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From the Editor:

We are especially proud of the selection of papers in this issue of TWC in part because they represent so well the collegiality, the sense of community that prevails in Romantic Studies. The topic was originally suggested by Morris Eaves, a long-time member of the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association and Editor, along with Morton Paley, of the Blake Illustrated Quarterly in his provocative address on Blake studies at the 1997 Association lunch in Toronto. Given our ranging and eclectic approach to the field, this topic was of particular interest to us. Our notice and inquiries soliciting papers for Blake and the Millennium elicited a wide range of approaches from the traditional reading of images to the most sophisticated considerations of Blake and hypertext. The papers were divided into two sessions, "Blake and Hypertextuality" and "Twenty-First Century Blake," presided over by James McKusick, President of the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association, and Alan Richardson, Vice-President, who also delivered the Keynote Address, "Fin de Siècle Romanticism" at the Association lunch. The sessions themselves offered challenging departures from the usual format, with multiple authors who used, so far as they were available, all the technical support the hotel and the MLA could offer while engaging in a high level of exchange over the value of technology itself. Ironies, of course, abound—but I leave those to our readers to enjoy on their own. Other speakers at the sessions whose papers, for various reasons, we could not include in this issue: Terence Hoagwood (Texas A&M), "Difference, Repetition and the Nature of an Artistic Work"; Nelson Hilton (Univ. of Georgia), "Revelation in the Digital Expression"; and Mark Lussier, (Arizona State), "Resisting Critical Erasure, or Blake Beyond Postmodernity." The papers by Baulch and by Sorensen were not part of the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association meetings but were included because they seemed to us to offer an interesting perspective for contemporary Blake Studies.
dramatize that all seeing occurs darkly through a glass” (emphasis added). “Blake’s millennium is always with us as a critical engagement with the present moment, including all its squalor and violence” (emphasis added). This Blake is a wondrous predictor of all things (“Blake’s work has already parodied this argument” (emphasis added). Such statements stand in consistent contradiction with others, such as this one: “Blake’s work insists that it has never been able to transcend the minute particulars of its own moment.”

8While we are on the subject of finances, Mary Lynn Johnson’s optimism for tomorrow’s electronic projects also raises warning flags. “It is of some comfort to reflect that with the proliferation of new media centers, teaching centers, and computer facilities, those who aspire to digitize, hypertextualize, and interactivate Blake no longer require a federal or corporate sugar-daddy. Any $2000 computer can handle both large databases and memory intensive authoring software . . . .” Is that really true? Perhaps for scanning the Blake Trust reproductions or one’s own slide collection, all of which can be done on the cheap, but then what? Create a site on your school’s local server for just your own students? (that is, within the fair-use guidelines of copyright law)? Publish your scans on the Web in violation of copyright? Store images for your own retrieval from a Photo-CD? Ultimately everything depends on what exactly one means by “digitizing, hypertextualizing, and interactivating” Blake—and for whom one means it. The high-tech cottage industry that Johnson envisions seems more of a Romanticizing gesture than anything else, perhaps unconsciously even recapitulating the Romantic portrait of Blake as solitary artist and producer. Contrast this, however, with the list of funders, sponsors, and project staff on the Archive’s credits page. And in addition to hardware and software, one must factor in costs for all kinds of other expenses that are not directly tech-related, such as transparencies, travel, salaries, paperclips (technologies of a different sort), etc. There is also a larger issue. Scientists and engineers routinely receive federal and corporate handouts that dwarf most awards from funding agencies in the humanities. In the big picture—where our values and priorities as a society are reflected in what we spend money on—humanists do themselves and their institutions no favors by cultivating frugal homespun virtue.

9It may be relevant that the formerly untraced copy E of The [First] Book of Urizen was recently sold at auction for $2.5 million. It was bought by an anonymous private collector, and in all likelihood will never be seen again outside of his/her estate—thus relegating Urizen copy E to a more “virtual” state than any of the electronic images in the William Blake Archive.

