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Digital Designs on Blake

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About This Volume

This volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* includes contributions by Ron Broglio, David M. Baulch, Marcel O'Gorman, Nelson Hilton, Joseph Byrne, Adam Komisaruk, Steven Guynup, and Fred Yee.

Digital Designs on Blake brings together recent and more seasoned Blake scholars who have worked in new media. Contributors explore how new media representation of William Blake's work provides a heuristic for another mode of inquiry into Blake's complex verbal and visual texts. The volume looks at Blake's designs as well as new media and critics' refashioning of Blake's texts. Essays include readings on Blake and 3-D environments, Blake and Heidegger on technology, gaming as a method of thinking, and digital performance in Flash and MOOs.

The text is encoded in HTML, but features no frames and a limited use of tables. It will work best with Netscape 4.0 or Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher or a comparable browser; earlier browsers may not display everything properly. Because you may enter and exit these files along multiple paths, you may need to use the back-arrow button on your browser to return to your starting point. The full text of the volume, like all hypertexts in the *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, is fully searchable.

The essays and other files were marked up in HTML by Joseph Byrne at the University of Maryland. The volume cover and contents page were also designed and marked up by Joseph Byrne.

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About the Romantic Circles Praxis Series

The **Romantic Circles Praxis Series** is devoted to using computer technologies for the contemporary critical investigation of the languages, cultures, histories, and theories of Romanticism. Tracking the circulation of Romanticism within these interrelated domains of knowledge, **RCPS** recognizes as its conceptual terrain a world where Romanticism has, on the one hand, dissolved as a period and an idea into a plurality of discourses and, on the other, retained a vigorous, recognizable hold on the intellectual and theoretical discussions of today. **RCPS** is committed to mapping out this terrain with the best and most exciting critical writing of contemporary Romanticist scholarship.

About the Contributors

Ron Broglio is completing a book project called *Technologies of the Picturesque*. This current essay on Blake is part of a second project called *Blake and The Fold* that examines the dynamic of Blakean characters and space using Deleuze and Whitehead.

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Digital Designs on Blake

Living Inside the Poem: MOOs and Blake's Milton

Ron Broglio, Georgia Institute of Technology

Blake designed his work to do more than sit on a page. The performative quality of Milton is examined and then enacted in a digital environment. The digital project serves as a heuristic for reading the transformative quality of Blake's visions. This essay appears in *Digital Designs on Blake*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

1. Every new media work can be located somewhere along a axis whose poles are archival at one end and performative at the other. Academic production online weighs heavily at the archival end of the continuum. Skills in textual editing can be translated to online editions. Furthermore, the robust nature of online texts allows for an editor to do more—serving several versions of a text with the ability to move between them with ease and add footnotes and images with little concern for production costs. So replete are examples that I can omit pointing to them in this essay. As an archival resource, web technologies allow us to improve upon what we already do. There is, however, the other side of the new media axis which is hauntingly underused in scholarship. Arguably, new media's unique contribution to the humanities is its performative nature. The reason why the performative side of the web has seen little academic use is simply because we have yet to think of most literary and cultural texts as performative. The performative nature of the web calls us to re-evaluate familiar texts on new ground. So, how can we use the performativity of new media in humanities scholarship?
2. Performance studies has made inroads into new media with responsive spaces and distributed computing. Here, however, I will limit my discussion to the ways literary texts—specifically Romantic poems—engage in a performativity that is enhanced in web technology. The goal of this paper is to better define immersive textuality. The term comes from work I've done with Steve Jones and Neil Fraistat on Romantic Circles Villa Diodati MOO (no longer supported by Romantic Circles servers). The MOO provides a different means of thinking about texts; it is part of the performative end of new media that works alongside more traditional scholarly elements of Romantic Circles.[\[1\]](#)
3. Through the early years (the mid-1990s), academic MOOing engaged problems of textual identity. This is evident in the work of Amy Bruckman, Sherry Turkle, and Jay Bolter. However, identity trouble is not the only fascinating aspect of MOOs. The other possibility is that agency does not reside solely in the user's avatar but also in the environment. What traditionally has served as the background upon which human dramas are played out can also have an active role in shaping characters, conversations, and performance. To show how textual spaces realize this possibility I created my first literary MOO space in 1996. The goal of this site was to perform walking tours inside William Wordsworth's poems. [\[2\]](#) Wordsworth as quintessential Romantic poet acts like a performance artist who creates an event, a happening, by his bodily motion through a landscape and by attention to what unfolds during his walks. After performing the event of his stroll with his body, Wordsworth writes about it for the reader to experience in the act of reading. The poet does not simply give the reader a description of what happened to him; rather, through the language of poetry Wordsworth attempts to create a transformation experience for the reader similar to the one experienced by the poet in his rambles. Wordsworth's rambles fold upon themselves as his physical wandering in landscape become the rambling of writing which then create for readers a second landscape and yet another experience. In each ramble, the space of the landscape and the space of the poem transform the human participating within them. Such transformations work well as MOO performances. Think of a poem and a MOO

space as architected space. Some words in a poem seem key. We want to circle them, interpret and investigate them. In the MOO we want to type 'look X' to see the word/object better or perform actions on objects. As the poem develops, new spaces open, and in the MOO, we open new doors. As we read a poem we react to it. In the MOO, as we occupy a space we react to the environment by "speaking" or "emoting." The MOO allows us to interact with the poem-text while all our actions produce new actions and reactions from a robot or from other players in the MOO space. The text we type becomes woven in with the MOO space. It is as if we entered into the poem and added our commentary, or perhaps we are re-writing the poem from within it.[\[3\]](#)

4. Digital performance for the humanities has most recently gained acceptance through Jerome McGann's work in *The Ivanhoe Game* in its many instantiations. In *Radiant Textuality* McGann creates the theoretical ground for performing a literary text using a notion of "quantum poetics." He explains that in the game mode, "action does not take place outside but inside the object of attention" (218). As the reader is situated within the textual object the relationship becomes one of "quantum poetics" by which neither the reading subject nor the textual object provides a stable ground for interpretation. Rather each shifts in relation to the other such that there is no "outside" space, no Archimedian point, from which to leverage an objective reading.
5. Like McGann's quantum poetics, immersive textuality uses the performativity of gaming rather than the archive as its model. In gaming, scholarship one can find the play/risk/possibility that works outside of traditional essays and books. While most scholarly inquiries have to adopt a singular and unified argument from a point of view outside of the object of study, the gaming genre can work from within the text itself and adopt several perspectives. Through play comes learning and discovery rather than the more conservative description of a singular coherent argument. As McGann explains "its [gaming's] critical method is procedural rather than expository" (219).
6. While the Wordsworth MOO site that I created in 1996 provided a proof of concept, it remains a fairly linear narrative with not much game play. Furthermore the site exercised only a limited amount of what is possible in MOO clients. Since the late 1990s, the text-based chat of MOOs has expanded into a text and web interface using EnCore software (for a web interface) on top of the core LambdaMOO program (the traditional textual MOO core). EnCore allows whatever is possible in web pages to be done in a MOO in addition to the fairly robust computing capabilities already inherent in the object-oriented programming environment of MOOs. After the Wordsworth space the challenge was to build a MOO that would allow for more serious experiments in immersive textuality. In order to construct the MOO for such work I needed to select a literary text that could expand the boundaries of what is possible or what has been done in MOOs. Conversely, for the space to be useful as a literary tool, construction and play within the space should allow the reader/player to think differently about the literary text. The literary text should expand what is possible in MOOs while MOOs should push textual interpretation in new directions.
7. My goal was to select a text that had multiple story levels, disjunctive narratives, and unstable character identities. Such literary problems would test the capabilities of a literary MOO space. William Blake's poetry met the criteria. Additionally, the relationship between image and text in Blake and the multiple versions of his works provided additional fields for exploration. Yet beyond all these rich literary elements, Blake had already thought through the problem of creating immersive environments. His characters are continually creating windows and doors into new worlds or falling through space and time in such a way that the fall creates both space and time. Through their immersive interaction with one another and their surroundings, Blake's characters forge the world upon which the narrative is staged. In like manner, Blake wants the reader to immerse him/herself in the poem such that "doors of perception" open for the reader, creating new worlds and new possibilities. As he explains in a letter to Thomas Butts, while walking across the hills "A frowning Thistle implores

my stay/ . . . With my inward Eye 'tis an old Man gray/ With my outward a Thistle across my way" (Erdman 721). Upon striking the Thistle/man, "Then Los appeared in all his power/ In the Sun he appeared descending before/ . . . Twas outward a Sun: inward Los in his might" (Erdman 722). The walls between Blake's fiction and reality remain porous as characters Los and the old man Urizen are another folded reality of sun and thistle. Blake asks that his readers move as facilely between the folds of the illuminated plates and the world in which they read his prophecies.

8. One set of folds takes place for the characters in Blake's poetry and another folding takes place between reader and text.^[4] In the first set of folds, characters gesture between the vegetative world and the heavens of eternity. Examples include the Adam and Eve figures Blake uses to illustrate *Night Thoughts* and the neo-platonic *Sea of Time and Space*. The bodies of the characters are the physical fold of their divided state between this world and others. Between-ness presents internal discord and unravels the character's sense of self. Internal difference, self-differentiation, causes the character to transform, to become other as shown by the tree-woman Daphane in Blake's *Notebook* and in the Preludium of *America*. Transformations abound and appear throughout Blake's work; striking examples include Nebuchadnezzar, the swan-woman, and the butterfly women found in *Jerusalem*. While characters' bodies are the site of folds and transformations, so too is the reader's body. The frontispiece for *Jerusalem* shows Los opening a door and entering the book. Of course, as the reader opens the book, he or she joins Los in entering the narrative. Readers also participate in perceptual transformations. For example, in plate 8 of copy E of *America* a naked Adam figure sits atop a hill. At his knee is an object that can be perceived as either a leaf or a skull. Whether the object is skull or leaf is up to the reader's interpretation.^[5]
9. To experiment with Blakean folds in MOOs I set up a team of Blake MOOers including undergraduates at Georgia Tech in architecture and computer science, a graduate student in the Information Design Technology program, and several Blake scholars as consultants including Nelson Hilton, David Baulch, and Donald Ault. The Blake MOO sites were constructed in Romantic Circles's Villa Diodati MOO. Not only did the subject matter make the Villa a proper home for the Blake MOO, but also previously programmed supplementary features of this MOO helped the Blake MOOers realize their goals. Collaboratively we began thinking about what an immersive Blakean text would look like. The *Milton* space serves as one response. Where the space has succeeded, it provides an example of what is possible in immersive textuality. Its limitations show directions yet to be pursued.
10. In brief, Blake's *Milton* is about spiritual inspiration through poetry and apocalyptic revelations that result from following such inspiration. As the poem opens, Milton finds himself in a seemingly heavenly world surrounded by the Eternals. A bard sings to the Eternals about the fall of Satan. The Eternals are angered by the song and the bard takes refuge inside Milton. The poet now possessed by the bard awakens to the realization that he is in heaven alone, without his female counterpart, his Emanation. To regain his Emanation, Milton takes off the robe of promise and descends to earth in what he believes will be his Eternal Death. Along the path of descent he must battle Urizen and Satan and their female counterparts. He arrives on earth and lands in William Blake's garden or alternately in Blake's left foot. Blake is then possessed to write the poem *Milton*. Once in the garden, Milton joins his female counterpart Ololon who, unbeknownst to Milton, has also descended from the heavens to meet him. Together they realize a spiritual apocalypse that transforms heaven and earth and all the worlds folded between them.
11. In constructing the Milton MOO space the design team wanted to emphasize the problem of possession in Blake's poem. Possession in Blake fits nicely with the aims of immersive textuality. The goal in immersive textuality, similar to that of McGann's quantum poetics, is to create a field of play that omits an outside objective space for contemplation. In the Milton MOO site thought should take place as action within the game space. Normally when reading the reader occupies a double position—one

inside the poem through the act of reading and a second outside the poem in the "real world" beyond the book. However, Blake's poem problematizes the second position and collapses it into the first. He does so throughout the poem most commonly by placing "real" British place names such as Lambeth or London next to fictional names such as Beulah and Golgonooza. Real people such as Milton and Blake find themselves alongside Palambron and Rintrah. Real life objects such as hammers and looms take on epic proportions as the creative Hammer of Los and the Wheels of Enitharmon. Such tropes are familiar to readers of Blake. Yet, perhaps the most powerful and salient for an immersive MOO is the title page to *Milton*. (Please see [the Blake Archive "Welcome Page"](#) before continuing on to *Milton* plate 1)

12. This famous opening page shows Milton naked, having cast off the robes of promise, and pushing with his right hand through the ether as he begins the descent to the vegetative world. The reader upon opening the book and beginning a descent into its pages places a hand over the upper right hand corner to flip the page. Doing so, the reader's hand is placed over Milton's hand so that the two perform a descent at the same time. Whose hand it is flipping and descending is up for grabs. Remember that Milton's hand is drawn with Blake's hand but Blake has been possessed and commanded to write by Milton who is possessed and inspired by the bard. The reader cannot enter the poem, that is enter *Milton*, without having Milton enter the reader. The physicality of reading allows Blake to collapse the reader's second position—outside the poem—into part of the first position—being immersed in the poem's field of play.
13. The Milton MOO site realizes these same goals by problematizing the relationship between the person typing and his or her player character inside the MOO. In following commands to "inspire" Milton, is the player another Bard or possessed by the MOO Bard? Through a series of inspirations and possessions, the player loses his or her identity and the player's name (object.name) changes to that of a character in the poem. At each character change, the point of view, the surrounding, and the spaces open or closed to the player change as well. To prevent total disorientation and facilitate some ease of use in the MOO, all of this information is graphically displayed in the Milton MOO. A map of possible open space is available at the top of the EnCore screen, and the identity currently occupied by the player is displayed in a "You are" screen at the bottom of the page. The map of spaces are threads that connect characters with MOO rooms. The thread image reminds the reader of Enitharmon's weaving and the weaving of the narrative, both of which culminate in Jesus's robes of blood at the apocalyptic ending of poem and MOO.
14. Several other special features of the Villa Diodati MOO help establish different character points of view and allow the MOO to keep track of where the player is and has been in the various space/time realms of Blake's poem. The Villa Diodati has "event aware" rooms that are sensitive to the entry and exit of players and other objects as well as actions performed in the rooms. So, for example, if a player gets possessed by Milton and so "is" Milton and enters the room called "Field" the room gives him a description of Milton's descent to earth and he (the player as Milton) must do battle with Urizen. The battle is satirically stylized to give the feel of a cartoon or primitive game. A simple pop-up screen allows the player to battle Urizen by answering a series of questions about the poem and thus confirming his state of inspiration. If the player is successful then the MOO space changes into a new area for exploration. If the player loses Milton is thrown back to the beginning of his adventure and must try again. One of the technical innovations for the battle scene is the ability of the Flash pop-up screen to affect the EnCore MOO screen. If the character Los enters the same room, he is served a different room description and sees different objects in the room (by making use of EnCore's `_html` function). "Field" for him and for Palambron is the agricultural field of the Bard's story told when Milton is in Eternity. In this case, Palambron, Satan, and Los must battle as if before the Great Solemn Assembly. It is also possible for both Los and Milton to be in the same room at the same time and see different worlds—a very Blakean phenomenon.

15. Successfully negotiating a room opens up new spaces to advance the narrative and game play. At any moment the player is aware that there are many other fields and levels not visible to him/her, and that other spaces, once traveled through, will never be served and described in the same way again. In constructing an immersive textual experience, the goal is to create for the player a feeling of being situated within deep spatial folds and a particular temporal moment. If such immersion is successful, the player feels that each action is a performance—that typing/textually performing creates an event structure that affects the very architecture of the poem: what is encountered and where the narrative might lead. The shifts in architecture mimic the way the decisions of Blake's characters create new spaces. For example, Urizen's fall in *The Book of Urizen* creates the space into which he falls. In *Milton*, Satan's reaction to Palambron and the General Assembly causes Enitharmon to create a "New Space to protect Satan from punishment" (13:13, Erdman 107). The creation of space in the poem gets performed not only by the character but also by the reader since as the reader's eye scans the line "Created a New Space to protect Satan from punishment," the space opens up in and through the act of reading. Once again, the reader is a performer within the text and within the MOO.
16. In the final scene of the MOO site, the player loses all control of the performance as a staged apocalypse unfolds. The EnCore screen folds upon itself and is replaced by a blood-red background recalling Jesus's robes. Before this backdrop Milton and his Shadow are wed to Ololon and a boat-like ark of the covenant sails them into the horizon. The player feels powerless over his/her EnCore screen during this scene. The actual EnCore screen is hidden behind an animated double that tells the final events of the poem. Such loss of control over one's computer screen creates a horrid moment of anxiety. In this case, the Milton MOO uses a problem familiar to the player to leap outside of the MOO "into" the player's computer, monopolizing the screen. Again the player's position as typist outside the poem is interrupted by the playing experience, eclipsing the EnCore typing space and seemingly hijacking the player's computer.
17. The Milton MOO is a first glance at what is possible in immersive textuality. Its strength lies in having no space exterior to the poem. Just as Blake in his letter to Thomas Butts sees the thistle as an old man and the sun as Los, for the MOO player the familiar computer screen and keyboard become gateways for opening the doors of perception rather than simply mundane tools. One of Blake's goals in his poetry is to help the reader see the four-fold vision. The game play actualizes these folds both for the player inside the game space and for his vegetative (typing) self. Still many of these apocalyptic possibilities for immersive textuality are yet to be realized. Milton MOO has the infrastructure for creating many player options, housing multiple players, and pursuing multiple narratives. Yet, at this stage, Milton's path—as in the poem—remains fairly linear. Reflection takes place at the level of understanding the architecture and programming one is immersed within. If Milton MOO is built out to more levels of choice and complexity, the very narrative itself can increasingly function as a reflective tool. Additionally, at this stage of production only the Milton perspective is fully playable. Other perspectives would be fairly simple to add on and should be realized if Milton MOO will have a life beyond its current instantiation. Such limitations only point to the horizon of what is possible in the MOO space. Using immersion and possession as forms of thought creates new possibilities for creative critique both for Blake and for building MOO environments.

