any extended studies of "Auguries of Innocence": John Beer's four illuminating pages in *Blake's Humanism* see "a loose organization which goes some way to compensate for its lack of a total form" and recognize that there is a basic vision behind the poem in relation to which all the couplets must be seen. See *Blake's Humanism* (Manchester, 1968), pp. 197-201. See also John Grant, "Apocalypse in Blake's Auguries of Innocence," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. V, 1964. Although this article deals mainly with the beginning and end of the poem, in a footnote Grant suggests a plan for reorganization without explanation, and with a hint of a future paper to discuss it. Since Erdman has acknowledged Grant's advice in his reorganization (see Appendix) I have not included Grant's note here. I regret that Grant's paper came to my attention too late to correspond with him about his current opinions.

3. John Sampson, *The Poetical World of William Blake* (Oxford, 1905), p. 287.

4. Erdman, p. 778.

5. The Pickering Manuscript poems are generally assumed to belong to the late Felpham period, circa 1803. The manuscript is in the collection of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne. Part of the manuscript of *Auguries of Innocence* has been reproduced in the catalogue of G. E. Bentley, Jr. *The Blake Collection of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne* (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 1971), Plates XXII and XXIII. The Facsimile of the Pickering Manuscript has been published by the Morgan Library, edited by C. Ryskamp, 1972. Erdman calls "Auguries" in the manuscript "a fair copy but a hasty one, with much mending of letters" (p. 778).

perhaps the reader's disquiet lies in the apparent randomness of the couplets, yet if attention is paid to the title alone, the poem's apparently "desultory sequence" is not perhaps as much a riddle as it first appears. For after all *augury* is the practice of predicting future events from the apparent *disorder* of natural phenomena, in other words, making coherent connections rather than merely indicating sequence. What we are dealing with, then, are the language patterns of prophecy, and like the ambiguous sayings of the oracles, there may be relevance in the fact that we can take the sequence of aphorisms in more than one order if we desire. Assuming, however, that the order of the verses was acceptable to Blake, this paper attempts a close look at the patterns of language of the poem, as they emerge through collocating items, or lexical sets.⁶ The patterns are found to be remarkably coherent, and the poem is found to be, not surprisingly, a microcosm of Blake's thought.

Blake's title for the poem, "Auguries of Innocence," gives us immediately food for thought about the meaning of the poem. The O.E.D. tells us that an *Augur*⁷ is: "a religious official among the Romans whose duty it was to predict future events and advise upon the course of public business, in accordance with omens derived from flight, singing and feeding of birds, the appearance of the entrails of sacrificial victims, astral phenomena, and other portents." The birds, animals, insects and human beings which people this poem provide the omens or auguries which the poet-augur reads for us and upon which he prophesies — this is clear enough. But are we to infer that *innocence* is dead, that it has been sacrificed? Except for the first four lines of the poem, it certainly seems so. The *Auguries* of Innocence are all that is left in a world of Experience, yet they are the key to seeing "a world in a Grain of Sand."⁸ An Augury is also an augural observation, ceremony, or rite (OED 1, 563, col. 3). This meaning reinforces the idea of sacrifice, emphasizing the ritual nature of the activity. Since a rite is an ordered sequence of human and/or animal behaviour, the auguries here should be considered to reflect order: if Blake has given us this hint so clearly in his title, we should try to follow it up.

Another puzzling question arises immediately: grammatically how are

6. Collocation is "the company lexical items keep" or "their propensity for particular neighbours and environments." This approach is derived from the work of J. R. Firth and M. A. K. Halliday as it has been developed by Michael Gregory and Richard Handscombe. See especially Michael Gregory, "A Theory for Stylistics Exemplified," *Language and Style*, VII (Spring 1974); and Richard Handscombe, "George Herbert's *The Collar*," *Language and Style*, IV (Winter 1970). I am grateful to Richard Handscombe for helpful advice and for reading an early draft of this paper.