Digging Transformation in Blake: What the Mole Knows about the New Millennium

Ronald S. Broglio, Marcel O’Gorman, and F. William Ruegg

University of Florida

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole

The twenty-first century promises new discursive modes for exploring Blake’s work primarily spatial and temporal transformation through electronic media. After explaining the performative possibilities of web theory (http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~bruegg/nassr), as well as the problems and limits of using the web as an archive (http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~ogorman/blake/fever) at two NASSR conferences, we have disturbed the ground of web criticism and set new directions by which we now intend to read Blake.

What happens if we turn to William Blake as the theorist for writing in the digital medium? This is the underlying question, the seismic rumbling that resonates beneath the ground where a monstrous Cerberus-becoming-mole digs Blake in the twenty-first century. There is a certain networking dynamic in Blake’s texts, a certain bordering on chaos and form, a certain transformational (il)logic of representation which qualify Blake as a fitting ambassador for critical discourse in a digital age. To view Blake as a theorist of the twenty-first century is to accept the possibility of a transformation in our modes of reading and seeing, a shift in subjectivation invoked primarily by new technologies of representation.

As we approach the millennium, the web is already transforming our practices as literary critics—not only is our “reading” of a text transformed, but also our forms of presenting or delivering this information is changed as well. The web site from which this article is derived (see http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~bruegg/molar/index.html) demonstrates the capacity of electronic media to maintain a multidiscursive, multidisciplinary conversation about a single topic: scenes of transformation in Blake. Of course, it is impossible, given the differences between the capabilities of print technology and the web, to fully translate in the pages of this article the experience of navigating the non-linear pathways and transforming pictorial screens of our web work. But we hope here in print to perform for you the theory underlying this work, to give you an experience of the site by enacting some of its ideas.
In what follows, our individual discourses are three channels through which the mole can travel. Each is governed by an icon that represents temporal and spatial shifts in a system of knowledge. Our discourses will unfold the associative/performative mode of our previous web work, and their intersections will demonstrate the way working in electronic space changes our work in other academic spaces. On the web, myriad discourses become intricately linked; in this article we will attempt to perform linking by shifting between speakers at various nodal points. We will thus enact the shifts in space, in voice, and in time that characterize our experience of the hybrid medium of the web, not as a synthesis, but as a shuttling between multiple discursive positions and modes of subjectivation.3

“A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees” (MHH 7, E 35). Taken together, William Blake and emergent technologies of representation help us to see as both fools and wise men, realizing all along that these perspectives are part of a shifting dialectics in which the wise are fools and vice versa.4 To see as both fools and wise men, one must be willing to forgo conventional modes of argumentation and learning, and accept the possibility that a tree might not be a tree at all, but a node in a network where transformations occur.

\[ V = \frac{\Delta s}{\Delta t} \]

In many ways, America is a landmark of what is possible for Blake in illuminated folio. There are several moments in America that illustrate Blake’s experimention with transformation of an object. Take for example plate fourteen. At the bottom of the plate a dragon who emerges out of the roots of a tree spits forked fire. This dragon resonates with the snake/phallus protruding with forked tongue from a man’s (or perhaps it is a woman’s) legs in the middle of the plate.6

\[ 12^6 + 4^1/2 \rightarrow \ast \]