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---. *The Arlington Court Picture*. (also known as The Sea of Time and Space). Copyright ©. By permission of The National Trust.

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Notes

¹ Today's widely used synchronous communication derives from Internet software called MUDs and MOOs, first programmed in the 1980s and still in use. MUD stands for multi-user dungeon. The object-oriented programming in MUDs created the name MOOs or multi-user dungeons object-oriented. As the word "dungeon" indicates, these programs had their birth in role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. Early MOOs were text-based chat spaces with room descriptions and interactive digital objects for characters to play with. Today, MOOs include a graphic web interface in addition to the text chat space.

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² These were not mimetic tours of the Lake District but rather a walk within poems. Miming the real world was and remains a common and problematic aspect of MOO environments. The degree of information in the world is hard to replicate in a MOO and calls attention to the digital environment's shortcomings. Conversely, MOOs as textual spaces are well equipped to emulate the textual space of poems.

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³ Such early performativity in MOOs is described in a web site "Romantic Text/ Electronic Text: Designing a New Pedagogical Practice for Romantic Studies" co-authored with William Ruegg. This material was presented at the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Conference in Boston in November of 1996.

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⁴ Some of these examples draw from the work of Christopher Heppner's chapter "'Humpty Dumpty Blake': Reading Blake's Design," where he details gesturing in Blake's characters. In this section I combine Heppner's work with Deleuze's idea of folding from *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*.

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⁵ The idea of folds between reader and text found affinity with MOO scholarship in the 1990s which spent a considerable amount of time discussing the play of textual identity and the interplay between screen identity and the typist's "real life" identity. The fold between the physical self and textual self at work in Blake's book medium can be highlighted in MOOs by capitalizing upon the difference between typing person and player character.

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Digital Designs on Blake

"If the acts have been perform'd let the Bard himself witness": William Blake's *Milton* and MOO space

David M. Baulch, University of West Florida

This essay explores what MOO space can tell us about Blake's *Milton* and, conversely, what Blake's *Milton* can tell us about MOO space. By eliminating the distance between the fictional character within a text and its reader/player, MOO space arguably allows for a sense of the aesthetic experience as an intersubjective event. This essay appears in *Digital Designs on Blake*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

1. In exploring the new media and what Ron Broglio calls its "performative" possibilities for the study and teaching of literature, literary scholarship finds itself in the apparent position of being without a tradition, without standards, and without the confidence of a methodological approach to a critical object for which it is still—literally—coming to terms. What the performativity of new media demands is, of course, new ways not only of thinking about scholarship, but new ways of doing it, a challenge that professional academics should welcome. Still, the problem of placing, let alone embracing, scholarly or pedagogical work that is unique to new media presents some significant challenges. When Broglio asks, "How can we use the performativity of new media in humanities scholarship?" he is redefining the terms of the dismissive half question, "So what is it good for?" ([see Broglio essay Paragraph 1](#)).
2. This paper focuses on the performative potential of new media with regard to my participation in developing, with Chris Hunt, Ravi Varma, and Ron Broglio, a MOOspace modeled upon William Blake's *Milton: a poem in 2 books*. Initially it was my belief that this project was to explore what MOOspace could reveal about Blake's *Milton*. However, as the project developed, I came to realize that Blake's *Milton* has the capacity to offer its own kind of answer to what exactly the immersive textuality of MOOspace might be good for. That *Milton* can function as a guide for the exploration of new media should hardly be surprising, considering the close association of medium and message, inspiration and execution that Blake forges there. *Milton* is obsessive in revisiting the moment of inspiration. These moments, scattered throughout the text, are realizable as hypertextual features of Blake's book, features which, through their non-linear connections, create alternate discursive fields. As I shall argue, *Milton* is a text that links the instant of inspiration with forms of artistic execution and aesthetic experience, creating, in turn, the potential for a kind of critical agency in its characters and by its readers. As the performativity of Blake's *Milton* becomes manifest in the immersive textuality of MOOspace, the critical potential of the aesthetic becomes apparent in ways that escape much of contemporary criticism's emphasis on a linear model of materialist history.
3. Recently, Morton Paley has written about Blake's *Milton* in a way that foregrounds the problem that historicist/materialist scholarship often has with *Milton*. Paley observes that while *Milton* seems to suggest some kind of significant, revelatory experience for the individual, it fails to realize its notion of apocalypse as a prelude to a millennial era that is a moment of historical change. Paley concludes that "[t]hese difficulties suggest Blake's realization that in *Milton* he had promised apocalypse and millennium in history but had delivered them only within the self" (90). In drawing this conclusion, Paley's reading of *Milton* offers a contemporary addition to a tradition of Blake scholarship that sees Blake's three, later long poems—*The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*—as marking a retreat from political concerns into a self-involved Christian mysticism. From such a perspective, the ontological

character of the text's performativity, what Broglio calls its "textual folding," is overwritten by criticism's recourse to a linear model of material history ([see Broglio essay Paragraph 7](#)). By contrast, I wish to suggest that Blake's later texts, and particularly *Milton*, can be read as sites of engagement with the issues attendant upon the theorization and representation of the interrelations of ideology, aesthetics, and critical consciousness. Based upon this, I also want to suggest some ways in which precisely these aspects of Blake's *Milton* are ideal sites for critical exploration of the poem in its incarnation in MOOspace and for the promise of the new media.

4. Paley's reading of *Milton* locates the primary problem for understanding the text in its author's inability to successfully negotiate the connection between history and psyche. Indeed, Paley's view of *Milton* is emblematic of one of the difficulties presented by Blake's later poetry. By comparison, some of Blake's earlier efforts such as "London," "The Little Black Boy," "The Sick Rose," and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* are justly celebrated for their astute engagement with both the state and the ideological repressive apparatuses of late eighteenth century. Similarly, texts like *The French Revolution*, *America a Prophecy*, and *Europe a Prophecy* have found a receptive contemporary critical audience for their visionary treatment of revolutionary politics. *Milton*, however, does not consistently appear to provide such a clear and satisfying engagement with political and social concerns, thus earning its reputation as a text that retreats into a Christian escapism. In both cases, aesthetic experience is effectively misrecognized and thereby opposed to political engagement.
5. My own view is quite different. Taking Blake's *Milton* as an example, I argue that while the content of Blake's post-1800 writings may be less obviously focused on a social/ideological critique and do less to espouse the revolutionary political themes of the 1790's, Blake's *Milton* develops a construction of the aesthetic which, seen in relation to Kantian aesthetics, lays the groundwork for what Robert Kaufman has recently called "protocritical consciousness" (141).^[1] To put it another way, while the direct level of political engagement recedes in Blake's post-1800 work, it does so in a way that foregrounds the aesthetic experience of what the "Preface" of *Milton* calls "the Sublime of the Bible," and it figures this form of aesthetic experience as a prerequisite to critical thought. In this way, Blake's *Milton* can be understood to explore a construction of the aesthetic experience which, while not a political act in itself, nevertheless discloses the formal capacity of thought distinct from the content of a given discourse. What the *Milton* MOOspace allows for is a MOO player's participation in the kind of aesthetic experience that confronts the characters in the poem. This experience of immersive textuality is the truly radical face of MOOspace as a scholarly or pedagogical use of new media because it collapses the traditional criticism's posture of maintaining an objective distance from the experience of characters within the text. In the moment of inspiration, the rules of the environment change and alternate possibilities emerge in the control of the character. For the characters in Blake's poem, this change is in the realization of the purely formal nature of time and space as constructs not necessarily coincident with a single ideological reality. For the *Milton* MOOspace, these changes are mediated by technology and they demand a player's active critical engagement with the different electronic environments that emerge.
6. Book One of *Milton* engages the discourse of Biblical eschatology, revising time and space into radically open forms, and thus exposing the bounds of their ideological content in the privileged space of the inspired moment. The revelation announced when the Bard/*Milton*/Blake combines with Los is a sublime apprehension of Biblical time and space. The speaker announces:

I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six thousand Years ago Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom. Six Thousand Years Are finishd. I return! Both Time & Space obey my will I in Six Thousand Years walk up and down: for not one Moment Of Time is lost, not one Event of Space unpermanent (22 [24]: 15-19 E 117)

This announcement is complex and yet characteristic of the poem in the way it combines its claims for the significance of the poet/prophet with the conclusion of the six-thousand year period assigned to Biblical history and the apprehension of the total forms of the time and space as an instant present to thought. The importance of artistic activity and the instant of aesthetic judgment are thus realized as the Biblical Last Judgment, which itself stands as an aesthetic judgment of the sublime.^[2] Rather than situating the Last Judgment as the point where material history simply ends, *Milton* can be seen to position the moment of aesthetic experience as the site from which a critique of the empirical forms of time and space and the ideology of Biblical eschatology can begin. Significantly, in Book One of *Milton*, the realization of the eschatological destination in the discovery of poetic purpose also coincides with the entry into Los's "supreme abode," Golgonooza (22 [24]: 26 E 117). It is as if aesthetic experience is not only necessary for realizing the destination of Biblical history, but rather that aesthetic experience actually is the destination of Biblical history. The "Preface" to *Milton* suggests as much by arguing that "if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity," we will be able to experience "the Sublime of the Bible" (1[i] E 95). Apocalypse and aesthetic experience merge in *Milton* in such a way as to critique their conjunction in the ideological legacy of John Milton's poetry.

7. What is thus at stake in *Milton*'s "Sublime of the Bible" and the poem's concern with the ideological implications of Biblical eschatology and aesthetics becomes clearer in the context of a construction of the sublime that shares some surprising territory with Immanuel Kant's interest in aesthetics. The protocritical character of "the Sublime of the Bible" identifies the way that *Milton* constructs aesthetic experience as simultaneously the form and content of poetic activity. In relation to Kantian aesthetics, the issue that emerges when reading the performative and descriptive implications of *Milton* is not so much that of a subject's response to an object (as is the case with Edmund Burke's empirical view of aesthetics), as it is that of a strictly delimited subjectivity that defines what Kaufman has identified in Kant as the "processive form" "necessary to effectuate, specific content-engaging acts of critical agency" (141, 147). The emphasis in *Milton* is thus focused on a character's experience of the moment of aesthetic judgment. This moment, one which the text tropes as the moment of inspiration, presents itself as an experience that is the necessary prerequisite for critical agency.
8. Perhaps, then, Paley's view that Blake's *Milton* fails to realize the promise of apocalypse and millennium as moments of sweeping historical change is to miss the truly radical potential of *Milton*'s critique of subjectivity, time and space as forms inextricable from their ideological content. The protocritical character of aesthetic experience in *Milton* lays the groundwork for a critique of the ideological implications of time and space by presenting aesthetic experience as an inspired apprehension of the principle of form itself, and thus form, as a principle momentarily distinct from the reified ideological inscription of meaning in the moment of aesthetic experience, is what Blake's poem poses as a condition contrary to the "fall." The Milton MOOSpace provides an electronic environment that presents a player with the experience of character, time and space as being radically contingent concepts that are, in part, open to the control of the player. *Milton*'s critique of subjectivity is realized in the way that a MOO player "possesses," as Hunt and Varma term it, the identity of a character within the poem. In the same way that the non-linear implications of the moment of inspiration in *Milton* is more like a single moment obsessively re-presented in its different aspects, all of the complex threads of the MOO map are connected. In other words, any one moment in MOOSpace potentially opens into any other moment within the Milton MOO. As apocalyptic moment, the Milton MOO also provides a kind of technological experience of the sublime which, while it does not change the world beyond one's computer, does suggest the same difference between representation and presentation central to the Kantian sublime in an electronic environment (see Milton MOO apocalypse).
9. Insofar as the realization and exploration of various constructions of time and space are a central theme in *Milton*, electronic environments hold the potential for exploring the critical potential of Los's claim

that "Both Time & Space obey my will" (22 [24]:17, E 117). As designers of the MOOspace, Hunt and Varma identify the fundamental applicability of the MOO to Blake's *Milton* in the way that it allows for the expression of what they call "the dynamic existence of [Blake's] objects and the strange relationships between them" (Hunt). Indeed, objects in *Milton* exist in relationships that are radically contingent. Character, time and space are equally objects and actors; they are the conditions of their own possibility and meaning. These relationships often identify a state of being as determining what an object appears to mean. The paradigmatic expression of this kind of dynamic relationship in *Milton* is called a "Vortex." In the poem, Milton's descent from a heaven that is the ideological legacy of his Christian epics, is followed by the narrator's explanation:

The nature of infinity is this: That every thing has its Own Vortex; and when once a traveller thro Eternity. Has passd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind His path, into a globe itself infolding; like a sun: Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty, While he keeps onwards on his wondrous journey on the earth
 Thus is the earth one infinite plane, and not as apparent To the weak traveler confin'd beneath the moony shade. Thus is the heaven a vortex passd already, and the earth A vortex not yet pass'd by the traveler thro' Eternity (15[17]: 21-26, 32-35)

In this passage, states of being such as *Milton's* Christian eternity of infinite temporal extension, the "moony shade" of radical relativism the poem later calls the state of "Beulah," and the physicality of earth itself, are equally realizable as discrete objects that exist within the infinite possibilities for the imaginative potential of form itself. The radically contingent relationship between time, space and character as objects in the text is realized in the moment of aesthetic experience. Here, the boundaries traditionally assigned to these concepts are folded back upon themselves by the text's use of language and visual image to create a non-linear textual logic. In adapting *Milton* to MOOspace, the text's use of the moment of aesthetic response and experience as the preeminent site of this process of folding becomes foregrounded, because one enters the MOOspace as a character actively immersed in the events of the text. To enter the Milton MOO space, one currently enters as Milton as shown below.

10. The way that Blake designed *Milton* as a text invites the very kind of participation in an immersive experience of the text as the character Milton that the Milton MOOspace demands. Entering the Milton MOOspace is to perform the process implied by the title page of *Milton*. The title page of *Milton* visually/verbally sets out the text's task of disrupting habitual conventions of reading/viewing to suggest that the reader/viewer needs to encounter the book, not as a spectator, but as the character Milton and to undergo the aesthetic experience of the moment of inspiration and its potential for critical agency. (Please see the Blake Archive "Welcome Page" before continuing on to *Milton* title page).^[3] The title page suggests that in order to read, to "enter," the poem one must inhabit the gap in the spatially destabilized identity/name/title "MIL / TON".^[4] In MOOspace, the user enters the poem through the gap in the character and the title of its subject. On the title page, the first syllable "MIL" defines a horizontal plane and "TON" defines a descending vertical plane. The naked man whose extended arm and spread fingers seemingly reach toward the upper right corner of the page create the break in the lexical indicator of identity. Thus Milton's name and the poem's title indicate both the human subject and literary text the reader is about to enter. Perhaps it is also worth reiterating Broglio's observation (See Broglio essay Paragraph 12) that the image/text of this disruption of the term "MIL / TON" is also the action the reader's hand must perform to turn the page, and thus potentially experience the aesthetic response stated in "[A Vision of the Last Judgment]": "If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative thought [. . .] then he would meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy" (E 560). To enter the text of *Milton* is to enter not only with the naked figure—Milton in the inspired moment of his descent—but as that figure and through that broken identity/name/title. Entering the Milton MOOspace

literalizes and thereby renders the player self-conscious of this process. A MOO player enters the space by "possessing" the identity of Milton, and thus the player becomes immersed in the processes of the text.