7. Phonologically, the word can also be *auger*, a carpenter's tool for boring holes in wood, an instrument for boring in the soil or strata of the earth. Richard Handscombe pointed out that even this meaning can be valid, for if the poem is looked upon as a sampling of social strata taken at random on the earth, you would find a seemingly unrelated group of peoples, animals, etc. No possible association can be completely ruled out linguistically.

8. Sampson remarked that some of the couplets in the latter half of the poem are reminiscent of the *Songs of Experience*, p. 287.

we to read the first four lines? The quatrain can be read as two parallel infinitive clauses (with "To" omitted before "Hold") — all of which leaves the lines dangling in air. This is the way they are most often read, I believe. It is also possible to read the first two lines as a dependent clause with "Hold" as an imperative. A reader feels that the quatrain could be a *demonstration* of the title and that Blake might have punctuated it as follows, making the first four lines part of his title: "*Auguries of Innocence: To See a World in a Grain of Sand. . .*" Blake did not make his meaning even this explicit, but perhaps he did not feel it necessary. About the time he must have been composing these verses, he was probably working on sketches for *Hayley's Designs to a Series of Ballads* (1802) and the cheerful monotony of Hayley's doggerel, which deals as the title page says, with "Anecdotes relating to Animals"⁹ might have convinced Blake of the superiority of imaginative ambiguity. (One wonders what Blake privately thought of Hayley's stanzas, knowing the extent of his own underrated talents: "The Poison of the Honey Bee / Is the Artist's Jealousy.")

The first four lines of the poem, however grammatically they may be separated from the rest of the poem's couplets, are nevertheless keystones of the poem as far as language patterns are concerned. Here occur words which belong to the lexical sets of *cosmology* (*World, Heaven, Infinity*), *time* (*Eternity, hour*), *nature* (*grain, sand, Wild Flower*), *humanity* (*palm of your hand*), and *prophecy* (*To See*). (I have not attempted to be exhaustive in recording the lexical items in this poem, but rather will give short lists to indicate patterns that the reader will be able to further investigate.¹⁰ For example, the *prophecy* set includes, besides the title base-word *augur*, *see*, *predict*, *know*, etc.)

The next two lines of the poem introduce another element, that of *emotion* (*Rage*), which along with *nature* and *humanity* comprise the

9. Hayley wrote eventually 16 Ballads "for young Readers" with the following titles: "The Dog," "The Elephant," "The Eagle," "The Stag," "The Stork," "The Panther," "The Grateful Snake," "The Fatal Horse," "The Lion," "The Swan," "The Hermit's Dog," "The Halcyon," "The Serpents," "The Goat," "The Baya," "The Horse." See Hayley's *Ballads* (Chichester, 1805). Sample stanzas from "The Dog":

Often in India's sultry soil
To brace the languid limb,
'Twas Edward's pleasure, after toil,
To take a fearless swim.

Bold in a flood he lov'd to leap,
When full the current flow'd;
Nor dreamt the water, dark and deep
the crocodile's abode.

And fearless he and Fido oft,
Along the stream would glide;
Their custom from the bank aloft
To vault into the tide!

10. A stimulating general discussion of Blake's most frequently used words as revealed by the *Concordance* is found in "Blake's Frame of Language" by Josephine Miles in *William Blake: Essays in honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, ed. Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford, 1973), pp. 86-95.

longest string of words in the poem.¹¹ The emotions range from *Rage* to *fright* and *grief*, from *Jealousy*, *Passion*, and *Misery* to *Joy* and *sweet delight*. But it is significant that the poem begins with "Rage" in Heaven and "Shudders" in Hell: cosmic reactions to what most people might consider pleasant sights — caged birds. This suggests the seriousness of the crime of insensitivity, and the poem continues to catalogue such crimes. The *bird*, *animal*, and *insect* sets, which I would list separately from *nature* for clarity's sake, are accompanied often by items of *sound*. If one listens to this poem, one hears outcries, calls, songs, howls, shouts: "The Bleat the Bark Bellow and Roar / Are Waves that Beat on Heaven's Shore."