As is typical of the strange constellations Blake’s images call into being, Orc’s transformation into a serpent, rising up the trunk of the Tree of Mystery in Night Seven of The Four Zoas, resonates powerfully in multiple realms of discourse. Alchemy itself developed a complex iconology of tree and serpent symbols, which fused alchemical, pre-Christian, and Christian elements. Dobbs observes that in Christian art the cross was often depicted as “a version of the cosmic tree at the center, uniting the underworld, earth, and heaven,” which the alchemists appropriated along with the pre-Christian tree as emblem of fecundity and resurrection (seen in the tree’s seasonal oscillation between death and renewal). In alchemical illustrations, the tree is often depicted with snakes wound around it, as in the caduceus of Hermes, the ancient symbol of the mythological originator of the alchemical arts. The snake also symbolizes rebirth through the shedding of its skin, the power to heal, fertility, and because of its lowly station, was supposed to know the secrets underground (Dobbs, Alchemical Deaths 11-12). Tree and snake thus emblematize the principles of interconnection, correlation between microcosm and macrocosm, and utopian teleology that are the primary themes of alchemy. The movement up the tree is simultaneously a movement from base to perfected matter, from ignorance to enlightenment, and from sin to redemption.

\[ \ast \ast \ast \]

Traditionally, the tree is a symbol of knowledge, strength, authority even. It is not surprising then, that as an icon, the tree has come to represent print technology, most specifically, its greatest progeny, the book. We might speculate that this iconic tradition is rooted in some of the very first printed texts—text books, actually, written for young boys who were studying to become Masters of Arts.9 These early books, for example the highly iconic primers of Thomas Murner, draw on the tree and its branches as a mnemonic framework for organizing knowledge. This type of fanciful, pictorial display disappeared, however, when Peter Ramus turned those tree-like structures into abstract tables of dichotomies. With this act of de-pictorialization, Ramus (whose name literally means “branch” in Latin) established the first method for organizing knowledge, and along with it, a pedagogic curriculum. In addition, we might suggest that Ramus inspired the first method for organizing the contents of a printed book.

\[ V = \frac{\Delta s}{\Delta t} \]

At the top of the plate a bird flies around a number of leaves. One of the leaves, a forked leaf at the top far right of the plate, is painted red. In relation to the dragon’s fire, the leaf of the tree transforms.

\[ 12^6 + 4^1/2 \rightarrow \ast \]

“As I have such a vessel in the fire,” Sir Isaac Newton writes in one of his many unpublished accounts of alchemical experiments secretly conducted in his Cambridge residence.

\[ \ast \ast \ast \]

145
\[ V = \Delta s / \Delta t \]

The tree is alive, but so subtly that it seems to be simply a tree. The last line of the plate reads, "The red fires rag'd! the plagues recoil'd: then rolled they back with fury" (America 11, E 56). The rolling back of the fires is seen in the small red leaf, hardly noticeable, but obvious when set against the next place where flames engulf foliage and strip a tree bare.

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After Ramus, books would be considered as logical containers with contents infinitely divisible into dichotomized arrangements. It is the Ramist method that inspired headings, chapters, paragraph division, and we might even add, the five-paragraph essay. By transforming the tree of knowledge into a table of bracketed dichotomies, Ramus instituted the Republic of Scholars, whose discourse and methodology circulates even today. The tree of knowledge, after Ramus, is no longer a living thing, which, from trunk to branches, signifies a force of entropy. The tree is now a force of containment, a force of impression. In fact, this is no longer a tree, but a system of clamps that hold information in place, that secure knowledge within an objectified, predictable space.

Henceforth, the book is not a tree, but a vise.

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\[ 12\delta + 4^{1/2} \sigma \rightarrow * \]

Urizen’s arrival in Orc’s fiery caverns in Night Seven catalyzes a reaction, a transmutation if you will, not unlike that which Newton witnessed in the golden arboreal growths warming in the laboratory vessels over his fire or which occurs, according to Paracelsus, when the principle of fire impregnates its contrary and generates “the roots of mineral trees, springing forth from their seeds” (1: 92). Indeed, the analogy is apt, for Urizen’s elemental characteristic, his stormy coldness, directly opposes Orc’s fiery essence, and the mingling of the two calls forth a vegetative root from beneath Urizen’s heel, a root that quickly grows into the “Tree of Mystery” (78: 6, 8, E 333).