11. Because the MOO is a multiple user environment, the player is also immersed in a text where the identity of characters becomes a kind of combined consciousness in the moment of inspiration. For Blake's *Milton*, the moment of inspiration, Milton's aesthetic experience within the book, involves the transfer of inspiration from one figure to another and, simultaneously, the movement from one construction of space and time to another in the poem. These moments of mental experience are treated as actions within the book. Actions reveal time, space, and character as fundamentally ideological forms and they provide the basis for the realization of form-in-its-possibility as for a critique of ideology. The question central to the poem is, what will inspire Milton to take action, what can create the necessary critical agency in *Milton*? Initially, John Milton is described as "Unhappy tho in heav'n" (2: 18 E 96). Milton's dissatisfaction with his lot in eternity and the ideological legacy he has left is embodied in "his Sixfold Emanation scattere'd thro' the deep" (2: 19 E 96).^[5] Milton seems to be both aware of and to regret this situation, but he somehow lacks the necessary motivation to reunite with Ololon. In the poem, it is precisely his aesthetic experience of a strange poem uttered by a nameless Bard that inspires him to take action. To put it more accurately, Milton's aesthetic experience is the action he takes, because in Blake's poem the potential for critical agency depends upon realizing the ideological nature of time, space, and ultimately one's own condition as a character; aesthetic experience alone makes this possible. Crucially, as Milton's experience of the Bard's song shows, the strictly delimited subjectivity defined by the experience also identifies the possibilities for radical constructions of intersubjective relationships within the protocritical space of the aesthetic.
12. If the question is, what will create the necessary conditions for critical agency in *Milton*, then the answer is provided in the appearance of a nameless Bard who suddenly commands the attention of those assembled in "the heavens of Albion" by relating a long and complex "Song" (14[15]: 10 E 108). The Bard's song introduces the performative nature of inspiration as a trope in the text. The Bard's heavenly audience wants proof that the actions described in his song are statements of fact referring to events that have taken place.^[6] The heavenly audience demands in unison, "If it is true! if the acts have been perform'd / Let the Bard himself witness" (13[14]: 49-50, E 107). Thus the key criterion imposed on the poetic value of the Bard's song is the witnessing of the performance of the actions described, but the text reveals that they are asking the wrong question. The Bard is bearing witness to the critical potential of inspired vision—his poem performs the inspiration it describes. What the Bard claims has been performed; what the Bard bears witness to, is inspiration: "I am Inspired! I know it is Truth!" (13[14]:51, E 107). According to the Bard, experience—here specifically aesthetic experience—is defined as inspired vision. This aesthetic experience is, at the same time, the disruption of habitual patterns of meaning, and as such it holds the potential for critical agency. While such inspiration may be simply a series of contra-factual statements, at least as far as his audience is concerned, it nonetheless unmask the ideological limitations of the empirical premises of his audience's rejection of his song.
13. Perhaps more importantly, the Bard's song is the first of a number of scenes of inspiration that ultimately are revealed as the moment of inspiration that enables Blake to create *Milton*. In this sense, the whole poem is about the inspiration necessary for its own making. Insofar as *Milton* is about its own generation, the Bard's song is both a biographical retelling of William Blake's struggle to find inspiration while in the employ of William Hayley between the years 1800 and 1803 in Felpham, and it is also a prelude to the moment of inspiration for the William Blake figure within the poem. The Bard is thus a figure representing the protocritical character of the aesthetic experience of inspired poetry. His concept of inspiration is what the poem realizes within itself. The transfer of the Bard's inspiration to Milton is achieved by the literal incorporation of his character into that of Milton: "The loud voic'd

Bard terrify'd took refuge in Miltons bosom" (14[15]: 9 E 108). Here, aesthetic experience simultaneously becomes the performance and the dissemination of the act of inspiration. Milton, inspired by the Bard's song and the Bard's presence within him, resolves to "go to Eternal Death!" (14[15]: 14 E 108); leaving the Christian heaven of infinite temporal extension, Milton moves outside of its particular ideological reality, and returns to the generative world. Milton's aesthetic experience of the Bard's song, the inspiration Milton receives from the song is simultaneously the potential for critical agency within the character Milton. As I shall argue, Blake's *Milton* can be read as, in part, a complex series of repetitions of the moment of inspiration and its implications for the possibility for critical thought. Because of its centrality in *Milton* and its impact on the character's within the text, the Milton MOO takes this moment where aesthetic experience and the potential for critical agency are simultaneously realized as the point of entry where a MOO-er experiences the immersive textuality of *Milton*. As a player entering the Milton MOO possesses a character, that player enacts a performative recovery of the sense of the word "inspiration" as a breathing-of-life-into the character and text.

14. The Bard's entry into and inspiration of Milton has a number of visual components throughout the book that complicate *Milton's* textuality in ways that render it ideal for an electronic environment. Operating by means of the possession of a character, the Milton MOOspace opens the possible connections between character, time and space as expanded possibilities for the MOO player. These visual components of Blake's *Milton* develop the possibilities of the text in both a linear and non-linear or hypertextual fashion. There is a visual counterpart to the conclusion of the Bard's entry into Milton on the plate immediately following its verbal description, but, as a book, *Milton* also presents non-linear connections where the actions described earlier in the text are give alternative visual representations later. The full page image on plate 15 (in copy C), that follows the Bard's resolution presents what appears to be a frontal view of the figure from the title page. Here, the action of going to "eternal death" is shown as the taking "off" of "the robe of promise," an ungirdling of "himself from the oath of God" (14[15]: 13, E 108) (see *Milton* plate 15) . The moment of Milton's inspiration is the move to a position critical of Christian ideology: this moment is his journey. Crucially, Milton's inspiration is also a potentially self-critical moment insofar as it is a rejection of the ossified remains of his poetic revisioning of the Bible in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Milton's move outside of his own construction of a Christian ideology of eternal life after death as a descent to "eternal death" is not simply a point from which the linear development of the "plot" proceeds; it is a moment that is compulsively repeated in various forms and in various places in the verbal and visual texts of the book. On plate 34 of copy C of Book Two, Milton's journey to eternal death is visually mapped as a one that is at once cosmic, spiritual, and mental. Here, the visual image has no adjacent verbal description as is the case with the verbal text of plate 14 and the visual text of plate 15 (see *Milton* plate 34) . These two visual representations of Milton's resolution fold the linear narrative development of the text back upon itself. Rather than progression, a reader of Blake's text or player in the Milton MOOspace is presented with an instance of repetitions that creates alternate discursive fields based upon alternate organizations of the image/text relationship.
15. Rather than unfolding in time, the differences or variations in the trope of inspiration/descent tend to make the linear progress of the text fold back upon itself, producing the impression that the whole poem is an exhaustive, multi-perspectival elaboration of one moment. This aesthetic experience opens the possibility for critical thought through the disruption of identity and reality as it is naturalized in ideology, both for Milton as a character within the poem and potentially for a reader of the poem. The transfer of inspiration from the Bard to Milton thematizes the dissemination of a kind of transformative aesthetic experience as the means by which the ideological nature of time and space are exposed in a kind of sublime mental experience of poetry. In what follows in *Milton*, this transformative aesthetic experience is disseminated to the first-person Blake narrator and to Los the poet/blacksmith figure within Blake's personal mythology. Through the moment of inspiration the identities of characters become seamlessly linked in an instant outside of the linear flow of time and space.

16. In the Milton MOO, Milton's descent to eternal death is a Flash sequence that provides Milton's point of view as he enters Blake to produce the moment of inspiration. This sequence presents the first-person view of Milton's fall through parting banks of fluffy cumulous clouds, down to Blake's Felpham cottage, through a window and into the room, and up to a table where the player-as-Milton sees what Blake is writing from Blake's point of view (See MOO Flash sequence). Thus, this sequence seamlessly moves a MOO-er from Milton's point of view to Blake's. While the change from Milton's point of view to Blake's is seamless, the Flash sequence represents it as a move from a relatively realistic depiction of a fall to Earth into a cartoon-like realization of Blake's Felpham cottage. Falling from "the heavens of Albion," now realizable as an ideologically reified, fantasmatic, space in the sky outside of the flow of time, "into the Sea of Time & Space" (15[17]: 46 E 110), an ideologically reified space dominated by materiality and temporal progression, Milton appears to the Blake narrator of the poem: "Then I saw him in the Zenith as a falling star./Descending perpendicular, swift as the swallow or swift/And on my left foot falling on the tarsus, enterd there" (15[17]: 47-49 E 110) (see *Milton* plate 16 and MOO Flash sequence). Just as the Bard takes refuge in Milton's bosom, Milton enters or possesses the Blake narrator by way of his foot, itself a critical comment on the Bible's depiction of the conversion of Saul into Paul on the road to Tarsus. The inspired Milton becomes, in turn, the inspiration of Blake and a part of his identity, a moment which the Milton MOO's descent Flash sequence depicts as both a movement through space and the inspiration to write from the point of view of the MOO player.
17. The value of thinking of *Milton* through the trope of the possession of identities that define the inspired moment in MOOspace is that it allows for the player to be immersed in an aesthetic experience of a potentially apocalyptic moment, but the apocalypse of *Milton* conceived of this way is not so much about the end of the world as it is about the potential for a kind of agency that can produce a critique of ideology. This critique of ideology allows for a MOO player to experience an apocalyptic end of the ideological single-mindedness of Milton's perspective. The remainder of the first book of *Milton* describes the visionary, geographical, biological, creative domain of Los, referred to within the poem as Golgonooza. It is as if the movement of Book One, in Milton's descent, has been a moment increasingly focused upon the internal works of Blake's mythopoetic machinery, a moment which when fully entered into is realized as an apocalyptic moment. With the Bard/Milton/Blake/Los character reaching Golgonooza, Los announces the moment that Christian ideology posits as the apocalypse, when the six thousand years of time assigned to Biblical eschatology "Are finishd" (22[24]: 17 E 117). But rather than resulting in the end of the material world, this moment reveals that the six thousand years are contained within "a pulsation of the artery" and "a red Globule of Mans blood" (29[31]: 3 and 29[31]: 21 E 127). What ends in this apocalyptic moment is the abstract measurement of time as temporal extension and space as material distance, and its inverse, the heavenly form of a Hegelian bad infinity without material existence, concepts that the book has programmatically tried to break down through its various foldings. In Golgonooza, the kind of temporal and spatial constructions within which the Bard/Milton/Blake/Los has existed are recognized as fundamentally ideological domains. Here, inspired moments of aesthetic response allow for a critical, disruptive remapping of a world that has become intellectually codified by empirical science and ideologically reified by Christian doctrine.
18. One of the myriad difficulties in coming to some understanding of Blake's *Milton* is that while the first-person speaker in Book One of the poem seems to announce nothing less than apocalypse and millennium, Book Two ends by clearly indicating that all of the actions taking place in the poem are somehow only preparatory to change actually taking place in the world. Rather than extending the action from the Bard/Milton/Blake/Los's vision of time and space, Book Two shifts its focus to the figure Ololon, "the Six-fold Miltonic Female" (41[48]: 30 E 143), and her descent into Blake's garden at the Felpham cottage he inhabited between 1800 and 1803 (see *Milton* plate 39). The appearance of Ololon in his garden momentarily overwhelms the Blake/the speaker of the poem, and Book Two quickly ends with the preparations for the apocalypse apparently having been completed, but there is

no real indication why this has not taken place or when it will. The Milton MOOspace suggests that aesthetic experience that provides the possibility of critical agency is apocalyptic insofar as it is a sweeping reorganization of the concepts of character, time and space. The political/historical dimension of this experience is a question of the dissemination of the experience.

19. Rather than presenting some narrative fulfillment in a drawing out of the apocalyptic implications of the events of Book One, Book Two seems to present what may well be an equivalent moment from a different perspective. Instead of hearing the Bard/Milton/Blake/Los's claims about the end of Biblical time, the poem presents the Blake narrator's account of his physiological reaction to his visionary experience as the experience of resurrection and judgment: "My bones trembled. I fell outstretchd upon the path/A moment, & my Soul returnd into its mortal state/To Ressurrection & Judgment in the Vegetable Body" (42[49]: 25-26 E 143). This is an example of what Broglio calls the folding of a textual character's body. If the entry into Golgonooza in Book One is somehow equivalent to Blake's reentry into consciousness in Book Two, it is pertinent to ask what this event has accomplished and how it has prepared "All Animals upon the Earth [...] /To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations" as the end of Book two claims (42[49]: 39-43[50]:1 E 144). I would venture to answer that the events of the text are ultimately contained in this moment, a moment which disrupts the ideological forms of time, space, and character.
20. As I have indicated earlier, Paley sees this oddity of the linear unfolding of the structure of *Milton* as the book's shortcoming. The point I wish to emphasize is that *Milton's* retreat from a historical/material realization of apocalypse and millennium suggests the text's emphasis on the aesthetic experience of the inspired moment, a moment that in *Milton* is always bound up with the response to a text or the techniques of its production, as a prerequisite for a critical agency that is capable of articulating a critique of the ideological implications of form. While *Milton* does not deliver the sweeping ideological change of apocalypse, it does deliver what might be necessary for such a change as an individual praxis. *Milton's* emphasis on aesthetic experience and its relationship to a critique of the ideological nature of reality is what ideally suits the poem for the immersive textuality of MOOspace.
21. As Broglio, Hunt, and Varma have begun to theorize *Milton* for the MOO, they have thus foregrounded the relationship between "systems" and non-system objects that exist, to a certain extent, independently within those systems. I'm reminded of Los's claim in Blake's *Jerusalem*, "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans" (10: 20 E 153). This strikes me as an ideal and utterly Blakean approach to the complexities of character, time, and space in *Milton* insofar as non-system objects such as an individual characters within the MOO environment can experience time and space as constructed along different parameters as defined in different systems. In this way, a MOO environment can realize what Blake's *Milton* describes as the various "States" of existence that are available to an individual. *Milton* claims that one must "Distinguish therefore States from Individuals in those States" (32[35]: 22 E 132). The MOO, like Blake's *Milton*, can offer the realization of the very constructedness of time and space as grounded in the formal capacity of the imagination. The MOO offers our contemporary exploration of *Milton* an immersive, dynamic, non-linear medium as a mode of experience and expression. By setting out the non-linearity of the relationship between the two books of Blake's *Milton*, a MOO environment can emphasize the contra-finality and simultaneous existence of the multiple states of its "Sublime of the Bible." Perhaps most importantly, the multiple user capabilities of the MOO offer the potential to realize the kind of aesthetic experience through which *Milton* attempts to produce protocritical consciousness as communal activity.

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Notes

¹ See Robert Kaufman's "Everybody Hates Kant: Blakean Formalism and the Symmetries of Laura Moriarty" in *Modern Language Quarterly*, 61:1 (March 2000) 131-155.

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² Blake's notebook description of the now-lost painting "[A Vision of The Last Judgment]," probably written near the time of the completion and printing of three of the four extant copies of *Milton*, suggest precisely this view of the Last Judgment. In this description, "The Last Judgment is an Overwhelming of Bad Art & Science," thus figuring the last Judgment as an aesthetic experience occasioned by what the description refers

to as "True Art" in opposition to an objective historical finality that is guaranteed by a theological principle (E 565).

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³ If your browser does not support Java, you will need to select the "non-Java" option for the pages on the Blake Archive to which this article is linked in order to view the plate.

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⁴ See Thomas Volger's excellent article "RE: Naming MIL/TON" for an extended analysis of this aspect of *Milton*.

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⁵ Sixfold, this emanative portion of Milton, called, enigmatically enough, Ololon, represents Milton's three wives and three daughters according to S. Foster Damon (307). As Blake's concept of emanation is developed in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, the term generally refers to a separate female part of a character that appears or emanates in the state of existence often referred to as generation, a state defined, in part, by sexual division and generative reproduction. Ololon is, however, much more complex than a biographical conflation of identities, of the legacy of Milton's treatment of his wives and daughters, or the repetition in Blake's personal mythology of the emanation in its conflation of the Christian mythos of the creation of man and of sexual awareness as coincident with the expulsion from the Edenic state. When Ololon appears it is as both a place located "in Eden [as] a sweet River, of mild & liquid pearl," and a voice, referring to itself as plural, of "those who Milton drove / Down into Ulro" (21 [23]: 15-17, E 115).

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⁶ Much of what the Bard's song describes are generally understood as a recapitulation, through the mythic machinery of Blake's *The Four Zoas*, of Blake's own struggles to produce his work while employed by William Hayley between 1800 and 1803 at Felpham.

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Digital Designs on Blake

The Fourfold Visions of William Blake and Martin Heidegger

Marcel O'Gorman, University of Detroit Mercy

William Blake and Martin Heidegger both drew on a fourfold conception of being. In an attempt to synthesize these conceptions, this essay performs a visual mapping of both fourfolds onto an image from Blake's *Milton: A Poem*. This essay appears in *Digital Designs on Blake*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

What was needed was an art that could not be turned into an abstraction, an art that no one would fall down and worship. It must be an art that would urge no programs and offer no systems. He found it in an art which was ultimately committed not to creation but, paradoxically, to destruction, an art that would not be seen but would be seen through. Through it would be made, like the Milton of Blake's poem, to "go to Eternal Death."

Jerome McGann, "The Aim of Blake's Prophecies and the Uses of Blake Criticism"



Figure 1: "Milton, A Poem", Plate 33 (Erdman), Copy C (1811), courtesy of New York Public Library.

1. In the summer of 2002, Ron Broglio asked me if I would be part of a panel on Blake at the Web X conference in Athens. "Do something with Blake and Design," he told me. "And dude, this is totally not about archiving." That invitation, complete with Ron's trademark inflection, was good enough for me. The title of this panel, "Out of the Archive" echoes what I have called the "fever for archiving" that seems to have infected humanities research during the last decade or so.[\[1\]](#) New media offer scholars

the opportunity to conduct research and criticism in ways that outstrip the limitations of the printed page, and yet the most renowned and well-funded "digital humanities" projects to date focus on performing a *direct translation* of printed pages into digital archives. My conference presentation, like Blake's illuminated work, is not readily translatable for the Web. Rather than try to do perform the translation then, this paper serves as a recounting of the presentation, which was meant to be nothing more than a performance to provoke innovation in humanities research.

2. As Katherine Hayles has noted in *Writing Machines*, the William Blake Archive (www.blakearchive.org) provides a case study in how humanities scholars are importing print-centric practices onto the web.^[2] She (Hayles refers to herself in 3rd person in the text) further made a point of the site's rhetoric, which emphasized rendering the print Blake as exactly as possible, providing users with a sizing tool and color device so they could adjust their browsers. But these very functionalities were themselves part of what made the electronic Blake different than the print Blake. In her conclusion she drew the obvious moral that the literary community could no longer afford to treat text on screen as if it were print read in a vertical position. Electronic text had its own specificities, and a deep understanding of them would bring into view by contrast the specificities of print, which could again be seen for what it was, a medium and not a transparent interface. (43) Hayles emphasizes her point by producing a printed text, *Writing Machines*, which visually remediates^[3] the materiality of the electronic texts that are the subject of her study. In a similar vein, at the Web X Conference, my goal was to remediate the relief-etched work of William Blake into a spoken performance supplemented by web pages and QuickTime video. Drawing on the performative and dialectical quality of Blake's imagetexts, I thought I would use this panel as an opportunity to work out a creative problem that I have been dealing with for the past year. The panel presentation (like this "essay") was not completely *about* Blake, then. Instead, my goal was to present *with* Blake, applying the materiality and performative potential of his work toward the resolution of a problem. That being said, readers in search of a linear argument may want to stop here.
3. I've been trying to reconcile two projects that I have underway. Not in order to consolidate them, but, following Blake's own method—a dialectic of dialectics—to create a generative relationship between the two so that they can feed off one another in productive ways. The first project is entitled *hypericonomy*. It explores the possibility of creating a form of academic discourse more suitable to a picture-oriented, digital age. Blake serves as a design exemplar for this project. The second project is entitled *necromedia*. This is about the historical, metaphorical, and philosophical relationship between media technology and death. For this project I draw heavily on Heidegger's theorization of technology. While working on these two projects, I noticed that both Blake and Heidegger arrived at very opaque fourfold conceptions of being. I came up with an equally opaque title for the Web X presentation, and sent an abstract to Ron entitled: "The Fourfolds of William Blake and Martin Heidegger: Minds, Bodies, Technologies."
4. To be honest, I had no idea where I was going with this. But I had set a challenge for myself, guided by a reckless penchant for pattern recognition. All I needed was a strategy, a method of embodiment, to give shape to the concept so that it might be fully played out. Like many before me, I turned to Blake for a structure, a visual system of organization. In the conference presentation, I presented this tradition of using Blake as an organizing system by pointing to a flashing series of digital images, which I cannot reproduce here for reasons of copyright ownership:
 - 1) ernst.html: from Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 têtes*, which foregrounds a trumpeter from Blake's *The Grave illustrations*;^[4]
 - 2) ruegg.html: from Bill Ruegg's Web Project, "*The Four Zoas Fetishized*," which features the same trumpeter;
 - 3) tattoo.html: from the film, *The Red Dragon*, depicting Ralph Fiennes with a Blake tattoo on his back;
 - 4) tarot.html: a card from the *William Blake Tarot of the Creative Imagination*.