By far the longest string of words in the poem belong to the *humanity* set. Almost every walk of life is suggested here from *Beggar* to *Prince*, from *Farmer* to *Soldier* to *labrer*, from *gambler* to *Whore*. Not only *Man*, *Woman*, *Infant*, *Child* contribute to this pageant, but also parts of the human form: *hand*, *palm*, *Brain*, *blood*, *sweat*, *foot*. Furthermore, human qualities are attributed to the *Rising Sun*, who is affrighted, to *Envy*, who has a foot, to the *Lamb*, who forgives, to *Lame Philosophy*, who smiles. While this sort of personification is common to all poetry, its frequency in this poem emphasizes the great Blakean theme of the human form of all creation.

Consistent with the implications of its title, the augur gives political advice. The political set includes references to *Public Strife*, *War*, the *Nation's Fate*, and *Old England*; it includes also the humanization of abstract qualities, such as "the realms of death," and "The Realms of day." Allied with this group are *commerce* words: *gold*, *farthing*, *poor man*, *miser*, *beggar*, *buy and sell*, *sell and buy*.

The words which collocate with both of these sets and the emotion and cosmology sets as well, and thus provide an image which gives the poem remarkable coherence, are the *woven-clothing* words. The *Prince's Robes* are juxtaposed with the *Beggar's Rags* to criticize miserliness (ll. 50-52), and later the *Beggar's Rags* tear the Heavens to rags (ll. 75-76). *Joy* and *Woe* are the woven silken clothing of the soul (ll. 59-62), and this material contrasts with the winding sheet of "Old England" which is made of Harlot's cries. A further cohesive structural principle of this poem is contrast: *Joy and Woe*, *Heaven and Hell*, *day and night*, *Truth and Lies*, *Doubt and Belief*, *Misery and Sweet delight*. These contrasts reinforce the atmosphere of two-fold vision, the "contraries" of the state of Experience where suffering Innocence provides the auguries. Words of *wounding* emphasize the state of experience: *Tear*, *wound*, *hurt*, *kill*, *torment*, *beat*, *strike*, *deform*. A set of words

11. The *Nature* set includes also: *Sun*, *Night*, *Leaf*, *Summer*, *Waves*, *Shore*, *Air*, *Fruit*, *Season*, *Plow*, *Moon*, *Morn*, etc. The *Humanity* set includes items both of physiology and character: *palm*, *hand*, *blood*, *Brain*, *Butcher*, *Men*, *Woman*, *Boy*, *Mother*, *Beggar*, *Widow*, *Artist*, *Prince*, *Babe*, *Infant*, *Whore*, *Gambler*, and so on.

made up of *absolutes* underlines the moral framework of the poem: *Innocence, Truth, Lies, right, Age, Death, Faith, Doubt, Knowledge, Good, Fate, Philosophy*. These absolutes, combining with the lexis of *cosmology* and *religion*, provide a wide screen against which suffering man and nature is projected, dissolving in the poem's final lines into the daylight image of the human form.

By this exercise, I hope I have shown briefly that this poem has a coherence which does not depend upon the order of the couplets. I shall now attempt to show that these lexical links nevertheless reveal a purposeful structure to Blake's own order.

All the poems in the Pickering Manuscript have musical connotations. Erdman noted, "They are all ballads ranging from the lyrical to the gnomic."¹² If a 'gnomic ballad' is possible, that is what "Auguries" may be called; however, I feel a clearer analogy may be simply to call it "Variations on a Theme of Experience." All the poems of the PM might be classified as songs of Experience. In the main these poems deal with emotional states, and often with a sense of loss (especially "The Golden Net," "The Mental Traveller," "The Land of Dreams," "The Crystal Cabinet"); "Auguries" is virtually alone of the group in dealing with external nature to any extent. In this respect it may provide a balancing effect to the other poems of more personal experience, and it certainly picks up a political note sounded in "The Grey Monk," the poem which immediately precedes it in the manuscript.