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"In the context of romantic textual ideology," writes W.J.T. Mitchell in Picture Theory, "the book ... represents writing as love; it is usually associated with patriarchal figures like Urizen and Jehovah, and Blake regularly uses the rectangular shape of the closed book and the double vaulted arch-shape of the open book to suggest formal rhymes with textual objects like gravestones, altars, gateways, and tablets, 'books,' as it were of stone and metal" (132). Like the tree, the book—even the book shape—is an icon, or even a hyper-icon: "a kind of summary image ... that encapsulates an entire episteme, a theory of knowledge" (49). I would argue that a reader imposes personal meaning upon these shapes as well, drawing on personal history, popular culture, etc. Hence, a shape or image can have iconic significance on both a personal and collective, epistemological/historical level.

---

\[ 12\delta + 4^{1/2} \sigma \rightarrow * \]

The Tree of Mystery draws its vitality from the "holy oil," the immanent fire of Orc’s domain, rather than the immutable Newtonian laws inscribed in Urizen’s books. At the same time, the tree springs from beneath Urizen’s Newtonian heel—it represents the introduction of a desire for order into Orc’s feverish environment. "The Tree or Root as an image." Deleuze and Guattari argue, "endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then of the two that become four. ... Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree" (The Deluze Reader 27). The tree hierarchizes; it represents desire that is organized or "arborified."

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\[ V = \Delta s / \Delta t \]

What is significant about the red leaf is that there is a body, the leaf, separated from its attribute, the color of a leaf and its shape.

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The cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite. ... But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid. (MHII 14, E 39)

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\[ V = \Delta s / \Delta t \]

This separation of body from attribute allows for the transformation of leaf to flame. Redness and the attribute of curvature of the leaf on the top of plate fourteen form a vector line with redness and the curvature of flames from the dragon on the bottom of plate fourteen and the flames at the bottom of plate fifteen. As the reader’s eyes shuttle back and forth from one to the other, thus amplifying the resonance or force of the vector, the reader becomes aware of the transformation of leaf to flame, the becoming-flame of the leaf. Otherwise, to see the leaf as only a leaf is to be stuck in “Single vision & Newton’s sleep” (Letter to Butts, 30 Nov 1802, E 72).
While the Nurse of Blake’s Songs of Innocence resigns to the children’s request for extended play time and allows them to postpone sleep, the Nurse of Experience would have the children go directly to bed. Their “Spring & their day, are wasted in play / and [their] winter and night in disguise” (L. 7-8, E 23). It may be appropriate, then, to see a slouched figure sleeping in the background of the plate; for this is the nurse’s vision of childhood. Or is this figure—the one neatly enframed, contained by a doorway—reading a book? What is the difference between sleeping and reading? Is this an instance of “Single vision & Newtons sleep”? As we move from figure to ground and back, the ambiguities of the plate, the interaction between image and text, beg such questions.

\[ 12 \frac{5}{4} + 4' \sigma \rightarrow \star \]

The sprouting gold Newton claims to have generated in the glass vessels turning over his fire is the result of a painstaking series of procedures copiously detailed in his alchemical papers, papers suppressed for almost three hundred years by successive generations of Newton scholars. The key to the process described therein is the formulation and use of a “Star Regulus,” the crystalline antimony star renowned in alchemical lore as a spiritual attractor. Newton explains, “two parts of antimony with iron give a regulus which in its fourth fusion exhibits a star.” This “stellate regulus” will, with repeated distillations, “spit out its blackness” and produce the “living” mercury described in Newton’s notes, a mercury capable of “dissolving all metals, particularly gold.” For Newton, the Star is thus an instrument for “meliorating nature in nature,” for drawing off the impurities that cloud the divine essence within all matter. “I know whereof I write,” Newton says, “for I have in the fire manifold glasses with gold and this mercury. They grow in these glasses in the form of a tree, and by a continued circulation the trees are dissolved again with the work into new mercury” (253).

\[ V = \Delta s / \Delta t \]

While the redness of the leaf is an attribute of autumn it also recalls the destruction by revolutionary or apocalyptic fire on plate fifteen. Thus the redness of the leaf/flame puts on the word “fall” both as temporal season and metaphysical state. The leaf/flame also marks the revolutionary political fall at the heart of Blake’s America.