The sequence of images was intended to demonstrate how Blake has provided other individuals with a pictorial schema for organizing and generating knowledge. I finished this sequence with Blake's schematic rendering of the universe in *Milton*, and I proceeded to map my two projects onto this imagetext, which I "photoshopped" into image only.

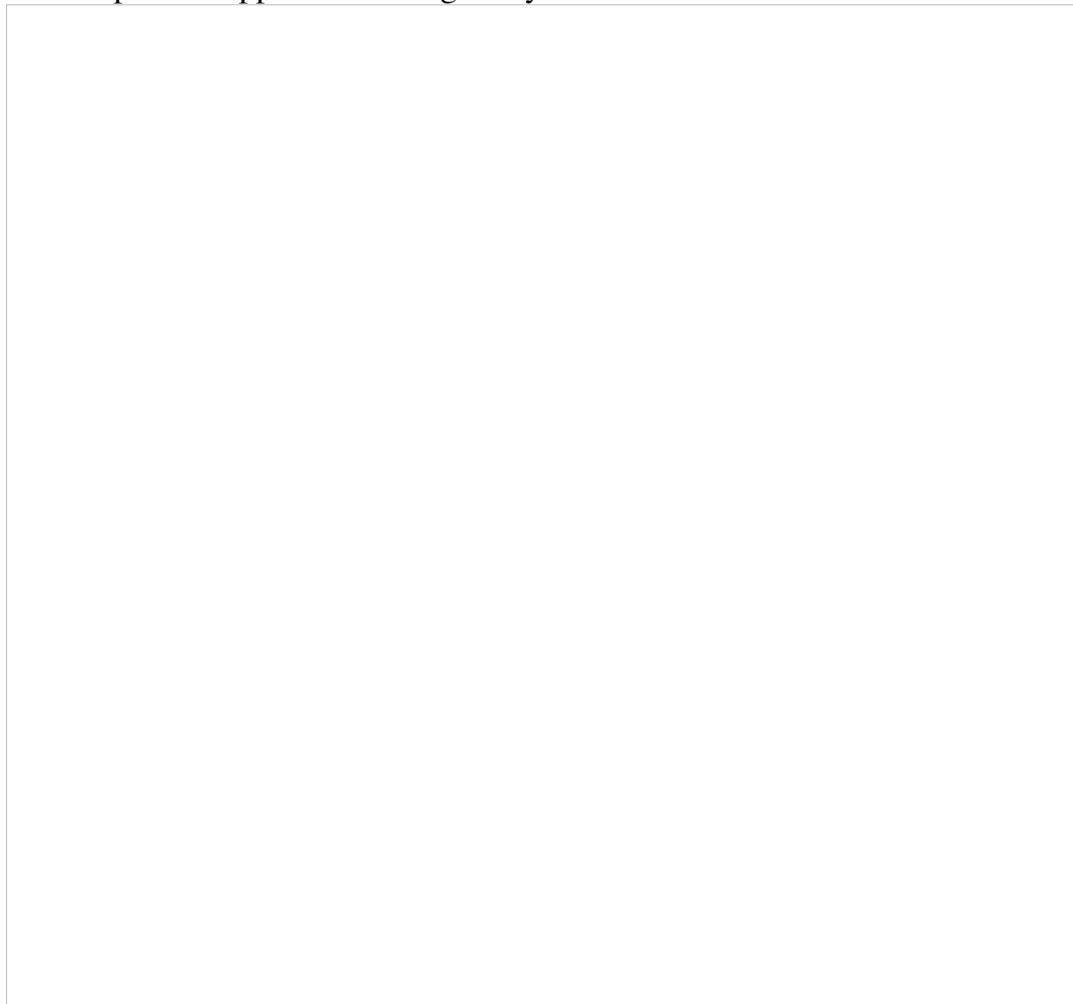


Figure 2: "Milton, A Poem", Plate 33 (Erdman), Copy C (1811), with text removed, courtesy of New York Public Library.

5. Hypericonomy is a method of research and writing that relies on the generative potential of the hypericon.[\[5\]](#) Rather than linking paragraphs toward the fulfillment of an argument, the hypericonomist links together hypericons, images of wide scope that encapsulate an argument and present it pictorially. As an exercise in hypericonomy, I created an assignment for my students entitled "The 4Fold vision."
6. The assignment is based on Greg Ulmer's mystory, a method of research that generates knowledge by combining four modes of conventional discourse: academic, popular, professional, and autobiographical. I modified Ulmer's mystory method by asking students to start with an image from Blake with which they most identified. Once they had chosen an image, they filled in the four folds of the vision by collecting texts and images related to each category. When that was done, they had to look for recurring patterns in their words and images, based on Blake's artistic schemata as identified by W.J.T. Mitchell. The recurrent visual pattern suggested a method of organization for the project, which took the form of a web site and animated gif.[\[6\]](#) The 4fold Vision is a project about Blake, design, pattern recognition, discursive communities and their interconnectedness in the production of knowledge. The generative potential of this mode of discourse is what I was trying to recreate in my conference presentation.
7. The second project that I mapped onto the *Milton* schema has to do with necromedia, a neologism that

I use to encapsulate the interrelatedness of media technology and death. To define the essence of technology, Martin Heidegger draws on the term "*gestell*," or enframing (*Question*, 19). He uses the term enframing not in the sense of a physical framework or structure of some sort. Instead, enframing is actually the work of technology. When the Rhine River is dammed up for the sake of generating hydroelectricity, enframing is at work, and I would argue that when a human being is cryogenically frozen, transformed into a holographic image, or even recorded on videotape, enframing is also at work.

8. But the most important thing about *gestell* is that this term may also be translated as "skeleton."^[7] This is the first clue in understanding what I mean by necromedia. Death and technology are not only linked phenomenologically, but they also share an uncanny symbolic relationship. To illustrate this, I presented the panel audience with a series of photographs from the history of technological invention, including Watson's gallows telephone, Marey's [chronophotographic rifle](#) , and an image of the first human sonogram, which was conducted in the turret of a B-29 bomber.
9. The history of technological innovation is teeming with accounts of death, war, and ghost stories. This is no coincidence considering that all media technologies are either filtered down to us from the military or are immediately co-opted by the military for the purpose of human destruction. Death and technology are intimate collaborators. Beyond this literal connection between death and technology, there is also a philosophical or existential link. As Heidegger proposed, technology challenges us to be more than human, challenges us to overstep our possibility:

The birch tree never oversteps its possibility. The colony of bees dwells in its possibility. It is first the will which arranges itself everywhere in technology that devours the earth in the exhaustion and consumption and change of what is artificial. Technology drives the earth beyond the developed sphere of its possibility into such things which are no longer a possibility and are thus impossible. (*Nietzsche*, 108)

10. To sum all of this up in Heidegger's words, technology causes us to forget our finitude, the fact that we are all going to die. According to Heidegger, finitude is the essence of being human. Living in full acknowledgement of our finitude is the key to being authentic or rather the key to authentic being. At this point, I would like to return to the Four Zoas schema and see how these two projects might be mapped out.
11. Since hypericonomy privileges instinct over reason, while challenging a phallogocentric, academic tradition (i.e., the printed essay), then it might make sense to place it where Luvah usually sits, on the right-hand side. In Blake's cosmology, this is a space for emotion, passion, and potential revolution in the form of Orc, Luvah's spectre. This suits hypericonomy well.
12. Necromedia, on the other hand, is about the body and the physical senses, particularly the impact of technology on the body. So maybe it belongs with Tharmas, the laborer, on the left-hand side.
13. Before pursuing this conjectural calculation any further, I should return to Blake. There is a danger here of treating Blake's art not as an infinitely generative entity, but as a sort of predictable calculating machine.^[8] one that would lend itself to the absolute reductionism of "single vision":

Now I a fourfold vision see And a fourfold vision is given to me
Tis fourfold in my supreme delight And three fold in soft Beulahs night
And twofold Always. May God us keep From Single vision & Newtons sleep. ("Letter to Thomas Butts")

There is a place where Contrarieties are equally True This place is called Beulah, It is a

pleasant lovely Shadow Where no dispute can come. Because of those who Sleep. (M 30:1-3)

14. If I return to the fourfold schema then, and attempt to locate Blake and Heidegger, it would seem that Blake belongs up at the top with Urthona, a place of creative imagination, art, wisdom. Heidegger, on the other hand, stickler that he is for reasoning things out, and for being a calculating, laboring philosopher, belongs at the bottom, with Urizen.
15. Heidegger's concept of the fourfold provides a schema at least as perplexing as Blake's fourfold vision. According to Heidegger, certain things—and note that "things" is the exact term used by Heidegger^[9]—are capable of gathering together the fourfold of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. A chalice, for example, can be a spiritual object designed with the gods in mind. The wine it contains brings together the earth that produced the grapes and the sky that provided rain for the vines. Finally, the chalice is designed to contain nourishment for mortals, and it is used by mortals to celebrate one another's company, and to worship the gods. In the chalice, then, we see the gathering of the fourfold.
16. A technological worldview tempts us to see a thing not in its fourfold manifestation, but only as potentiality, "raw material." Or such a worldview causes us to ignore the thing altogether, take it for granted. To recognize the fourfoldness of a thing is to resist technology's dehumanizing power. To see things in fourfold is to open up an infinite world of possibilities.
17. A primitive stone bridge, according to Heidegger, could accomplish the same gathering of the fourfold as the chalice. Here is a place for Earth, Sky, Gods, and Mortals to meet. But a modern highway bridge poses a problem. As you zoom across the bridge in a gas-sucking SUV, immersed in techno music downloaded from the web, the bridge loses its *thingness*; it loses its capacity to gather the fourfold. The bridge is merely a conduit for a postmodern morpher obsessed with technological potentiality: How fast can I drive here? Should I get a new MP3 player? Will I have a high-protein smoothie after my workout? Will I find a lover in the chat room tonight? In the words of Heideggerian Michael Zimmerman, "in the technological age, the gods have departed, the sky has been effaced, the earth has been exposed to ruin, and the mortals have forgotten who they are." So much for the fourfold.
18. Heidegger insisted that acceptance and even celebration of one's own mortality is absolutely necessary if we to avoid becoming post-human beings plagued by single vision—that is, technological vision. But he didn't mean that we should all become death-obsessed, angst-ridden philosophers—shave our heads and dress in black (as I did for the Web X Conference, complete with skulls on my t-shirt). Instead, we should accept and remain aware of our human limitations, even while dabbling in post-human activities. Also, we should appreciate the thingness of things. Even the smallest things, the minute particulars, can reveal to us the gathering of the fourfold. It is this gathering which grounds us, reminds us of our finitude, and opens us up to infinite possibilities beyond those offered by technological potentiality. In the words of Richard Coyne, author of *Technoromanticism*, "Heidegger saw the modern age as a result of the conquest of *techne* over *poesis*, a kind of making and reflecting that seeks instrumental causes rather than a mode of being that lets things disclose themselves" (268).
19. It's safe to say that Blake had come to the same conclusion in his own time. Like the figures in Blake's visionary works, the postmodern morpher needs to understand that death is not a final annihilation, but a facet of everyday life that leads to vision. By accepting your finitude, and resisting technology's false promise of immortality, you can avoid seeing the world in purely instrumental terms. In Blake's terms, you will be free to engage in the "art of invention, not of imitation" ("Public Address").
20. I have come to the conclusion that that death belongs somewhere in the schema that I have been assembling. This, perhaps, is where Heidegger and Blake meet. Both of them recognize the

transformative potential of death. Not death as annihilation, but as a daily form of redemption that goes beyond the obvious religious connotations that come to mind here. In the schema, I have placed the word "death" in hell, although something tells me that's not quite right. At the top, where Adam belongs, I initially installed the word "creation," then opted for the more appropriate term, "invention." Of course, that doesn't seem quite right either. But for the sake of generating knowledge about my two projects, it works. What's certain is that I could keep shifting all of these elements around, and I won't arrive at a satisfactory, final configuration. No Grand Thesis. But in this exercise of mapping, I will generate a great deal of knowledge about my own projects, and arrive at a new understanding of both Blake and Heidegger. Fourfold Vision as I understand it, is about performance, generativity; it does not deal in the calculation of immutable absolutes, exact translations, or authoritative interpretations.



Figure 3: "Milton, A Poem", Plate 33 (Erdman), Copy C (1811), with new text added, courtesy of New York Public Library.

21. In the introduction to his book *Heuretics: the Logic of Invention*, Greg Ulmer suggests that he is trying to invent a new mode of academic discourse "the way Breton invented surrealism, or the way Plato invented dialectics: to do with 'Jacques Derrida' . . . what Breton did with Freud. Or to do with Plato what Plato did with Socrates" (15). I guess the final question here is this: Is it possible to invent a new mode of academic discourse by doing with Blake what Blake did with Milton?

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Notes

¹ See my "A Fever for Archiving: How Humanities Scholarship Works the Web."

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² Like Hayles, my goal is not to devalue the William Blake archive, which is an exceptional research tool (I made extensive use of it in composing this essay), but to take issue with the print-centered ideology of ownership, authorship, and Authority that characterizes the archive.

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³ Like Hayles, I borrow the term "remediate" from Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media*.

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⁴ For a detailed discussion of this collage, and its relationship to design and cognition, see Rosalind Kraus, *The Optical Unconscious*.

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⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell defines the hypericon as “a piece of moveable cultural apparatus, one which may serve a marginal role as illustrative device or a central role as a kind of summary image . . . that encapsulates an entire episteme, a theory of knowledge” (49).

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⁶ For a sample of student work, see Amy Ruud’s fourfold vision at <<http://www.ruudweb.com/electronica/>>

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⁷ To quote Heidegger, “according to ordinary usage, the word *Gestell* [frame] means some kind of apparatus, e.g., a bookrack. *Gestell* is also the name for a skeleton. And the employment of the word *Ge-stell* [Enframing] that is now required of us seems equally eerie, not to speak of the arbitrariness with which words of a mature language are thus misused” (*Question 20*).

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⁸ In what I would like to consider a phenomenological-Romantic translation of Blake, Heidegger thus described the “single vision” of modern science: “nature reports itself in some way or other that is identifiable through calculation and . . . remains orderable as a system of information” (*Question 23*).

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⁹ See Martin Heidegger's "The Thing."

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Digital Designs on Blake

Golgonooza Text

Nelson Hilton, University of Georgia

Exemplifying an interpretation of Blake's invented name 'Golgonooza' as 'living word' or 'animated text,' this piece demonstrates several ways that, by means of digital processing, Blake's work might be made more physically dynamic. This essay appears in *Digital Designs on Blake*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

". . . optimism for tomorrow's electronic projects . . . raises warning flags."

Editors, [The William Blake Archive](#)^[1]

1. The parodic graphic in this pop-up box, by way of beginning, is the work of two undergraduate students in a Blake class three years ago who created it to serve as the jacket copy for their recording of several poems from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. It reflects nicely the relief some students find in Blake's energetic questioning of conventional pieties and platitudes. Having opened his Blake (we read white where he reads Blake [cf. 'The Everlasting Gospel' [e], 13-14]), Dad is inspired and empowered to forswear his fresh supply of false perception to the gratitude of weary Mom, the innocent pride of Daughter, and the utter indifference of the most interesting figure she holds. Such, then, may prove the power of Blakeomancy:

Guide thou my hand which trembles exceedingly upon the rock of ages, While I write
of the building of Golgonooza, & of the terrors of Entuthon(*Jerusalem* 5.23-24).

2. 'Golgonooza' names the "Great City" whose building is largely co-extensive with the Blakean epic endeavor. Like many of Blake's myth-mashed names, it has attracted speculation as to its construction. One ever-fruitful manner of such speculating draws on the printed concordance to Blake's work to study other uses of the term. Having depended on that mainframe-generated resource for over two decades, a personal, desk-top version seemed a desideratum from my first acquaintance with programming. The generous agreement of David and Virginia Erdman to waive any copyright claims concerning a freely available electronic concordance to *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* made the realization of such a project imperative, and the advent of the world-wide web meant that a program written in Perl to search the text could take input from and deliver a response to anyone with a browser.
3. A search on the term 'Golgonooza' using the online concordance (www.english.uga.edu/~nhilton/ee/home.html) discovers that it sometimes occurs with the name "Enthuthon Benython," which strongly suggests a transliteration of the Greek ενθυθον—'from hence'—βενθος—'the depths' (words Blake could have picked up from study of Homer and perhaps related to his "[Lake of] Udan Adan"—'Αδην,' Hades). These associations can support the suggestion that 'Golgonooza' incorporates an anagram of λογον ζω[=oo]ης ('logon zoas'), the "living word" (as in Phillipians 2.16).^[2] "Golgonooza text" then, as a tissue of living words or word-creatures, invites animation, a possibility now realizable with relative ease through Macromedia's Flash™ software.
4. We appreciate increasingly the 'activity' of Blake's text, assisted in good measure by digital technology. *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, for instance, was long known almost entirely from the

order of the final copies, so that most readers thought of "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" as the concluding poem (before the frequent editorial inclusion of "A Divine Image," only posthumously included in *Songs*). With the Blake Digital Text Project's hypertext version, the links at the top corners (\leq and \geq) disclose the great variety of poems that come before or after in over thirty years of various copies (the conventional order of the six last copies is represented by '@'). Links to annotations open from clicking on the text, and streaming audio of some versions generously provided by the artists are available. Obviously the low-resolution graphic image serves mostly as an *aide-mémoire*.