The musical analogy may be applied to "Auguries" in more detail. Sampson thought it a "curious fact" that Blake seemed to be treating themes alternately, "interweaving one with another like the rimes in a canto of terza rima."¹³ Since this kind of interweaving conforms to the random idea of "auguries" it seems to me consistent with Blake's title, and worth pursuing.

The "themes" which Sampson refers to are really groups of lines which cohere around certain lexical sets such as I indicate (e.g., *insects, commerce, belief*). Sampson's own editorial rearrangement is actually based on this principle.¹⁴ (I shall have more to say on the subject of rearrangement presently.) But looking closely at the poem's original patterning we find:¹⁵

Prelude Lines 1-4: keynotes sounded of *prophecy, humanity, nature, time, cosmology*, as already noted.

A (a) Lines 5-24: deal with human cruelty or kindness to birds and animals and the cosmic result. (Lines 9-10 and 21-24 also introduce political set.)¹⁶

12. Erdman, p. 777. Ballads generally have a 4 beat line and the traditional ballad measure is 4a3b4c3b. In the PM rhyme schemes vary, and the poems are in tetrameters with the exception of *The Smile* (3') and *Long John Brown* (6').

13. Sampson, p. 288.

14. Sampson, pp. 292-295.

15. Cf. Sampson, p. 287.

16. *Political set* includes these words: *Public, Strife, War, Prince, Rod, Realm, Nation, Caesar, Crown*, etc.

- B (b) Lines 25-28 introduce the lexis of *belief* and *doubt* and use flying creatures (*bat, owl*) to symbolize human faults or vices.
- A₁ (c) Lines 29-44 repeat the theme of A, this time introducing the lexis of *insects* among the animals (*Fly, Spider, Chafer, Moth, Butterfly, Gnat, etc.*).
- B₁ (d) Lines 45-52 return to the idea of human faults and vices, this time symbolized by insects. Humans begin to be named, such as *Beggar, Artist, Prince, Miser*.
- Coda (e) Lines 53-62: a reflection on preceding themes, emphasizing the lexis of *emotion* which has accompanied the former themes. ("Joy & Woe are woven fine / A Clothing for the soul divine"). The lexis of *woven-clothing*, which has appeared before in words such as weaves, robes, rags, is here also made explicit.
- A₂ (f) Lines 63-78: the theme of human cruelty and cosmic reverberation returns, but this time the concern is man's cruelty to man, especially Babe and Beggar.
- C (g) Lines 79-84: lexis of *commerce* and *politics* strongly re-introduced, related to the cruelty of the preceding passage ("One Mite wrung from the Labrer's hands . . .").
- B₂ (h) Lines 85-96: return of lexis of *doubt* and *belief*, but in *human* terms, rather than bird symbols, as formerly ("He who mocks the Infants Faith . . .").
- C₁ (i) Lines 97-102: return of *commerce* and *politics* (Caesar, gold and gems, peaceful Arts).
- B₃ (j) Lines 103-110: again *doubt* and *belief* with lexis of *nature* as well as *insects* and *animals*.
- C₂ (k) Lines 111-118: *politics* and *commerce* again, linked up with *emotion* (Passion, Cry) and *death*. From now on there is no more *animal* lexis in the poem, only human.
- Recapitulation Lines 119-124: *Joy* and *woe* themes re-iterated ("Some are Born to Sweet Delight / Some are Born to Endless Night").
- Finale Lines 125-132: *belief* and *cosmology, religion* and *prophecy*. The final lines deal with *vision* as did the opening lines.

This is indeed a musical pattern: Blake's original order does seem to have more coherence and appropriateness than editors have supposed. There is a kind of orchestration of language here in which the separate couplets can reflect the whole and still be integral parts of a larger plan: a rhetorical demonstration of seeing the world in a grain of sand.