This is not an isolated moment in America. Their number is legion, infecting the text and destabilizing the images. Vector relations imply that the image is self-differing, rather than self-similar in its growth. An image which relies on its contexts for its identity undergoes radical changes with the application of new and variable contextual forces.

\[ 12 \frac{5}{4} + 4' \sigma \rightarrow \star \]

As a reader of Blake one learns a certain liberty to pursue the uncanny linkages that abound in the boundaries between libidinal and rational economies. While Newton perfects gold with his Star Regulus, Blake cautions, “The Man who can Read the Stars, often is oppressed by their Influence, no less than the Newtonian who reads Not & cannot Read is oppressed by his own Reasonings & Experiments” (Letter to Richard Phillips, E 769). Writing here to the editor of the Oracle & True Briton in defense of an imprisoned astrologer, Blake urges sympathy for the hapless stargazer, noting how difficult it is to escape mental error. But in addition to intuiting a link between Newtonian physics and the occult, Blake’s letter (returned unpublished, of course) points out a crucial difference: the occultist can read, albeit in error, while the Newtonian cannot. What is the scene, the text of this reading? Nothing less than the universe itself—not the rational “water wheel” universe of the mechanists, but a universe of immanence, interconnection, and affinity.

On the plate of “Nurses Song,” background and foreground, the perennial dualism, enter into a conversation about bookish experience. Like the child in the background lullled to sleep by a book, the child in the foreground is being led by the nurse into a Newtonian sleep of single vision. In this scene of reading, a dragon-lady nurse and a book serve the same purpose: both are forces of disciplinary impression, forces of rationalizing oppression that thwart the dynamism and energy of a child-like state of being. The distinction between background and foreground is blurred here because books and nurses sit on the same branch; a branch they share with the father in Blake’s Tiriel: “The child springs from the womb. The father, ready, stands to form the infant head …” (L. 12-14, E 281). In this hypericonic network, fathers, books, and indoctrinating nurses all stand ready to form infant heads.

\[ V = \Delta s / \Delta t \]

Like many readers of Blake, I find that whatever archetypal apparatus I apply to a passage the details of the text evade my construction. Blake’s texts are complex in that actions and attributes are free floating functions, attaching themselves to different characters at different moments in the text and disturbing notions of character identity. To help account for the slipperiness of Blake’s work, we have developed a method of reading that never finds an enduring ground for construction, a digging into the text that holds only for a moment—something like performance art.
12\(\overline{6} + 4^{1/6} \sigma \rightarrow \bullet\)

In applying a methodology and selecting examples, we, as literary critics, distill our own Stars Regulus, strange attractors with which we crystallize narrative, historical, and ideological constellations in the texts we study. We would do well to remember Blake's admonition about readers of stars often being oppressed by their influence. Whether Newtonians or astrologers, our own desires and identities are bound up with our objects of study, and our efforts to place these objects into interpretive systems are themselves ideologically structured.\(^7\)

---[knowledge]---

The Nurse, then, holds the child's head in the vise-like grip of her hands. But would this thought have occurred to me if, at a young age, my brother had not attempted to put my head into a vise? Would I be capable of transforming a tree into a vise were it not for the fact that the scene in Martin Scorsese's *Casino*—the grotesque scene in which Tony Dogs hangs his head—has been graven into my brain? These seemingly incidental connections are the remainder\(^8\) of scholarly discourse: that which is left out for reasons of convention. But the remainder can be recovered in a new method of research and representation created for an electronic, picture-oriented culture. A culture which has undergone the Pictorial Turn.\(^9\)