5. As with the site linked above, the Blake Archive also makes the varying order of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* dramatically evident to the viewer who considers the various copies it offers. Still more wonderful is the fact of its letting viewers see those copies in living color and, if desired, at a high resolution. The epitome of Blake industry for our time,^[3] the Archive succeeds gloriously as an indispensable resource without which this presentation—for one example—could not exist. In thinking about the Archive, it is useful to recall the history of technological innovations and the way in which at first new innovations extend or "remediate" the status quo ante—the first railway coaches, for example, being coaches on rails. The question that might be asked is whether or how the nature of the new medium (bits) enabling such a super collection might also alter or at least supplement its presentation, especially when the editors of the Archive hope to see its material "organized, interlinked, and searchable in ways that only hypermedia systems will allow" (139) and write of making its work "freely accessible and usable in new ways" (136). The intersection of possibilities for *Living Form* made available by the Archive are what interest this piece-work aficionado, at any rate.
6. For one new way in which holdings in the Archive might be used, consider the comparisons of different copies of "The Voice of the Ancient Bard." As it was first published in *Songs of Innocence*, one can go to that section of the Archive and use the comparison feature it supplies to see in parallel the two copies it offers. To see versions of the same plate that appeared in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, one goes to that section and uses its comparison. Wishing to see copies from both sets together and in closer proximity, I have made for my own use a program with a somewhat different approach. This combination of frames and cgi scripts enables easy comparison of various versions and texts. Using this application, a comparison of "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" might look like this screenshot. Each image is linked to the Archive's enlargement, so that it is easy to summon up detailed comparisons.
7. To avoid the copyright concerns in offering public access to the Archive's images which have been copied for personal research, another version of the application draws on the power of deep-linking to take the viewer directly to the Archive's own displays, circumventing its "Welcome page" and intermediate clicks (unfortunately, its enlargements—in "Image & Text Options"—open in new windows [the Archive asks that "any links to individual items within the Archive be accompanied by a link to {its} welcome page"]).^[4] Extensive use of deep-linking to the Archive—which could certainly become a mainstay of electronic writing about Blake—should probably await the promised transition of the Archive to XML, as that will break any current—and, in any event, unpermanent—links (evident in the changed reference of some of the deep-links since the example was created [September 2003]). Students of the future age must hope that the Archive's Editors will in that revision facilitate enduring deep-linking, so that the Archive can serve also as a repository of images for the coming, truly networked generation of digital scholarship.
8. Side-by-side comparisons are one way of appreciating the different editions of "The Voice of the Ancient Bard." The bit-mapped existence of the images enables another, which, if never physically seen by Blake, perhaps suggests nonetheless one aspect of his living text ("glowing with varying

colours immortal, heart-piercing / And lovely" [*Milton*, 11.32-33]). Achieving this effect entails a new form of editing, as the images from various editions, reflecting the vagaries of paper shrinkage, do not line up exactly. To make the transition more seamless and legible, the various copies can be brought as layers into an image-processing program like Photoshop and tweaked in small ways. One can use the negative of a black and white edition as the base, and work with different images against that.

9. While the Flash file offers an exercise in presentation rather than the scholarly research to which the Blake Archive is dedicated, it might prove attractive to more dynamic multi-media sensitivities of our age and so serve the common goal of expanding an attentive and interested audience for Blake. Such manipulations and adaptations bring issues of copyright and "fair use" to the fore, however, as there is no way to present them without a copy to hand. In this instance the pertinent permissions have been obtained, at a cost of about \$100. These costs are interesting to consider in themselves. All the images were copied effortlessly from the Blake Archive. Most institutions gave permission for use of their images without charge. The Library of Congress images, though in the public domain, proved to be the most expensive for this presentation, given the Archive's charge of \$15 per image for permission to use its bits here and for its "image-accessing instructions."
10. That those instructions turn out to be exactly what one does to copy the image in the first place adds to the oddity of being able to copy and reuse without restriction Blake's words but not their material images, which are owned by the individuals or institutions who happen to have come into possession of the originals. Explaining their copyright position, the Editors of the Archive posit a hypothetical, totalizing critic who feels that "museums and libraries whose existence is predicated on the uniqueness of their collections should give everyone everything for free" (141-42). But distinctions might be made between the sale of original intellectual property, the free provision of a copy that costs nothing to supply, and the taxation of new representations of material available at no direct cost. There is, to be sure, an infrastructure behind the images, but to imply that the alternative to charging some "users" (the Editors' term) some fee for some images is that "the Archive's technical staff and graduate assistants should work without pay" (141) seems a red herring. If the Editors are going to going "to regard [their] copyright policy as a key part of [their] editorial policy" (142), the possibilities of Copyleft or "Open Content License" might be considered, at least with regard to images of materials donated to the public. The admirable labor to bring talents before "users" without facilitating the use of those resources serves more to reify than activate "Great Golgonooza" (*Milton*, 29.48-49).^[5]
11. For the dilettante, Flash opens all kinds of possibilities for presenting Blake's text, including ones that might attempt to condense argument into moving image. The suggestion that the demon of Fuseli's "The Nightmare" watches over the frontispiece of *VISIONS of the Daughters of Albion*, for example, may more effectively be made graphically than verbally (may take some seconds to load). The effect of *Urizen's* "unique copies" can be staged dynamically using the simple effects of frames and the "refresh" tag (here again, these could be done as non-refreshing deep links to the Archive to offer another means of comparing the copies). The last example for this show-and-tell returns to the initial site of "Golgonooza," *VALA, or The Four Zoas* (opens new window), with some frames whose only interactivity comes in links and scrolling. In my for-personal-research version each page links to its scanned, descreened reproduction from the Erdman-Magno edition of the manuscript, but these are not linked here owing to copyright considerations.

<exit>^[6]

¹ Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, Joseph Viscomi, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, "Standards, Methods, and Objectives in the William Blake Archive: A Response" (*The Wordsworth Circle* 30,3 [Spring 1999], 135-44, p. 144, fn. 8). The complete sentence reads: "While we are on the subject of finances, Mary Lynn Johnson's optimism for tomorrow's electronic projects also raises warning flags."

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² As I suggested twenty years back in *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 236. Greek vowels being literally—quantitatively, in time—short and long, Blake would have understood that "The Greekes therefore haue *wmikron* standing for a short o: and *wmega* for this double or long o, oo" (*OED*, s.v. "omega," which quotes John Baret's *An alvearie or triple (quadruple) dictionarie*, 1573, 1580).

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³ The editors note their "list of funders, sponsors, and project staff," their "all kinds of other expenses that are not directly tech-related, such as transparencies, travel, salaries, paperclips (technologies of a different sort), etc.," to support their moralizing conclusion that "humanists do themselves and their institutions no favors by cultivating frugal homespun virtue" ("Standards, Methods, and Objectives. . .," p. 144, fn. 8).

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⁴ As Stuart Curran notes, the Archive's "design is strongly hierarchical, so the user must descend four levels to get to the texts of the individual illuminated works. For the novice this involves a surprising number of false starts the editors might not have anticipated. This notion of penetrating to an inner sanctum is, of course, antithetical to Blake, as would be the paragraphs of hectoring admonition about copyright law on what is unfacetiously called the 'Welcome Page'" (["The William Blake Archive"](#)).

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⁵ On the one hand, while editor Robert Essick hopes that "the ability to manipulate images on one's home computer" will stimulate "new ways to teach, research, and think about" Blake, and editor Morris Eaves finds it "unimaginable that the availability of so much matter for thought won't alter the scholarship of the next generation," editor Joe Viscomi warns that "Teachers and researchers, of course, will need to keep in mind the 'Fair Use' clause of copyright law." The concerns are to them, evidently, not entirely serious—unaware of a more than decade-old IBM software product, one jokes: "Editing in new media I think of as Xediting (I've copyrighted that). . . ." "Once Only Imagined" (section 1; section 12; section 11; section 13)

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⁶ For assistance with Flash, I am grateful to John Lucas (John Lucas Interactive) and to Shannon Wilder, Office of Instructional Support and Development, University of Georgia.

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Digital Designs on Blake

Blake's Contraries Game

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1. You will find nothing here but fun and games. Granted, these games might only appeal to the more playful scholars of William Blake, and the fun they offer is of a decidedly cerebral kind. Nonetheless, all those who can imagine scholarship as a game, and games as a worthy subject of scholarship, are invited to play.
2. Our games-master is William Blake himself. It is he who created *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, which, I argue in this essay, was a kind of game. Using modern gaming parlance, I have re-named Blake's game "Contraries Game 1.0." The first half of this essay will deal with this game. The second half will deal with a scholarly, digitized version of Blake's originally codex-based game, which I have called "Contraries Game 2.0." At the end of the essay, you will have an opportunity to play the "Contraries Game 2.0" yourself. You may skip immediately to the game, but, as with any game, it would probably be more fruitful to first read the operating instructions and rules. These are provided in the essay proper, below.
3. *Please note that all the images used with this essay, and with the "Contraries Machine" (described below), are owned by The Blake Archive and are used with permission. It is strongly suggested that you travel to [The Blake Archive](#) to read, and agree to, their terms and conditions before proceeding.*

Contraries Game 1.0

4. When William Blake futurity saw, did he foresee such things as video games? And did he foresee himself as one of those eccentric geniuses of the early 21st century who dream up the fantastic virtual worlds that thousands enter daily and only reluctantly leave? Whether he did or not, I think the case can be made that Blake anticipated, with his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the type of hypermedia games that can be played in virtual environments. He did so by experimenting with multimedia, with textual interactivity, with agency and role-playing, and by using effects that simulated virtual immersion—all this together making up "Contraries Game 1.0". In calling it a game I do not mean to imply that Blake's intent was in any way frivolous. This was, for Blake, a game of critical import, central to his artistic mission: creating tools to help cleanse the reader's "doors of perception," to bring him/her to enlightenment through imagination.
5. More particularly, Blake was creating with his game a virtual space, and an actual artistic engine, that would allow for the creative engagement with and integration of contraries. He highlighted such an idea in the *Songs* by giving the over-all work the subtitle "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul." The most important contrary relationship in the *Songs*, of course, is that between Innocence and Experience. For Blake, as a quick perusal of the *Songs* will show, Innocence was largely associated with childhood, and Experience with adulthood; but, as a more methodical perusal will show, these associations are not absolute: we see elements of the jaded cynicism and world-weariness that Blake associates with experience in the *The Songs of Innocence*, and elements of joyful play in the

The Songs of Experience [Note: To read the transcription of the text on Blake's plate, click on the image in the pop-up window. To return to the plate, click on the text]. As Nicholas Marsh notes, "It would be wrong to think of Experience as any wiser than Innocence" or any more cynical or world-weary; it would be equally wrong to think of Innocence as more joyful or playful (30). There are elements of both in each. For Blake, these were virtual time-spaces or mind-states, with portals from one to the other appearing in either world. And it was not the road to or from one or the other that concerned Blake, but rather the road *between* them which eventually led beyond all dualities. As Marsh notes, for Blake "[i]t appears that the route towards wholeness and a 'true' vision lies through combination of the two, not rejection of either of them" (30).

6. Another important contrary relationship in the *Songs*, as Blake's well-formed lissome bodies and pseudo-Biblical language show, is that between the body and the soul. As with the split between Innocence and Experience, in the *Songs* the wall between body and soul is quite porous, and there is much intercourse between the two: for Blake, the body, including the sexual body, was not the enemy, but rather the locus of enjoyment and enlightenment. As Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, all creation "will be consumed, and appear infinite. and holy . . . by an improvement of sensual enjoyment" (pl. 14).
7. The true enemy consisted of the forces arrayed against sensual, and sexual, enjoyment—puritanical church institutions and the anti-sex God they represented, which Blake mocks in "The Garden of Love." The soul is not the enemy either, though it needed to be redeemed from the forces that would repress the pleasures of the body. For Blake, there was a Fall, and an expulsion from Paradise, but this Fall was not occasioned by sexual sin, but rather its repression. As W.J.T. Mitchell explains: "For Blake, in the final analysis the body and the imagination [or soul] are separable principles only in a fallen world of limited perception; the business of [Blake's] art is to dramatize their unification" ("Composite Art" 69). We need redemption not from the body or the soul, according to Blake, but from the false division between them. And it is the imagination's role to effect such a reconciliation.
8. Imagination has a contrary as well: reason. If there is an enemy in Blake's illuminated books, it is reason. This is because, according to Blake, reason is the cause of the division of the world into contraries. The division of imagination and reason, according to Blake, is based on the 'Two Horn'd Reasoning, Cloven Fiction' represented by super-rational philosophies such as that of John Locke (*Gates of Paradise*, pl. 9). For Blake, reason-as-enemy was the scientific mind-set, and it needed to be rejected as a principle of organizing meaning—as opposed to knowledge—in the world. Liberation, Blake believed, comes not from reason but imagination, as it is expressed through art, and this is Blake's mission.
9. Yet this liberation in spite of—and to some extent from—reason sometimes seems more flight than victorious fight; it is more like a "daring end run around the reasoning intellect that is everywhere both the goal and mechanism of Blake's art" (Behrendt 6). Unlike the synthesis that Blake advocates when representing other contraries in the *Songs*, the integration he advocates for reason and imagination is lopsided in favor of imagination. There is no hard-won co-existence here, no spiral dance of dualities, but rather an "apocalyptic" subsuming of reason into imagination. For Blake, there are many mansions in the house of imagination, but there is no room for the "Cloven Fiction" of scientific reasoning, for its purpose is to cleave everything in its path, leaving nothing but split off contraries wandering like Cain in the wilderness.
10. I could spend much more time laying out all the other contraries found in the *Songs*—night and day, winter and spring, wilderness and Eden, even left and right political orientation (as well as left and right cognitive orientation)[\[1\]](#)—but it is the integration of such contraries that we must move to now. We might—and now shall—use another word for the play of contraries: *dialectic*.[\[2\]](#) As W.J.T.

Mitchell writes, "dialogue and dialectic of contraries constitute the master code of Blake's text" ("Image and Text" 46). Eben Bass adds, "the total effect of Innocence and Experience is one of balanced opposites, each fulfilling and completing the other" (209). This is not a strictly thesis-antithesis-synthesis of Hegelian dialectics, but the functioning is much the same. Blake intended for his reader to come into a space where he/she could encounter the two contraries in dialogue, within the imagination, and come to a sense of resolution.

11. Blake wanted his reader to hold both contraries in view in a kind of double-vision. As he wrote in a letter to Thomas Butts, "For double the vision my Eyes do see / And a double vision is always with me" (*Letters* 44). He was not suggesting we look towards the body or the soul to the exclusion of the other, but to allow them to remain, in fruitful contest, within the imagination. "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" Blake writes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (pl. 3). Just as opposition might be the truest friend, allowing the play of contraries might be the truest path to wisdom. And since Blake was more visual artist than rhetorician (and thank goodness for that!), he chose as the realm of this play of contraries that of the artistic imagination, rather than the Hegelian philosophical system.
12. The interpretation presented above, of course, is not new. It begins with Blake himself. What is new to the discourse, however, is the idea that, in the *Songs*, Blake actually constructed virtual spaces, as well as a text-vehicle to navigate those spaces, which together constitute a "gameworld" where the reader can perform and play the dialectic game of contraries. In the following discussion of the *Songs* as a game in a virtual environment, I will draw upon the work of a number of New Media scholars. For a more detailed and general discussion of the work of these scholars, and the principles of games in virtual environments, the reader is invited to follow this link.
13. Through his world-creating imagination, as well as his technique of illuminated printing, Blake created an imaginative world that can be inhabited and navigated. We can see this through his use of lighting and perspective in his plates, perhaps most clearly in the frontispieces of the two books. In the frontispiece to *The Songs of Innocence*, the reader, through the use of light and shadows, enters a world that seems three-dimensional. It recreates some of the immersive qualities of stain-glass windows, or perhaps a cathedral itself, with the arch of trees over the two central figures and the two column-like trees, the one on the right twisted in a way similar to the piers of many gothic cathedrals. Similar effects are found in the frontispiece to *The Songs of Experience*, with the figure striding outwards, nearly stepping out of the frame, implying that the reader might step *into* the frame.
14. It might, however, be misrepresentative to choose two plates that have no text, and are thus anomalous to Blake's overall design for the *Songs*. Let us look at the first plate where text appears, the title page to *The Songs of Innocence*: Here the text is surrounded and entwined with, if not actually made out of, lush green foliage. Most of the plates in *Innocence* have a similar interplay between foliage and text. Do the words bring us into or take us out of the illusion of immersion? With their integration into the foliage, and their curved and round shapes, I would suggest that the words are meant to be viewed as exfoliations of the visual, and vice versa, and their function is to help draw us into the virtual world of the plate.
15. Blake brings off a similar effect in his "Introduction" to *The Songs of Experience*, though this time it is words and cloud, rather than words and foliage, that work symbiotically. Sometimes Blake is playfully ambiguous with this effect. Look, for instance, at Plate 24, "Nurse's Song." I draw your attention to the leaf at the top of the plate, between the "e" and the "s" in "Nurse's." Or is it an apostrophe? Transcribers have had fits when faced with such textual ambiguity, not knowing whether to translate that leaf into an apostrophe or not. David Erdman's edition, on which the transcriptions on this site are based, chooses to make it an apostrophe, but other transcribers choose differently.