Of course, language patterns in one way or another have been the underlying principle of all editorial arrangements, though it has seldom been explicitly stated. The three most important arrangements of "Auguries" are those of D. G. Rossetti, John Sampson, and David V. Erdman, as I have mentioned. (See Appendix for a table of detailed line comparisons.) The earliest is Rossetti's, which appeared in Volume Two of Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake* in 1863. It is somewhat idiosyncratic, and occasionally re-writes Blake, as when "A Skylark wounded in the wing / A Cherubim does cease to sing" becomes "A skylark wounded on the wing / Doth make a cherub cease to sing"; Rossetti also often changes verb forms: "Does" to *do* or *shall* so that Blake's meaning is altered:

COLBY LIBRARY QUARTERLY

Blake: One Mite wrung from the Labrer's hands
 Shall buy & sell the Misers Lands
 Or if protected from on high
 Does that whole Nation sell & buy

Rossetti: One mite wrung from the labourer's hands,
 Shall buy and sell the miser's lands,
 Or, if protected from on high,
 Shall that whole nation sell and buy;

Such small changes are able to take a good deal of life and immediacy out of a poem. Even the removal of capitalization has a curious flattening effect: it de-emphasizes the variety of people and creatures in the poem. However, the most important aspect of Rossetti's arrangement for us is the effect of many lines being moved about quite radically. Sampson in 1905 was quite upset about this:

[Rossetti's arrangement] . . . which has been adapted by all later editors except Shepherd, readable as it appears on first glance, seems to me to do great violence to the author's meaning. Passages are torn from their context and given an entirely different sense, by being placed in an artificial position. An example of this may be seen in Rossetti's penultimate section, where, by the juxtaposition of two separate passages, Blake is made to argue that a correct apprehension of the fact that some are born to misery and endless night will enable us to go through life with safety.¹⁷

It is true that Rossetti generally moves about Blake's lines for little discernible reason — whereas when Sampson or Erdman move lines they tend to group them thematically, or in meaningful lexical groups, Rossetti just seems to scramble lines for the sake of it. I have unsuccessfully tried to imagine Rossetti's reasons for combining the following lines:

The wild deer wandering here and there	21
Keep the human soul from care:	22
The lamb misused breeds public strife,	23
And yet forgives the butcher's knife.	24
Kill not the moth nor butterfly,	39
For the last judgment draweth nigh;	40
The beggar's dog, and widow's cat,	43
Feed them, and thou shalt grow fat.	44
Every tear from every eye	67
Becomes a babe in Eternity;	68
The bleat, the bark, bellow and roar,	71
Are waves that beat on Heaven's shore.	72

Aside from grammatical changes,¹⁸ the first of which generalizes Blake's meaning, Rossetti also leaves out the second half of the section:

Every Tear from Every Eye	68
Becomes a Babe in Eternity	69

17. Sampson, p. 288.

18. Rossetti's grammatical changes: "Keep" for "Keeps" (l. 22); "shalt" for "wilt" (l. 44).

JANET WARNER

133

This is caught by Females bright 70
 And returned to its own delight 71

In Rossetti's version of "Auguries," lines 70-71 never appear anywhere.

On the other hand, the juxtaposition of the passages Sampson especially objects to in the quote cited above (ll. 119-24, 59-62, 55-58) *can* be justifiably combined, for "misery," "delight," "joy," and "woe" are expected collocations which Blake has been using throughout the poem. Sampson's judgment against the arrangement is based on his dislike of the sentiment.

This brings us to one of the problem points of the poem as it stands, lines 53-62:

A truth thats told with bad intent
 Beats all the Lies you can invent
 It is right it should be so 55
 Man was made for Joy & Woe
 And when this we rightly know
 Thro the World we safely go
 Joy & Woe are woven fine
 A Clothing for the Soul divine 60
 Under every grief & pine
 Runs a joy with silken twine

Sampson makes the point that ll. 55-58 and 59-62 "appear to have been mistakenly copied down in inverted order."¹⁹ This could make good sense and Erdman follows this re-arrangement so that this section reads:

A truth thats told with bad intent
 Beats all the Lies you can invent
 Joy & Woe are woven fine
 A Clothing for the Soul divine
 Under every grief & pine
 Runs a joy with silken twine
 It is right it should be so
 Man was made for Joy & Woe
 And when this we rightly know
 Thro the World we safely go

One can still maintain, however, that the passages could remain as the manuscript stands, with line 55 referring to badly intended truths, and not be incoherent.