---[knowledge]---

The intuitive connection Blake makes in his long poems between the Hermetic tradition and the Newtonian synthesis is based on the insight that both systems of knowledge, one "rational," the other "irrational," share the ideological goal of mastering and perfecting their materials, whether inanimate or human, physical or spiritual. Like the alchemist in the *Ripley Scroll*, who looms god-like above the flask in which he has finally perfected matter (and thus himself), Newton sought endlessly for One Law—in physics, alchemy, and even biblical hermeneutics—but Blake knew that "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (*MHL* 24, E 44).\(^{10}\)

---[knowledge]---

In the scholarly method that I propose as an alternative to the Republic of Scholars, the image of the vise becomes a hypericon—an image that encapsulates an entire episteme or mode of thought. And in this case, the episteme in question is based on rationalization, restraint, and discipline—an episteme rooted in, and fully dependent upon, the standardization of the printed text. But the hands/vise as it appears on Blake's plate is not an isolated pictorial incident. Hypericons are diachronic elements. They recur over time and space. And so the vise hypericon is not only Blakean, it appears in Ramus's brackets, in the film *Casino*, in my own personal history, and of course, in the history of writing as the most literary of vises, the printing press. The vise, then, can be both a generator of knowledge and a means of organizing a discourse on the history of print. The recurrence of the vise hypericon can act as the conductive force behind a cross-disciplinary investigation of culture, theory, and literature. And electronic media can act as the framework for this conduction.

We can emulate Blake's hypericonic, composite art form in the electronic realm, and this can result in a new scholarly method. By interlinking diachronic data by means of a visual cue or hypericon, we are inventing a method of research and representation that I have given the temporary name of *hyperonomy*: a scholarly method based on the distribution and management of hypericons over space and time.

---[knowledge]---

\[V = \Delta s/\Delta t\]

The notion of vectors takes seriously the idea that the "noise" of the text—its inconsistencies, materials of production, history of production, stray marks, editorial instructions, etc.—becomes increasingly relevant for the production of meaning. Using vectors as a metaphor for reading Blake, we are able to map changing relations between textual units and changes in the units themselves. Series of vectors from different events in the text are brought to bear in the composition of any particular moment or space-time unit.Blake's characters can be considered as composite forms constituted by a nexus of surrounding objects and events. Agency develops not from characters but from a swarm of micro-agents, vector relations of textual units.

As readers, we are affected by the vector relatedness of textual elements. We have to re-member the various dismembered fragments of text. As trajectories pile one on the other and as distances between converging objects increase, readers strain their faculties of memory to recall past occurrences of words and strain their faculties of imagination to combine these occurrences. In this sense, the readers experience dilemmas similar to those of the characters who forget lost or fictionalized origins, who struggle to combine objects, and who forge new configurations.

---[knowledge]---

\[12\overline{6} + 4^{1/6} \sigma \rightarrow \bullet\]

As his letter in defense of the astrologer makes clear, the question of how we read is central to Blake: reading generates the possibility for error as information is taken in and stratified into new orders, but it is also, potentially, an avenue of liberation. For Blake, the role of poetry is to fracture closed systems and the language on which they depend with monstrous infestations, monstrous mutations, and eternal
transformations: hideous progeny produced by unnatural couplings at the margins of poetry, mysticism, and science.

* * *

—[knowledge]—

If the eagle’s domain is in the tree, then the mole’s knowledge must be housed among the roots and rhizomes of the pit.

The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and . . . and . . . and . . .” This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb “to be.” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 25)

Somewhere in the underground of Blake Studies, a new mode of scholarship is being forged out of the eradicating structure of the rhizome and the radical dialectics of the Blakean imagetext. And the result is a scholarly devise created in and for an electronically-informed, picture-oriented culture.