16. It is not just the use of elastic space that creates the illusion of immersion, but also Blake's use of time. In the plates of the *Songs*, days come and go, some quickly, some slowly, with a focus on the most plastic times of all, those of dawn and dusk. The same is true for the seasons, though each book generally dwells within one season—Spring for *Innocence*, Winter for *Experience*. And while time functions in such a way as to structure temporal movement in virtual space, time can also stand still. W.J.T. Mitchell writes: "In the simplest possible terms, [Blake's] poetry exists to invalidate the idea of objective time, his painting to invalidate the idea of objective space. To state this positively, his poetry affirms the power of the human imagination to create and organize time in its own image" ("Composite Art" 69)—that is, in the image of the virtual world the imagination maps onto consciousness. Mitchell sees such virtual space and time in opposition, as contraries, but I would suggest they could also be different modes of habitation in Blake's virtual world.
17. It is not just by tricks of the eye and plastic use of time that Blake creates an immersive world, but also through characterization. Ron Broglio speaks to this when he writes, "[Blake's] characters are continually creating windows and doors into new worlds or falling through space and time in such a way that the fall creates both space and time. Through their immersive interaction with one another and their surroundings, Blake's characters forge the world upon which the narrative is staged" (3). This is particularly true of characters from Blake's other illuminated books, such as *Milton*, which Broglio, along with a consortium of others, is attempting to game in the *Romantic Circles* MOO. But it is no less true of the less-peopled *Songs*. For instance, if we look at Plate 6, "The Ecchoing Green," in *The Songs of Innocence*, we can see how the characters of this particular tableaux create the space through widening circles of movement, through dance and play. The boisterous children cannot even be contained within the picture frame: they rampage through the text box as well, spinning hoops and watching a batted ball fly. As in all of Blake's plates in the *Songs*, they carve out a space that can be inhabited.[\[3\]](#)
18. It is possible, as many New Media scholars point out, that immersion can go too deep, creating anxiety and disorientation which ensues from a state in which we have lost touch with the so-called "real world." Bolter and Grusin posit hypermedia—playing multiple media off one another—as a strategy to be used to counteract a too-deep immersion. Does Blake have a strategy of hypermedia to prevent disorientation within his immersive, virtual space? I believe he does in his creation of borders and frames. Bolter and Grusin cite the theories of Leon Alberti in showing how such borders work to prevent an immediacy that is too transparent: for Alberti, a painting presents "a window on to a world of representation; the viewer remains on one side of the window at a safe, analytical distance from the objects of representation" (251). Blake is not as safe as that, or an immersive experience would be impossible, but he does provide safe-guards, especially when he creates separate windows for text and image, such as in Plate 13, "A Little Boy Lost."
19. Here we see in the image box one of the more frighteningly immersive scenes in either book (and the fact that this appears in *Innocence* rather than *Experience* once again shows how elements of the other virtual world sometimes crop into the world of its supposed opposite): the little boy lost in a dark wood, with the will o' the wisp that he has followed about to fly off, abandoning him to the darkness. But here the text box is clearly delineated, framed off from the immersive scene above. The effect is one in which we are conscious, if not "hyperconscious," of two media at work. This hypermediacy serves to assuage our anxiety about the situation depicted in the image box. Blake allows us an escape hatch from too much transparency, immediacy, immersion.
20. But Blake's windows and doors are not just escape hatches, they are also portals to other worlds. They provide us with ways into the virtual worlds of *Innocence* and *Experience*, and ways between them. Angels pass from one world to the next, and we may follow them if we dare [Plates 21 & 41]. Indeed, we must if we are to make peace with our contraries. "One does not become fully aware of . . .

Innocence until one has departed that state and moved into Experience" Stephen Behrendt writes, and the same is paradoxically true of Innocence: one does not become fully aware of Experience, nor integrate it within his/her consciousness, until one has traveled from there to the virtual world of Innocence (54).

21. Let's look at an example of what I am talking about here: Plate 27, "On Another's Sorrow." Here we see the verdant foliage of *Innocence* change in color and begin to fall from the tree, bringing us into the winter climate, and time-space continuum, of *Experience*. This plate reveals a portal between these two virtual worlds: we can travel, in our mind anyway, back and forth. We can "quest" from one world to the next, and eventually come through another portal into the "real" world. If our quest has been successful, we will find our senses liberated, and the fallen world, created by our displacement of our senses, redeemed. In a virtual environment, we encounter Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief," but in Blake's hands we find that such a world is also fruitful for the *creation* of belief, through a transformed consciousness.
22. In the preceding I have focused almost exclusively on the images, without saying much about the texts. I will analyze texts in other sections below, but I would like to note that Blake's texts are, in their own way, as immersive as his images. As Broglio writes, Blake's poems "create a field of play that omits an outside objective space for contemplation Normally when reading the reader occupies a double position—one inside the poem through the act of reading and a second outside the poem in the 'real world' beyond the book. However, Blake's [poetry] problematizes the second position and collapses it into the first" (Broglio 4). Broglio is no doubt correct, though, as with his images, Blake offers us "escape hatches" that allow us step out of immersion when it gets too deep, as well as allowing us to bring back to the "real" world the treasures of wisdom found strewn in the virtual portalways between virtual worlds.

Blake's game is multimedia

23. Blake's use of multimedia is perhaps the most distinctive element of his art. His use and combination of the media of painting and poetry, particularly, as well as his creation of technologies to bring the two media together in a single work of art, set him apart—causing bewilderment to his contemporaries and his isolation during his lifetime, but admiration and feverish scholarly activity today. But it was not just his proficiency in these media that is remarkable but also what he managed to accomplish with them: creating virtual worlds long before hypermedia tools made such things commonplace. Joseph Viscomi asserts that "working on metal with the tools of poet and painter enabled Blake to create a multi-media space, a 'site' where poetry, painting, and printmaking came together in ways both original and characteristic of Romanticism's fascination with autographic gesture, with spontaneity, intimacy, and organicism" ("Digital Facsimiles" par. 2). As already noted above, Blake not only uses multimedia to provide an immersive experience, but uses it to transform consciousness: "Blake continually emphasizes the mediatorial function of art, which serves as a catalyst in a transformation of a mental state" (Behrendt 22).
24. Let's look at some examples. In Plate 22, "Spring," the media of both image and text playfully work together to make the sense of the poem. The child strives to "spring" out of the grasp of its mother, creating a visual/verbal pun; the foliage winding amidst, and springing from, the words of the poem does the same. We also see an angel playing a flute, fading into a golden invisibility as the sound of the flute goes "mute." The reader is lulled by the gold-lit sleepiness of the image and through the metre of the poem.
25. We see a more harrowing multimedia performance in *The Songs of Experience*, in Plate 33, "Holy Thursday". We see "Babes reduced to misery," certainly, with the prone images showing signs of

hunger-induced lethargy. It's also possible their misery goes deeper, that the bodies strewn about the scene are actually *dead* children, felled by a "cold and usurous hand" (certainly, with the white and ice-blue colors, we feel the cold) of the economic system that has destroyed them.

26. Both of the previous two plates depict fairly realistic portraits. Blake also uses surrealism to perform the meaning of a poem as well, such as in Plate 25, "Infant Joy." Here we see a scene depicted in the heart of an indeterminate, rose-like flower. In a poetic way, it expresses the beauties and joys of new birth. If we listen hard enough we might hear the dialogue between mother and child: "What shall I call thee? / I happy am / Joy is my name" though such a dialogue occurring between a two-day old child and its mother is as surreal, or poetic, as the image.
27. We might compare this to Plate 39, "The Sick Rose," in which the worm featured in the poem wriggles its way around the words, perhaps *out of* the words, upwards. Meanwhile, various figures react to the worm in differing ways—the female figure at the bottom, within the rose, seems to revel with and ride the worm, whereas the figures up above fearfully try to escape it. But whether his depiction is realistic or surreal, it is clear that Blake uses multimedia to collectively formulate the meaning of the poem, and at the same time allow for engagement with and immersion into virtual space.
28. I would like to suggest that it is not just visual and verbal media that are represented in Blake's *Songs*, but also the aural. Blake did not call these poems "songs" for nothing. Though occasionally parodic—especially in *Experience*—the *Songs* are nonetheless constructed similarly to the hymns and popular songs of Blake's day. Some of Blake's contemporaries noted that Blake liked to sing, and some critics have suggested Blake may have sang his songs as he composed and printed them. This seems somewhat fanciful, but I do believe Blake expected the reader to hear a kind of "soundtrack" while reading the *Songs*. Stephen Behrendt sees the *Songs* as polyphonic musical texts, for which the reader must invent the music; in fact, it is the performance of the reader that makes them songs (48, 50). Nelson Hilton situates the *Songs* amongst the devotional song books for children that were contemporary to Blake, such as Isaac Watts's *Divine and Moral Songs Attempted in easy Language, for the Use of Children, 1715*, which Hilton claims Blake parodies in "A Cradle Song" ("Introduction" par. 4). Whether it is a parody or not, it certainly resembles a song in structure, and might very well be sung. [\[4\]](#)
29. The *Songs* are also musical, as all poems are, in metre. Nicholas Marsh is particularly good at parsing out the metre of the *Songs*, showing their inherent musicality, a musicality that differs depending on where the song is placed along Blake's Innocence-Experience textual continuum. For instance, "The Shepherd," Plate 5, in *The Songs of Innocence*, Marsh points out "is written in regular anapests, a metre which gives it a more bouncy and tripping rhythm," presenting a "carefree and uncomplicated style [that] enhances the simple and positive picture presented" (16). In contrast, the songs of *Experience* often combine a "lumpy and irregular rhythm" that "adds to [a] destabilizing effect of metrical irregularity" (24, 18). He shows this in his metrical analysis of the "Introduction" to *The Songs of Experience*, which has a much more complex rhyme-scheme than the songs of *Innocence*, reducing the "chiming sing-song effect of rhyme" in the *Innocence* version, and introducing us "to a more complicated relationships between sounds," and between poems, and books of poems, in the combined *Songs* (18).
30. The importance of Blake's use of multimedia, of course, is not just the effect it produces in the individual poems, but rather the effects it produces in the reader. With multimedia, Blake takes us beyond the "disinterested play of the senses" to a radically engaged sensual experience. His mission is to "rouze the senses to act," to activate the transforming imagination. If, as Nelson Hilton suggests, "man serves as his own jailor, imprisoned by his vocabulary, culture, and perception," in Blake's game it is the role of the senses—enhanced by multimedia, and further enhanced by virtual immersion—to

liberate humans from their "mind forg'd manacles" (Hilton, qtd. in Marsh, 232).

Blake's Game is interactive

31. I have already discussed above how image and word interact in Blake's *Songs*. This interaction is also key to our discussion of the interactivity between reader and the illuminated poems. Steven Behrendt states the case in his introduction to *Reading William Blake*:

The exceptionally interactive process of reading which the encounter with Blake's works entails is more dynamic—and frequently more disturbing—than anything for which most readers' training and previous experience have prepared them. The transaction between author and reader that is mediated through the printed text of any conventional literary work naturally involves an intellectual, emotional and aesthetic interchange. But the nature of that interplay is infinitely more complex in an art form like Blake's in which verbal and visual texts make simultaneous and often quite different demands upon the reader. (1)

32. I would argue that one of the major contributions that the electronic editing of Blake has brought us is the understanding that Blake used his books as forms of hypermedia, in particular hypertext. Or perhaps it would be better to call Blake's illuminated books proto-hypertext, much the way Espen Aarseth considers the *I Ching* proto-hypertext (*Cybertext 2*). Whatever term we choose, the functioning is similar if not the same. I will attempt to go from the more subtle to the more obvious ways in which the *Songs* work as hypertext.
33. First, we can speak of the intertextuality of the *Songs* as presenting hypertextual function. This is where poems, and text within poems, refer to one another, creating a kind of hypertext navigation within the mind of the reader. We see this most obviously in the songs that share the same titles, such as "Holy Thursday" and "The Chimney Sweeper." Since we have already looked at one plate of "Holy Thursday," and have ignored the arguably more prominent "Chimney Sweeper" poems, we will look at that pair now.
34. The two virtual worlds that the two "Chimney Sweeper" poems represent are perhaps the most starkly contrasted in all the *Songs*; but this is only at first glance. Certainly visually they present stark contrasts: in the *Innocence* version, we see a whole crew of gamboling, seemingly happy boys. But if we look closer, we see that it is "coffins black" from which they are being released by a kind of Jesus-figure, after which they "run down a green plain leaping laughing they run / And wash in a river and shine in the Sun." An idyllic scene certainly but then it is only a dream, and the chimney sweeper then awakes in the cold dark to begin another day of drudgery. There is not even the consolation of a dream in the *Experience* version. Here the chimney sweeper is all alone, in a snowstorm—the snow already stained with the pollution from burning coal—perhaps homeless, covered head to foot in coal-soot; indeed, to enhance the effect of the image, it appears that Blake may have used some sort of coal mixture for his water-coloring, for the only real color in the plate is a rusty coal-oil brown. Still, the chimney sweeper admits to being happy, despite it all: "And because I am happy & dance & sing / They think they have done me no injury." But they have, "God & his priest & King" have turned the chimney sweeper's heaven into misery.
35. The difference between the two poems, and the chimney sweepers who inhabit them, is that in *Innocence* the boy is still "asleep" to the social realities of the misery of the chimney sweeps' existence, and in *Experience* he is awake, he knows why he is poor. In this sense, the two poems work intertextually, or hypertextually: one is a dream and the other an awakening from a dream. We may travel from one to the other, awaking into one, falling asleep into the other; they are portals of meaning as well as virtual transport. These poems are also excellent examples of the social ramifications of such

hypertextual, "virtual" surfing: they lead to the surfacing of outrage which, as Tim Fulford points out in "A Romantic Technologist and Britain's Little Black Boys," helped lead to the eventual amelioration of the conditions the poems exposed. Blake's virtual world does not allow for disengagement, for "lurking" in a gameworld. Through empathy with the subjects, we "click" on the "link" to reality and re-enter the world, bringing with us a goad to social action. We "surf" in a virtual world but eventually our surfing lands us on the shore of the things-as-they-are.

36. The complex intertextuality between the words and images of these poems, both within and between themselves, may or may not comprise a "third text" or a "virtual text," as Behrendt suggests in his discussion of Blake and reader-response theory, but it certainly comprises a hypertext function. I want to make clear that the intertextuality I suggest is found in the *Songs* is not the same as that understood in reader-response theory. In the case of Blake, we are talking about an actual hypertextual machine, in the form of a multimedia book. I would also like to suggest that Blake may have had a primitive hypertext function in mind when he put the two books together. His purpose was to spur if not facilitate the physical comparison of his plates, particularly in the similarly-titled songs in both books, as a way of engaging contraries. It was with this idea in mind that I created the "Contraries Machine" that accompanies this essay, to allow the physical comparison of Blake's plates with the aid of a hypermedia device.

Blake's Game creates agency

37. Many of the things said above might also be said of role-playing in virtual worlds. The creation of roles, as well as agency, in virtual space is also, in effect, creating portals for virtual travel; they also provide a hypertextual structure that does not just link texts or books but also personalities behaving in virtual space. Bolter and Grusin suggest that empathy and shared point of view are an invention of the Romantics; Blake may not have been the inventor, but he certainly made use of the invention in his texts (245). There are many opportunities for the creation of "avatars," or game-playing personas, in the *Songs*, some of them masks for hiding from the implications of both innocence and experience, others allowing for problem-solving, for psychological closure. We will look at examples of both.
38. Nicholas Marsh addresses the first kind of avatar, the mask that allows the reader to hide. He says that the "process of building false 'selves', and attempting to fix a 'self' beyond the reach of natural change is seen through the Songs," particularly, he adds, in the "Little Girl Lost/Found" poems. Ironically, the mask to hide behind is presented not by Lyca, the girl who is the eponymous figure of the poems, but rather her parents. Marsh writes, "Fear of their daughter growing up, desire to keep her dependent and as a child, turns them into tyrants, blind to natural truth, before their moment of vision" (176). Because of their fear, they "develop fixed delusions which close the personality away from infinity, vision and truth" (177). Eventually they are liberated by, as is usually the case with Blake, a "vision," one in which they see their daughter living in paradisiacal peace in the wild (where Blake's fearsome tyger lives); compelled by their vision, they remain in the wild themselves, which is in fact an island of innocence: "to this day they dwell / In a lonely dell / Nor fear the wolvis howl, / Nor the lions growl." In fact, in Plate 36, Blake depicts the entire family as children frolicking in the forest (along with a prone adult woman in the foreground; more on her below). Here once again we are presented with a virtual portal into a parallel universe, this time from Experience to Innocence. We are also presented with a situation in which the mask of fear, through "vision," might be magically transformed into a mask of liberation.
39. But it might seem that we are ignoring perhaps the most salient and strange feature of the Little Girl Found/Lost poems: the fact that the little girl depicted is not even remotely *little*. In Plate 34, the only female figure that appears is a full-grown woman, scantily-clad and kissing a man.^[5] In the following plate, Plate 35, a lost female appears, but this female is also clearly an adult. Then, as has already been

noted, in Plate 36 the adult woman appears naked with her parents reduced to the figures of children—another strange reversal. What could possibly be the explanation for this? I admit I am flummoxed, but I can suggest a *use* for this discrepancy: we might see this series as a modeling of role-playing. The adult figure in the plates, particularly in Plate 35, might be the character who in fact is trying on the mask of her inner child, taking on that role in virtual space, as a way of resolving some conflict. The resolution might be represented by the otherwise bizarre stripping of the girl by the lions, after which they carry her naked to their cave, as well as by the ruby tears that the lion cries. Such a scene is oddly affecting, the lion and his bloodied tears representing empathy. The lion, like a helping "bot" (artificial intelligence program) in a virtual world, helps the lost girl/woman, and the reader that identifies with her, achieve some kind of closure.