Neither Sampson nor Erdman feel that "a truth thats told . . ." should follow lines 51-2. Sampson noted, "It has the appearance of being an afterthought, perhaps in the nature of a personal reflection on one of the chief modes by which 'slander,' 'envy,' and 'jealousy' work for evil."²⁰ With such a good insight, one wonders why Sampson still felt uncomfortable with Blake's order.

The interchangeability of lines which is such a notable feature of this

19. Sampson, p. 287.

20. Sampson, p. 287.

poem can lead us to some further observations. When we ask of the language, "how does it work?", we find it works because of the lexical patterns we have already noted, and also because the poem's couplets are nearly all declarative sentences which are easily moved about. Thus almost any re-arrangement can be made to work one way or another — some more satisfactorily than others. Both Sampson and Erdman follow thematic arrangements which satisfy the reader better than Rossetti's, because they fulfill our expectation regarding collocation. However, in my opinion there is also a drawback to a too scrupulous attention to thematic groupings: the reader can become weary with it all: there are just too many examples of one particular kind all at once. I appreciate Blake's original interweaving of themes as a dynamic arrangement.

Turning now to a closer look at some of the poem's lines, the aphorisms of "Auguries of Innocence" are individual prophetic utterances which are endlessly evocative. The over-all lexical pattern tells us that all of Nature is an augury of an eternal Human Form; individual couplets support this theme in more particular ways.

The couplets of the first part of the poem define the bonds between all living creatures and imply violent results to body and spirit when these bonds are broken. To deprive the robins and doves of freedom causes rage and upheaval in heaven and hell; to starve a dog presages political ruin; to misuse a horse is to invoke the spilling of human blood in return. Later the same call for revenge in heaven and hell is raised by cruelty to children and the poor:

The Babe that weeps the Rod beneath
Writes Revenge in realms of death
The Beggars Rags fluttering in Air
Does to Rags the Heavens tear

Yet Revenge is not enough: nothing less than apocalypse is implied by the breaking of natural bonds:

Every Wolfs & Lions howl
Raises from Hell a Human Soul

and in one of the two imperatives in the poem:

Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh

Here we may also assume Blake's familiarity with the butterfly or moth as symbol of the soul,²¹ and thus the links of human and natural world are even further emphasized. These connections are again evident in the couplet:

21. This is fully discussed by Irene H. Chayes, "The Presence of Cupid and Psyche," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, eds. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, 1970), pp. 214-243.

Each outcry from the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear

A few lines later the natural creature is *completely* identified with the human brain:

The Bat that flits at close of Eve
Has left the Brain that wont Believe

This complete identification of man and creature is the reason why the Owl speaks the Unbeliever's fright or the Gnat is poisoned by Slander. The *humanity* words (I count 52 in all) continue to dominate the latter parts of the poem where they are related to the many other lexical patterns already noted. Some of the lines remind us vividly of the poem "London" in *Songs of Experience*, where the 'youthful Harlot's curse' which blighted the 'Marriage hearse' was perhaps the germ of the idea extended in "Auguries" to include the blight on the whole Nation. The "Marriage hearse" becomes "dead England's hearse" and the Harlot is paired with the Gambler as determining the fate of the Nation. These are no doubt two of those who are born to misery in "Auguries of Innocence," a work which catalogues so many of man's emotions in a world of experience.