* * *

The goal of the Florida School is not to transport Blake Studies as we know it, unharmed, across the threshold of the millennium, but to transform this field of research, and the circle of scholarly research, altogether. To qualify as a Blakean in the twentieth century, one must be devoted to the recovery, archiving, and interpretation of the life and texts of William Blake. But if the seismic rumblings of the Florida School shake the earth sufficiently, if their infernal howling reaches the surface at all, then the twenty-first century Blakean will be the purveyor of a new mode of discourse—textual, pictorial, and electronic—in which our object of study, the life and texts of William Blake, suggests a model for digging the screen.

NOTES

1Our citations of Blake are drawn from The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (1988). Our epigraph is from The Book of Thel (plate i, E 3).

2We have reproduced here three direct screen shots from our web site and six of the twenty-five “illuminations” that provide its pictorial text. The illuminations, like the text below, are marked with icons that signify the discursive “channel” to which they belong.

3We encourage the reader to apply the principles of vector relations, hyper-iconicity, and alchemical transmutation described herein to the reading of this article. The paragraph order given is but one of many potentially illuminating trajectories.

4In Blake’s Compositive Art, W.J.T. Mitchell describes the “total form” of Blake’s illuminated work as a “dialectic of dialectics” in which contrary elements interact, producing a vigorous dialogue that challenges conventional wisdom (74).

5Each icon serves as a shorthand for a separate discourse of this text. Yet, each discourse will link to the others, crossing over and influencing the other methods of reading. This velocity equation marks the shorthand for spatial and temporal transformations that take place in Ron Broglio’s “vector” reading. Vectors are physical quantities that have spatial direction (Δs) over time (Δt). A vector reading takes into account the traveling of a minute particular and its contextual meaning across the field of a text from the standpoint of another minute particular through which it travels and which provides the vector’s directedness. Plate 14 of America serves as an example of vector reading by which various moments throughout the text exert their force on the verbal and visual details of this plate. For more information on vector reading and its transformational possibilities in Blake, see Ron Broglio’s “Becoming-roa,” forthcoming in Visible Language 33.2 Summer 1999.

6Visual details come from copy M of America reproduced by Dover Press. In other copies the details vary. Vector reading recovers the “noise” of the text. Not all the elements that would be considered “important” by an abstract scheme have relevance to the convergence of vectors chosen here, and some of the “less important” details take on new found value.

7This formula represents in abbreviated form Newton’s secret alchemical process for forging the crystalline “Star Regulus” of antimony. As an icon, it marks William Ruegg’s contributions on Blake, Newton, and alchemy in the text. The formula is a fitting emblem both for Newton’s private fascination with alchemy, a fascination seemingly at odds with his status as the “father” of modern science, and for Blake’s use of alchemical allusions within his poetic (de)construction of Newtonian cosmology. For Blake, who had a genius for making manifest the hidden or latent features of “rational” systematizing, the spiritual materiality of the alchemists is the repressed subtext of Newtonian science and bespeaks the oppressive tendency of systems—whether scientific, mystical, or linguistic—that attain to absolute control and perfection of their objects.

8This iconic signpost serves to indicate portions of the text dealing with Marcel O’Gorman’s notion of hypericonomy. The brackets are reminiscent of Ramus’s method of dichotonization, and their wise-like appearance demonstrates the constraints that logical method places on knowledge—constraints that can only be eradicated by means of a new discursive devise.

9For an extensive overview of the Ramist tradition and its role in traditional scholarly method, see Walter J. Ong, Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason.

10Newton’s alchemical essay entitled “Clavis” or “The Key” (Keynes MS 18) is reproduced from the previously unpublished Latin text and translated into English in Appendix C of Betty Jo Tet-
ter Dobbs, The Foundations of Newton’s Alchemy or “The Hunting of the Greene Lyon” (see Works Cited).

11This argument, which is glossed only briefly here, is developed extensively in Ong, especially in the final chapter. The argument that the form of written discourse is indicative of ideology and power structures is also, of course, the central concern of structuralism and poststructuralism as developed by Derrida, Foucault, and others.