40. In the same way, the angels that roam about the two virtual worlds of Innocence and Experience act as helpful bots whose role, such as in Plate 20, "Night," is to relieve suffering: "If they see any weeping, / That should have been sleeping / They pour sleep on their head / And sit down by their bed." Nicholas Marsh suggests that these angels are rather ineffectual entities, standing by while the wild beasts howl, but that does not change the fact that these are bots necessary to the workings of Blake's virtual world(s). And unlike bots in many virtual games, these angel bots can also convert to avatars, allowing the one who takes on that mask to devote themselves to relieving the suffering that exists in both the worlds of Experience and Innocence. In any case, the transforming possibilities of role-playing in these worlds is substantial. Upon entering them, "we will find that individual poems elaborate real life situations, showing us how the 'two contrary states' . . . are lived out by actual people," both the characters that inhabit the virtual worlds and the players who take up their masks (March 29).

Conclusion

41. In the end, of course, it is not argument that convinces in a gameworld, but rather immersive experience. This is true whether we are speaking of the gameworld that Blake created or the game of interpreting Blake's work. As Ron Broglio notes, one "can find the play/risk/possibility that work outside of traditional essays and books. . . . Through play comes learning and discovery rather than the more conservative description of a singular coherent argument" (6). Let that be my cavil and my caveat. Find one of the many virtual doors that Blake's work offers and slip inside for a while. Whether you enjoy the experience or not, you might find at least a layer of grime wiped clear from the doors of your perception when you re-surface in the "real" world.

Contraries Game 2.0

42. Now that we have seen how Blake "games" us, it is time to return the favor and "game" Blake. "Contraries Game 2.0" is described above as a digitized "upgrade" of Blake's game for critical, scholarly players. It is in fact a game of critical interpretation, inspired in large part by "The Ivanhoe Game" developed by Jerome McGann and Johanna Drucker.
43. "Contraries Game 2.0," like "The Ivanhoe Game," is a game that makes use of "digital tools to augment critical reflection" and "produce simulated forms of meaning" (McGann 214). The "gameplay" is also quite similar to "Ivanhoe": players make moves of interpretation within "a field of interrelated textual, visual, cultural, and critical artifacts. The game 'moves' involve the production (the writing) of texts that integrate with and simulate the materials in the discourse field of the game. Players produce text in response to the opportunities and problems raised by the texts produced by the other players" (218). Unlike "The Ivanhoe Game," however, "Contraries Game 2.0" makes use of a hypertextual machine, which is described below. [*For a more detailed discussion of McGann and Drucker's game, and its current stage of development, I invite the reader to follow this link.*]

Blake's "Contraries Game" is immersive

44. In the section on interactivity above, I suggested that Blake put the two books of *Innocence* and *Experience* together with the expectation that the reader would compare them hypertextually, particularly those songs that have the same title, such as "Holy Thursday" and "The Chimney Sweeper," found in both books. I created the Contraries Machine to test this notion. The Contraries Machine is a hypermedia device that allows the reader/interactor to not only read verbal and visual together, but also to read *Innocence* and *Experience* together, synoptically, in virtual space.
45. As I describe the Contraries Machine further, I invite the reader to actually open the Contraries Machine in a separate window, explore it for a moment, and then continue reading here. What immediately comes into view, when the reader opens the machine, is a window divided in half. The left side represents the virtual world of *Innocence*, the right side the virtual world of *Experience*. At the far left is a column of thumbnails which, upon clicking them, brings up Blake's plates for *The Songs of Innocence*. The thumbnails on the right represent plates from *The Songs of Experience*. All the plates are in the order of the plates from Copy Z of the *Songs*, owned by [The Blake Archive](#). [Note: For optimal functioning for the Contraries Machine, your monitor should be at least 16 inches in width and set at a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels].
46. To compare the *Innocence* and *Experience* plates of similarly-titled songs, or to compare similar themes and designs, the reader only need click on the thumbnails for the contrary plates and the plates will appear in the center. If the reader scrolls down either column of thumbnails, he/she will also find the thumbnails from the other book. This is not meant to confuse the reader, but rather allow him/her to compare plates from the same book of songs, such as the two very different "Little Girl Lost" poems in *Experience*.
47. Transcriptions of each poem are also available for viewing. You need only click on the big images and they "flip over" to reveal the transcription. To flip back over, click on any of the text and the image will be returned. If you would like a transcription in view as you look at a plate, you can choose the image in one column, and choose its transcription in the opposite column.
48. In terms of the actual game-playing, there are many ways to proceed. For "single-player" game-play, one might choose a "quest" game, in which the player enters the virtual space of *Innocence* or *Experience*, explores that world, keeping a kind of travel log. The player might also be questing for, and collecting, magical talismans, such as animals (sheep, lion, tyger), blossoms, angels, musical instruments (harp, flute), game gear (cricket batt, badminton racket), lost children, etc. For it to be a game of contraries, each player should find an object in one world and then find its contrary match in the other (e.g. sheep in *Innocence*, tyger in *Experience*).
49. Another single-player version of the game would involve role play. The player might choose one character in one world as an "avatar." For instance, a player might choose to become the nurse in *Innocence*. After exploring that world as that character, the player might even take that avatar into the other world, in this case *Experience*, to see how that world changes the avatar. Or the player, as avatar, might look for his/her contrary match in the other world. Some possibilities for avatars: nurse, angel, piper, shepherd, little boy lost, little girl lost, chimney sweep, infant, little vagabond, Old John, Ancient Bard, lion, tyger.
50. The games above have "multi-player" equivalents. One player might choose to explore, and then represent, one world (such as *Innocence*), and the other player the other world (such as *Experience*). From this could come interaction and dialogue (by email, or instant messaging), with contraries being compared. Players representing contrary worlds could compare contrary talismans, or contrary avatars.

Or a point system might be set up for the collection of talismans, or a competition set up where one player, representing one world, would choose an avatar and try to commandeer its contrary (by naming it, or even downloading the corresponding plate) before the opposing player could choose it for him/herself. The dialogue itself might be conducted using only the words Blake uses in the Songs.

51. In terms of my own game-play, I chose a very simple road: I proceeded by bringing up two plates for comparison in the Contraries Machine, then filled in the game log template, putting in the thumbnails first. I made some notations on the visual and textual codes that are present in each plate, and compared the two, conjecturing on the meaning created by their juxtaposition. I also brought in the work of other scholars, as part of the "discourse field." Their input usually spurred more of mine. The players might consult my game log, which records the first two moves in my game.
52. As you will discover should you choose to play "Contraries Game 2.0" there is no real space within the Contraries Machine for text generation. This, hopefully, will be added in future iterations. In the meantime, you might open a separate window on your desktop computer to compile notes. Or you might use the HTML template I have created for that purpose.
53. In the template page, there is a box in which you can put the thumbnails of the plates you have looked at, as well as ample space to type in notes. Exchange between players can be facilitated by email, which is how "The Ivanhoe Game" began, or instant messaging, if players want to play in "real time." In future versions of the game, an electronic interface could be developed, with, perhaps, the possibility of real-time, synchronous dialogue in a chat room—again, like "The Ivanhoe Game"—as well as a MOO for player moves. In terms of the "discourse field" or the manner of play, that is for the players to decide for themselves.
54. The most interesting and fun game would be to see what the players invent on their own, using the Contraries Machine. The players might begin by writing out their own rules, and describe their specific gameworld. If this is a multiplayer game, the opposing player might strive to circumvent the game rules set up by the other player, since "hacking" the game is a game as old as games themselves.
55. There is nothing left to say except "Let the games begin!"

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Notes

¹ Considerable space might be devoted to the contraries implicit in Blake's illuminated print-making technique—in which he was compelled to design and to write his plates backwards—as well as the historical split in Blake scholarship between the verbal and visual interpretation of the *Songs*, but we have not the space here and besides, others, such as Joseph Viscomi, do so better than I ever could. I refer the reader to Viscomi and Essick's "An Inquiry into Blake's Method of Color Printing."

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² Some critics, such as E.D. Hirsch, vehemently resist such a term as applied to Blake. Hirsch contends that "Innocence and Experience were two mutually exclusive states of his own soul corresponding to two different periods of his life"(6). While I would obviously not argue that the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience* were composed during two very different times in Blake's life, I believe it indefensible to suggest that even though he put the two books together, and made changes in the plate order and tinting to make the pairings more significant, Blake did not intend for the two books to be read in relationship with each other.

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³ An interesting analogue to Blake's immersive image/texts are Tibetan mandalas, which are used in conjunction with a meditative practice that engenders a trance-like state in which the mandala becomes a three dimensional space that the meditator enters, and where he/she is spiritually transformed. I would suggest that Blake is striving for a similar effect.

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⁴ Such modern musical eminences as Benjamin Britten and Ralph Vaughn Williams have set Blake's *Songs* to music; many others, including the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, have attempted more "amateur" settings.

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⁵ It seems astounding that Blake originally included this somewhat risqué plate in *The Songs of Innocence*. It was only later, after the creation of *The Songs of Experience*, that he moved it to that book.

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Digital Designs on Blake

Blake & Virtuality: An Exchange

Adam Komisaruk, Steven Guynup and Fred Yee

In a three-part interview, a group of Blakeans and digital artists discuss their endeavors to represent Blake's thought in digital environments. They explore the practical and theoretical ramifications of Adam Komisaruk and Fred Yee's *The Blake Model*, and of Steve Guynup's *Crystal Cabinet*. This essay appears in *Digital Designs on Blake*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for *Romantic Circles* (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.

[Guynup interviews Komisaruk](#) | [Komisaruk interviews Guynup](#) | [Komisaruk interviews Yee](#)

I. Steven Guynup Interviews Adam Komisaruk about *The Blake Model*

SG: *How did you initially conceive of *The Blake Model*? Why put together William Blake with new media?*

AK: I've been reading Blake since my adolescence and reading him seriously since about my junior year of college, during which *The Book of Urizen* served as my point of entry to the mythology. By the end of graduate school I had come to feel reasonably secure in my understanding of the Blakean system. Then I received a major jolt at the hands of the great Romanticist, Fred Burwick, who gave me to understand the central importance of space in Blake's thought—the geographical alignment of the zoas and the *pas de quatre* they perform at the fall. Having avoided this dimension of Blake, but having always found visual schemata extremely valuable to my own learning and teaching, I began to look more closely at Blake's spatial configuration of his universe. His instructions are usually very specific, and the principal passages in which they appear don't number above a half-dozen or so. Taken individually, these passages vary in their intelligibility; to superimpose them on one another poses a considerable challenge.

Four Universes round the Mundane Egg remain Chaotic
One to the North, named Urthona: One to the South, named Urizen:
One to the East, named Luvah: One to the West, named Tharmas
They are the Four Zoa's that stood around the Throne Divine!
But when Luvah assum'd the World of Urizen to the South:
And Albion was slain upon his mountains, & in his tent;
All fell towards the Center in dire ruin, sinking down.
And in the South remains a burning fire; in the East a void.
In the West, a world of raging waters; in the North a solid,
Unfathomable! (*M* 19.15-24, E112-13; repeated almost verbatim in *J* 59.10-20, E208-9)[\[1\]](#)

Fourfold the Sons of Los in their divisions: and fourfold,
The great City of Golgonooza: fourfold toward the north
And toward the south fourfold, & fourfold toward the east & west
Each within other toward the four points: that toward
Eden, and that toward the World of Generation,
And that toward Beulah, and that toward Ulro:

Ulro is the space of the terrible starry wheels of Albions sons:
But that toward Eden is walled up, till time of renovation (*J* 12.45-52, E156)

the four points are thus beheld in great Eternity
West, the Circumference: South, the Zenith: North,
The Nadir: East, the Center, unapproachable for ever (*J* 12.54-6, E156).

the Eyes are the South, and the Nostrils are the East.
And the Tongue is the West, and the Ear is the North. . . .
And the North is Breadth, the South is Height & Depth:
The East is Inwards: & the West is Outwards every way (*J* 12.59-60, E156; 14.29-30, E158).

In a sense these details are easier to conceptualize symbolically than literally. How would the four aspects of existential space (Eden, Beulah, Generation, Ulro), zoa-space (Urizen, Luvah, Tharmas, Urthona), geographic space (north, south, east, west), geometric space (zenith, center, circumference, nadir), bodily space (head, hands, viscera, feet) and facial space (eyes, nostrils, ears, tongue) intersect? It became clear to me that what was needed was to integrate these details in a single map or model, which could in turn serve as an invaluable tool for readers of Blake at all levels. If I may move from the sublime to the ridiculous for a moment, there was another influence: I had grown up with an early computer game called *Zork*, an all-text adventure that was famous for its rather baroque narrative. At some point in my later years, I came across a novelty called the "Zork Poster," an attractive flowchart that mapped out the entire game at a glance. I may have seen it hanging on a friend's wall or in a hobby shop; it was obviously designed more as a nostalgic nod to my generation than as a practical user's guide, although the recent adaptation of *Zork* for the web may spur a revival! I thought, What a great idea—a master-key that unlocks a mystery by spatializing what was temporal. I first intended to build a large physical model that it would be possible to walk around and view from any angle. A three-dimensional replica of the "human form divine" from Blake's "Glad Day" would serve as the centerpiece, perhaps with spheres attached at the appropriate places to represent the zoas; and bullet trajectory rods, the kind used by forensicists, to represent sensory pathways. Since I wanted to retain Blake's own iconography wherever possible, I needed someone who could transpose these two-dimensional images into three; I solicited the help of the visual artist Fred Yee, who's been my friend for almost two decades and from whom we'll be hearing shortly. After further reflection, I decided to shift the medium to virtual space. In this way, one could more easily subject the model to a variety of manipulations (zoom, pan, rotate, disassemble, reassemble, etc.), run a series of animated routines (the fall of Albion, the shifting of the zoas, Milton's passage through Albion's vortex, etc.) and also annotate the space with pop-up windows and hyperlinks. Since most of Blake's images have been digitized by now, they could be grafted into this space wherever two dimensions would suffice, and rendered by hand wherever three were necessary. The result would be an immersive, navigable environment through which one might experience the spatial extent of Blake's vision. So that's the plan right now. I'm still working with Yee and have gotten the West Virginia Virtual Environments Lab involved as well. I discuss some of the practical and theoretical ramifications of the work-in-progress in an article that appears in the Winter 2004-05 issue of [*Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*](#).

SG: *Mapping Blake's multiverse and narratives has been an obsession with many Blakeans from Northrop Frye's Fearful Symmetry to Donald Ault's Narrative Unbound. Maps of Blake's worlds are often criticized, however, as limiting the horizon of Blake's vision. Isn't your project—despite its possible benefits and*

insights—yet another chain or net?

AK: This has been an abiding concern of mine since the early stages of the project: am I missing the point, imposing a Urizenic literalism on what is obviously a symbolical vision, compelling intellectual space to obey Newtonian law? I'm hoping it's not sophistry to argue that this anxiety *is* the point. For all his affirmations of the redemptive power of art, I think there is a powerful suspicion in Blake that such affirmations may be at best wishful thinking, at worst a dangerous deception. Every reality is a virtual one and every medium provisional, just as mediation itself is inescapable. This is the case whether we encounter Blake through my model, through the [Blake Archive](#) at the University of Virginia, through the Dover or Princeton facsimiles or through David Erdman's standard edition; it would be the case even if we could hold Blake's own books in our hand. The only way for Blake to present an unfallen vision would be for him never to commit it to paper, and perhaps not even then. Art is the best that we, as fallen beings, have to work with; but as Jay Bolter and David Grusin say in *Remediation*, any attempt to recover some originary, immediate reality only drives us deeper into the simulacrum. This is the predicament of poor Los, toiling in the very bowels of Golgonooza. The Blake Model reproduces Blake's vision by the insufficiency of its doing so.