The lexis of *doubt* and *belief* in the poem deserves our attention, because as John Beer observed, some of the couplets can read "like cautionary verses for the children of pious households" if a reader is not aware that: "'Belief' does not consist of subscribing to a set of doctrinal articles, but of joining in the general affirmation by which the universe exists: 'If the Sun & Moon should doubt / Theyd immediately Go out' " (*Blake's Humanism*, p. 198). The Bat in the human "Brain that wont Believe" is a spectre, if we may bring Blake's visual symbols to bear here (bat wings are given to the spectre in J6 and J33, and to Satan in *Satan Exulting Over Eve*, for example). Lexis of *doubt* or unbelief is collocated with *night*, *fright*, and *rotting grave*. The couplet "He who replies to Words of Doubt / Doth put the Light of Knowledge Out" seems at first to contradict the other aphorisms by approving of Doubt. But on closer examination we see that we have just been told that "the Child's Toys & the Old Mans Reasons" are the fruits of their respective ages, and a "Questioner . . . / Shall never know how to Reply" (ll. 91-95) — therefore, Reason being but a Toy, a Reply to words of Doubt will only be a reply by a Questioner who has no true knowledge. The "endless Night" of the poem's penultimate lines belongs to the unbelievers who Doubt from what they see and are led to "Believe a Lie" because they do not see "Thro" their eyes. The lexis of *doubt* and *belief* and true vision or *prophecy* are thus closely related in the finale of the poem which contrasts the vision of the corporeal eye which was "Born in a Night to perish in a Night" with the vision of those "who Dwell in Realms of day."

A closer look at the *clothing* words will demonstrate the basis of one

of the poem's main images. Although there are only twelve lexical items in this set, its collocation with all the other main sets of the poem make it a vital unifying element.

In their first appearance, "Princes Robes & Beggars Rags" occur in the same line (l. 51), and in the next line they are identified with nature — "Toadstools on the Misers Bags." This suggests that both poverty and wealth (of which clothing²² is the emblem) are both powerless in the face of greed. The Beggar's clothing as symbol of his need — "Rags fluttering in Air" — lacerates Heaven in lines 75-6:

The Beggars Rags fluttering in Air
Does to Rags the Heavens Tear

The repetition of "Rags" and the immediate transferring of the association from the human body to the Heavens suggests a fabric sky being shredded — an apocalypse again. This also emphasizes the relation between man and the cosmos. The *clothing* lexis is next used in lines 59-62, where the soul is clothed in a fabric woven of Woe and the silken twine of Joy. The lines immediately following carry on the fabric idea in the reference to the "swaddling Bands" or clothing of infancy: words which find their grim echo in the winding sheet of Old England later in the poem, where the fabric is now made of the cry of the Harlot, as I mentioned earlier.

In the lines:

He who torments the Chafers sprite
Weaves a bower in endless Night

the image of human cruelty creating its own forever dark enclosure suggests a cocoon, and indeed the "Caterpillar on the Leaf" is the next line in the poem. The cocoon implication prepares the way for the swaddling Bands of a later line, and the winding sheet is the final form of the image, gathering all the lexical threads of *humanity*, *cosmology*, *emotions*, *nature*, and much else, in a tremendously powerful line. When Blake then goes on to resurrect the human form in the final lines of the poem, we realize we have been told again and again that all of what is apparently external nature — men, women, and their institutions, creatures, cosmos, everything — is an Augury of a visionary state in which everything is interconnected, and everything is ultimately human.

Several lines in "Auguries" suggest visual analogues either in Blake's own designs, or designs of William Hogarth with which Blake would be familiar. An obvious connection is with Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* and *Rake's Progress* which could each provide ample inspiration for lines we have been discussing. His illustrations of *Four Stages of Cruelty* could also have suggested ideas to Blake. Another important connection is with Blake's own *Gates of Paradise* where the Frontispiece emblem of

22. *Rag* is still used as a synonym for clothing today in such phrases as "the rag trade" for the fashion industry.