12The invocation of “The Republic of Scholars” here is inspired by Friedrich Kittler, who draws on the term to describe a Western academic apparatus founded on hermeneutic discourse and the dissemination of standardized knowledge. In Kittler’s words, “The Republic of Scholars is endless circulation, a discourse network without producers or consumers, which simply heaves words around” (4).

13Newton’s alchemical manuscripts had been examined after Newton’s death and placed in a box marked “not fit to be printed.” Aside from a few horrified references to them by his nineteenth-century biographers, they remained unpublished for many years (Dobbs, Foundations 12). In 1936, the papers were sold at auction, making many of them available for study for the first time, but it was not until the work of Dobbs and Westfall in the 1970s that Newton’s science and alchemy were admitted to be interconstitutive.

14The matter described here, matter that is not atomic but “living and mobile,” directly opposes Newton’s description of “solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, moveable Particles” in the 31st Query of Opticks; indeed, his procedures, based as they are on a belief in the truth of alchemical secrets, seem to contradict Newton’s own published method of scientific inquiry. Dobbs, however, argues that Newton derived his concept of attractions from his alchemical practice. She speculates that it may even have been the Star Regulus itself, with the lines of force gathering inward along the crystal matrix of its surface, that provided the germinative impetus for Newton’s addition of attractive forces to the mechanical amalgam (Foundations 154).

15For example, on plate one of the Preludium to America a man appears to descend down a tree. Amid the roots of the tree is a woman’s torso and legs; it is woman-as-tree or tree-as-woman like Daphne in Blake’s Notebook sketches. Plate twelve places a youthful and hopeful man next to a leaf which is shaped like a skull colored yellowish white or ivory (Paley, William Blake 22, 29).

16I use the term “libidinal economy” to designate a system for the management and exchange of desire. Blake shows that desire, when projected outward in an effort to ameliorate or manage an internal psychic need or impulse, provides a motivating force for our relationships to objects, a force that when disavowed or repressed (as it continues to be in everything from argumentative writing to military research) often returns in the guise of fantasies of control, domination, and ultimately, apathy.

17When the disavowal of a particular force of desire, such as that between a scientist and his or her object of study or a literary scholar and a “privileged” text, becomes institutionalized, it surely is, as anthropologist Michael Taussig argues, a sign of “massive cultural repression at work” (255).

18The term “remainder” is intentionally reminiscent of Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s use of the term. The remainder may be considered “the linguistic equivalent of the Freudian unconscious, excluded or repressed by the rules of grammar, but trying to return in jokes, slips of the tongue, solecisms, and poetry” (25). By working with the remainder, we submit ourselves to “the realm of chance, of the arbitrariness of the irrational… . Beyond the frontier, there is no guideline, no structuring metaphor—the tree, for instance—that can be projected on to the chaos of phenomena” (38).

19Mitchell describes the “Pictorial Turn” as an historical phenomenon whereby “modern thought has re-oriented itself around visual paradigms that seem to threaten and overwhelm any possibility of discursive mastery” (Picture Theory 9).

20George Ripley (1415-1490), for whom the scroll is named, was an influential English alchemist studied by Newton. The scroll, of which twenty-one copies, dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are known, represents the entire alchemical process vertically through an ascending series of emblems. The version of the scroll reproduced here (top portion is shown) is now held by the Huntington Library and is more than ten feet in length.

WORKS CITED

Digging Transformation in

What the Mole Knows about the New Millennium

Does the Lion know what is in the pot?
Or will there be a Fall?
"Fall's Moto:,, William Blake

A Molar-festo?
*America*, plate 14, copy M, Blake, ca. 1800 (detail)

"The Nurse's Song," *Experience*, copy W, Blake, ca. 1825

*Ripley Alchemical Scroll*, artist unknown, ca. 1570 (top portion)