a caterpillar on a leaf and a human chrysalis are pictured with the motto "What is Man!"; and the later version's Key reads: "The Caterpillar on the Leaf / Reminds thee of thy Mother's Grief." (The parallel lines in "Auguries" read: "The Caterpillar on the Leaf / Repeats to thee thy Mother's Grief.") Indeed the *Gates of Paradise* shares with "Auguries of Innocence" the theme of the humanization of nature, with its emblem of the child-mandrake, the elements pictured in human form, and the concluding design of the worm-mother. "Auguries" final lines can also be associated with Blake's famous design, *Albion Rose*, which was engraved in 1800 or later, at which time the bat-like form and the worm motifs were added. Albion dancing "the dance of Eternal Death," as the inscription reads, giving himself up to life in Experience, is simultaneously an augury of Innocence and the image of God in human form.²³ The human form of all creation manifested itself also in a poem in a letter to Thomas Butts which Blake wrote on October 2nd, 1800, describing a vision in the sunlight on the yellow sands of Felpham:

The Light of the Morning
 Heavens Mountains adorning
 In particles bright
 The jewels of Light
 Distinct shone and clear —
 Amazd & in fear
 I each particle gazed
 Astonished Amazed
 For each was a Man
 Human formd. Swift I ran
 For they beckond to me
 Remote by the Sea
 Saying. Each grain of Sand
 Every Stone on the Land
 Each rock & each hill
 Each fountain & rill
 Each herb & each tree
 Mountain hill Earth & Sea
 Cloud Meteor & Star
 Are Men Seen Afar

...

My Eyes more & more
 Like a Sea without shore
 Continue Expanding
 The Heavens commanding
 Till the Jewels of Light

23. For an interesting interpretation of the engraving, as distinct from the colorprint of *Albion Rose*, see Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "Albion Agonistes," in *Angel of Apocalypse* (Wisconsin, 1975), pp. 48-69. Wittreich argues that the line engraving represents "Albion in the posture of error; the color print shows Albion transfigured." While I do not entirely agree with Wittreich's extreme position, he has made a convincing and important case for paying more attention to the relation of Albion to Samson, and to the iconography of the worm and bat, which may qualify the extent of the regenerative implications of the engraving.

Heavenly Men beaming bright
Appear'd as One Man . . .

This is surely the language of the vision underlying "Auguries of Innocence." It may have come to Blake as he dwelt in "Realms of day" at Felpham, inspiring him to write of the potential regeneration of the natural world and the dwellers in Experience.

APPENDIX:

Editorial Re-Arrangements of the Poem

Both Rossetti and Sampson divide the poem in sections, designated a, b, c, etc. Erdman follows Blake's undifferentiated spacing, except for lines 1-4.

Rossetti

- (a) ll. 1-4.
- (b) ll. 5-10, 17, 18, 11-12, 19, 20, 13-16.
- (c) ll. 29-32, 41, 42, 33-38, 21-24, 39, 40, 43, 44, 67, 68, 71, 72.
- (d) ll. 25-28, 45-50, 97, 98.
- (e) ll. 99, 100, 77, 78, 101, 102, 75, 76, 51, 52, 81-84, 79, 80, 113-118.
- (f) ll. 85-90, 63-66, 93-96, 103, 104, 91, 92, 105, 106, 53, 54, 107-110.
- (g) ll. 119-124, 59-62, 55-58.
- (h) ll. 125-132.

Sampson

- (a) ll. 1-4.
- (b) ll. 5-24, 29-44.
- (c) ll. 25-28, 45-50, 53, 54.
- (d) ll. 59-62, 55-58.
- (e) ll. 63-74, 85-96, 103-110.
- (f) ll. 51, 52, 75, 76, 79-84, 77, 78, 97-102, 111-118.
- (g) ll. 119-132.

Erdman

- (a) ll. 1-4.
- (b) ll. 5-18, 23-24, 41-42, 19-20, 71-72, 21-22, 43-44, 29-30, 31-32, 35-36, 33-34, 37-38, 39-40, 25-26, 27-28, 45-50, 103-110, 85-96, 53-54, 59-62, 55-58, 63-70, 73-74, 51-52, 75-76, 79-84, 97-100, 77-78, 101-102, 111-132.

Glendon College, York University
Toronto