SG: *How might the user of The Blake Model experience not only the "cognitive dissonance" in Blake's formation of his system but also in your formation of Blake's formation of system(s)? Further, how might the user be made aware of her own cognitive dissonance that arises from those she is experiencing?*

AK: One technique is to have The Blake Model foreground its artificiality. I don't particularly want realism, not even the cartoonish realism of films like *Shrek* or *Toy Story*, which basically remediate claymation or the hand-drawn cel. I love the richly detailed textures of Yee's storyboards, but these are another artist's riffs on Blake, not an attempted recovery of some authentic text. A more important way to create the dissonance to which you refer, however, is to build little malfunctions into the model itself, representing the aspects of the system about which Blake may have been indecisive or changed his mind throughout his career. As I explain in the print article, one such aspect is the ambiguous genealogy of Los—an appropriate enough place for an ambiguity, since Los himself appears after Albion's fall into genealogy, into reproduction, into temporality. I'd like to program The Blake Model at such places to "flicker" as if a wire were loose, to visualize alternate interpretations at different moments. Along these lines, I'm intrigued by the image of the "shuttle" that Ron Broglio uses to describe the experience of Blake's multifarious page. In the undulating vines of "The Divine Image," where the viewer's "eye moves from black to white" just as the artist's "hand moves from brush to needle," "there is a shuttling between physical image and mental transformation." Similarly, in the "sibyl" plate of *America*, "the reader's eye *shuttles back and forth*" between two similar forms, the single red leaf at the top of the page and fiery dragon's breath at the bottom, as well as between this leaf and the "furious flames" of the page following ("Becoming" 1997) (Please see the Blake Archive "Welcome Page" before continuing on to the "sybil" plate of *America*). For our audience, the "shuttle" image will of course call to mind [The Voice of the Shuttle](#), Alan Liu's pathbreaking web archive of humanities resources. The origin of the allusion is the myth of Philomel who, after her brother-in-law Tereus raped her and cut out her tongue, wove the tale of her violation into a tapestry; Sophocles represented the myth in his now-lost play *Tereus*. In *Tereus*, says Aristotle's *Poetics*, the shuttle—the small boat-shaped instrument on a loom that threads the weft through the warp—speaks where Philomel cannot. By the time the allusion reaches Broglio it has been quadruply deferred—the dismembered Philomel reconstitutes herself at the loom; she is memorialized by Sophocles and then lost; Aristotle remembers her story, then displaces it metonymically onto the "voice" and again synechdocally onto the "shuttle." Liu gathers up the loose ends on his site, itself a weaving-together of data that might otherwise lie mutely in far-flung corners of cyberspace. Aristotle refers to the "voice of the shuttle" while he's listing different ways a dramatist can bring about the *anagnorisis*, or moment of recognition. Among these options, an "artificial invention" like Philomel's tapestry (*My God! Is that what Tereus did to you?*) is strictly fourth-rate, slightly better than "tokens" (*I know that scar—you're Odysseus!*) but not nearly as good as a device that "arises from the events themselves" (*Wait a minute—this Laius who I killed at the crossroads was my father?*)(Aristotle 16:45-7). Aristotle prefers that the shuttle would shut up,

because it announces its factitiousness rather than carry itself with an air of dignified inevitability. The deferred, provisional quality of the shuttle is, however, what piques Broglio's interest (and that of Blake himself, who frequently represents weavers as up to no good) just as the "flicker" piques mine. Perhaps an errant leaf in The Blake Model landscape, periodically flickering into a flame and back again, could combine these metaphors! In brief then, having taken a temporal narration and made it spatial, one must re-introduce temporality, the possibility of decay that arises from the Fall. This imperative occurred to me in the discussion that followed my presentation on The Blake Model at the NEMLA convention in Toronto—indeed, the conference Q&A is an important kind of temporal dynamic! The title of my panel was "Blake: Between Aestheticism and Historicism," which I took to be asking, "Are we to read Blake's poems as self-sufficient works of art or as products of their sociopolitical environment?" My answer, of course, was "Yes, absolutely," to rise to the challenge of "between"-ness—a position wonderfully elucidated by Susan Wolfson in her remarks on Blake's hyphenation, and by Christopher Ricks in his remarks on T.S. Eliot's. I've also tried to stake out this ground in the print article by examining The Blake Model in terms of Blake's own sense of his technology and its material contingencies. The studies by David Bindman, Robert Essick, Morris Eaves and Joseph Viscomi remind us that aestheticism itself is never ahistorical.

SG: *Blake's works and objects in these works seem to carry within themselves an internal difference such that the works and characters mutate over time. That is to say, his poems have multiple versions without any one being the definitive edition from which the others are earlier or later mutations. His characters change characteristics from poem to poem and even within the same poem. It is as if his poetry and his characters are simulacra of themselves. Would it be fair to characterize your own digital project as yet another iteration, another simulacrum, spawned from the problems and questions within Blake's works themselves?*

AK: Yes, but having said the preceding, I think it's also important to heed Viscomi's warning against fetishizing difference. To return to the "voice of the shuttle" allusion, Liu directs us to a few critics who have meditated on the phrase while avoiding a totalism of dismemberment. For Geoffrey Hartman, the "voice of the shuttle" is an archetype of the poetic condition that is "compel[led] . . . toward an aesthetics of silence," but this silence results from overdetermination; "the problem is that of fullness rather than emptiness" (353). Patricia Klindienst takes the Philomel legend as emblematic of a female artistic and political agency that refuses to be silenced. When the reader's eye "shuttles" along the manuscript of *The Four Zoas*, says Broglio, it maintains the "minute particulars" of Blake's icons—a toe, for instance—as its frame of reference; the "becoming" of the particulars, moreover, involves a transformation that is purposive although not teleological (Broglio, "Becoming" 1999: 13, 138). In *America*, the "becoming-flame of the leaf" suggests a "means of liberation via imagination" (Broglio, "Becoming" 1997). The concept of "becoming" builds on Deleuze and Guattari, who ask us to "conceive of [a] world in which a single fixed plane—which we shall call a plane of absolute immobility *or* absolute movement—is traversed by nonformal elements of relative speed that enter this or that individuated assemblage depending on their degrees of speed and slowness. A plane of consistency peopled by anonymous matter, by infinite bits of impalpable matter entering into varying connections" (255). Viewing the world in its "molecular" reconfigurability rather than its "molar" aggregation, however, doesn't mean that anything goes. The system that "deterritorializes" still "retorriorializes" as a unity; as for "molarity," Blake himself reminds us of the ground-level knowledge that only the "mole" possesses! There *is* a measure of coherence in Blake's system for all its suppleness, just as I hope there will be in my guide to it. We needn't write off an interpretive methodology as "closed" simply because it doesn't do justice to a text that, although putatively "open," would otherwise remain closed to a great many readers. Of course, as any scientist knows who's ever wrangled with animal-testing protocols, a computer simulation will only take you so far: the notion that you could build such a thing presupposes the very knowledge that necessitates the experiment in the first place. Arguably my project begs the question in the same way. I need to understand Blake's spatial system before I can build a Blake Model, but I need a Blake Model in order to understand Blake's spatial system. I hope, however, that I can parlay this vicious cycle into a virtuous one; that my experiment can be an organic form in Coleridge's sense, in which the Blake Model discovers its character through its own process of becoming.

II. Adam Komisaruk Interviews Steven Guynup about *The Virtual Crystal Cabinet*

AK: Your refrain in "William Blake and the Study of Virtual Space" is that "Blake is not a game." You associate "game" with "generic plot line . . . classical narration schema . . . a limited, linear story," you seem to want an approach to Blake that is ludic—more so than gaming itself—instead of teleological, and "spatializ[ed]" instead of temporal. Yet there's a specific, step-wise movement that is pretty much assumed of the users, guided not only by Blake's stanzaic structure but by his foundations—whatever his revisionary tendencies—in Judeo-Christian romance. You also suggest at one point that "the human spirit and human desire" alone powers the users' movements; elsewhere, that the text takes on a mind of its own and presents the users with "worlds that are beyond their immediate control." Doesn't your project exhibit divided loyalties—determinacy and indeterminacy?

SG: The development of narrative within the video game genre appears to be paralleling that of early film. Borrowing terminology from film studies, we can see the emergence of a *Classical Hollywood* video game style. Within this construction, narratology blends with ludology. As story and game-play fold together, ludology can be seen as providing a set of comprehensible rules for dramatic interplay based on user choices. Within strict limits, video game ludology allows users to create a personalized narrative in a predefined system. Viewer control does not create indeterminacy, however, only a faux sense of it that lies in a simple binary code of success or failure. All questions are preprogrammed and the corresponding answers mathematically predefined. True indeterminacy offers more than a series of yes/no answers that always lead to a predetermined goal whose outcome is never ambiguous. The player can either win or lose; there is no middle ground. To hide this fact, this lack of true freedom in a virtual space, game programmers use narrative techniques to focus the player's act of readership on completing narrow tasks. A series of singular mouse clicks allows salvation. Blake's writing appears to function much like a path in a video game. The "clos'd" world of the video game, however, is precisely the type of structure that Blake struggled against. He impresses upon readers the need to create a new narrative, a narrative that removes the mechanical, mathematical limits to understanding and seeks to explore the totality of existence. His works serve as a guide for that process, and the key is the construct of active readership. Active readership is, by video game definition, a ludic practice through which the "path" carries multiple layers of possible signification. Blake, who saw that "Improvement makes straight roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are the roads of genius," offers us many kinks in the path and opportunities to re-conceive his work. He wants his readers to cleanse the doors of their perception and to become active readers of the world around them, leaving no aspect unquestioned. So while Blake's texts consist of fixed words arranged by stanzas upon the page, they do not create determinacy. Accordingly, immersion into the Virtual Crystal Cabinet is like finding "the world in a grain of sand." It appears to be a small space with limited play, but it provides layers of meaning, infinite levels of interpretation, and unlike the video game, it reaches beyond itself to the world outside the computer screen. A second issue arises in that narrative video games must continuously reinforce their reality to maintain the sense of immersion. There is no world beyond the game spaces of Unreal, Quake or Doom. This places strict limitations both philosophic and physical on the video game. No act can be seen as unreal, in the context of the game world, or else the immersiveness of the game would be broken. This then limits the acts that the virtual designer can code for the space. Poetry and Blake especially allows for an open-ended exploration of virtual reality. There are no real-world requirements. No natural laws or physics need exist. The full potential for the virtual environments and the digital consciousness that seeks to utilize it is approachable through the investigation of informatics set within a poetic frame. Outside the real, new philosophic questions arise. Within the virtual we can look deep into our human nature. It is an existence not as flesh but as the memory of flesh. This knowledge in turn forces a reappraisal of reality. In *The Virtual Crystal Cabinet*—as in Blake's poem—one falls from one England into another and then returns to a third in the final stanza. Each England is the same England, for it is only our knowledge of it that changes. The fold

upon fold upon fold, the virtual space and the written poem, extend a question on the truth of reality and virtuality.

AK: *I'd like to ask you about your reading of Blake's poem. Certainly "The Crystal Cabinet" itself seems to be an early crack at virtual reality, which is what I imagine drew you to it in the first place! I'm wondering what you think Blake envisions as the fate of that parallel universe. The extent of the narrator's agency is ambiguous—in lines 23-4, "burst" could be a transitive verb of which "I" is the subject and "Cabinet" is the object, in which case the narrator becomes the "Weeping Babe"; or "burst" could be an intransitive verb of which "Cabinet" is the inverted subject, in which case it's the cabinet itself becomes the "Weeping Babe"! By the end of the poem, does the narrator achieve that "organiz'd innocence" that Blake sought for so long, or does the simulacrum implode under its own weight? Are we back to Eden, or back to the dull rounds of generation as in "The Mental Traveller," another one of the Pickering Manuscript poems?*

SG: I should probably note, before it becomes completely obvious, that I'm not a Blake scholar. My background is in new media and for years I've built virtual worlds. In Blake I see a kindred spirit, a forefather, an explorer of media form and a philosopher of the human position within a nonmediated yet equally virtual world. My take on your question stems largely from my belief that Blake believed that innocence, once replaced by experience, must be regained and maintained. In this world there can be no Eden for mortals. The Crystal Cabinet for me represents this process of growth. If the Cabinet is indeed a vagina, Blake is reborn through experience as the weeping babe from it. He is, as a babe would be, innocent. Yet the babe weeps; neither the organiz'd world nor the possession of innocence is that static structure it once was. In adapting this to a virtual interpretation, the London of the seventh stanza is identical to that of the first and second stanza. The underlying code is same as before, yet by virtue of experience the space is much more dynamic and more flexible than before. Triggered by experience, walls of stone and steel (metaphors of the concreteness of the industrial revolution) now spin in a gentle dance with a four-fold vision of the world. Revealed in those walls is image of Blake, the humanity that underpins the structures of a society and society's only hope against the grind of inhuman machinery. Here in the center of the true wilds, the wild of London, the Cabinet as woman and as vagina is "reclin'd." Above sits a weeping reborn Blake. So, as I see it, there is a possibility for birth into a visionary transformation. While my representation of it is virtual, there is nothing to prevent the reader's experience of it from being literal. My play space and Blake's poem space trigger something for the readers, an outside, another space by which the world they inhabit is not the fence and prison it first appears to be.

AK: *I love what you've done in populating your landscape with bits of detritus from the Blake iconography, like the vines from "Holy Thursday." Could you talk about your decision to juxtapose these images with the striking photographs by Thomas Tulis and Dierdre Curry, which really rattles the cultural frame of reference in the project?*

SG: Thomas Tulis is a both a brilliant photographer and a good and trusting friend. On many occasions he's allowed me to dig through the thousands of photographs he's taken and adapt them to my virtual works. After several conversations with Ron Broglio, about ways Blake scholars have read this poem, I went to see Thomas. To be honest, I was really stumped; how does one represent a "three-fold vision"? Following a literal interpretation, my opening question to Thomas was simply "Do you have pictures of a naked couple in the woods"? His answer was "Yes, I just shot some last weekend." He showed me the contact sheets of an Adam and Eve photo session he did for Dierdre. Two hundred and fifty images laid before me and I was enthralled. They were perfect. I wished I used more of them. The photography brought a sense of presence, of immediacy and of realism to a space that I knew would soon be awash in metaphors within a visionary frame. This play between the real and visionary allowed me to place the viewers in the real at the poem's start, move them into a vision and, at the end, throw them back into a real world as seen through the eyes of innocence regained. It may also be worth mentioning that the time needed to create the Virtual Crystal Cabinet was roughly two semesters. The process of conceptualizing the space, working out ideas of

visionary spaces and creating a navigational process between them usurped most of the time. In contrast, the file size of the work, without audio, is only 1.4 megs. In terms of new media projects this is very small, not much more than its literary counterpoint—seven stanzas. Like the original Crystal Cabinet, it is the concepts and visualization that make this piece, not the size of the space or the task of programming it.

AK: *Your project is truly a multimedia one. Tell us a bit about Jah Wobble, who provides the extraordinary ambient music for "The Crystal Cabinet."*

SG: This is the one major loose thread within the project. I found the Jah Wobble CD *The Inspiration of William Blake* and immediately knew it was perfect. Jah Wobble sets some of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and a few other poems to his own visionary music. He captures the spirit of Blake's writings in a way that just explodes within my virtual interpretation. I had little choice but to take small snippets of his longer songs and loop them. Of course, Jah Wobble's own history in music makes for another fold in the virtual work. As a legend in punk rock, Jah didn't just perform music; he lived it. That is to say, his music and life folded into each other. Blake's vision is in his poetry but also outside of it, in the reader and the reader's world. The same can be said for the vision in Jah's music. Sadly, I've been unable to contact Jah Wobble for formal permission. Two letters stamped "undeliverable" sit in my Blake file. My hiring of a web-savvy, musically connected friend to get Jah's email address was a failure. Honestly I hope he contacts me. I've got other music on hand donated by local Atlanta musicians. The new music is good, but it misses the feel of Blake that Jah's music holds. I hope Jah sees my work and enjoys it as much as I enjoyed his music and as much as it helped progress my vision of The Crystal Cabinet.

III. Adam Komisaruk Interviews Fred Yee about The Blake Model

AK: *When I asked you to help me bring The Blake Model to fruition, there were many aspects of Blake's vision that you seemed to recognize immediately. One feature of the mythology that seems especially to have captured your imagination is Bowlahoola. A pun on "bowels," it serves as the workshop of Blake's stand-in Los. You've depicted it as a great city of pipes and pathways that makes digestive noises. How do you interpret the idea that art emanates from the lower bodily registers?*

FY: I was fascinated by images in medieval alchemy of vessels being heated, of fire and bellies and containers. I knew they were metaphors for multiple internal processes. It is natural for me to think that the creative process comes "from the gut." There is a ferment that creativity undergoes. I liken it to digestion, taking the raw material, chewing it up, perhaps if it's not to your liking spitting it back out. It's not a subtle process; it's one in which things are broken down by acids and sometimes the content fights with you and gives you gas. An idea goes through many permutations, so it would be closer to a cow gut, with its many stomachs, many stages of digestion, of processing and understanding, in and out, in and out. On another level this explains why organized religion and the individual vision of the artist have historically been at odds. The artist transforms what the church shuns and arrives at a distillation. This unruly process is from the body, from the very depths of the body, where passions are stirred. I visualized Bowlahoola [Fig. 1] as both an organ and an architectural structure. I remember a grammar-school field trip to the Franklin Institute science museum in Philadelphia. They had this very large model heart you could walk through. It's like that except it heaves and gurgles and has windows. The tantra teacher Vimalananda once suggested that one should not engage in spiritual activity during or after a meal, as the stomach has the dual function of digesting spiritual and physical food.^[2] It can do one or the other but not both at the same time. In fact, he identified the mind and the stomach as the same organ. Many mystical traditions take mind out of the picture. Analytical thought becomes an impediment to direct experience. In yoga, you're so busy doing these asanas—poses—that you're far too tired to think. It's as if your mind has been doing these poses too and now is saying "I'm tired. I'll just tag along." You are just so aware of your own physicality at that point. Going back

to the idea of the stomach, what happens to a meal after it's digested? It's metabolized. It's broken down and integrated.

AK: *How would you describe your vision of Blake's vision of the "Mundane Egg" or "Mundane Shell"?*

FY: That was the one I struggled with the most. When at first you said "shell," I thought "seashell," like a clam [Fig. 2] or a bivalve, and I imagined something immensely vast which was on the surface of the earth and reached the heavens, and had windows and stained-glass interiors. I realized, having read further, that it has to be something subtler [Fig. 3]. Theosophists describe reality as being seven-fold. The realms co-exist in the same physical space, each subtly interacting with the other. The physical world is the densest; each world thereafter becomes finer in quality. And I thought, What if the Mundane Egg was a bridge between realms? How would it be seen in each? On the manifest level it would be an absurd physical form, a great egg collided with the world, spilling its contents unto the land. Golgonooza is the square yolk, the inner sea of ooze out of this cracked egg, runny and smelly. But as one progressed it would become less concrete and more transcendent and beautiful. It's a perfect image, so basic, the symbol of chaos from which all arises.

AK: *The collection in which this piece is appearing is part of the Romantic Circles Praxis Series, which seeks to acknowledge how Romanticism has both "dissolved as a period and idea" and also "retained a vigorous, recognizable hold on the intellectual and theoretical discussions of today." Many articles in the series marry theoretical concerns to the real-world contingencies Romanticists are likely to encounter, directly or indirectly, in the classroom. Although you're not a Romanticist, you are heavily involved in what you have called a praxis or practice of your own. Couldn't one argue, though, that what you are doing is more theoretical or abstract than pragmatic?*

FY: I've never had much time for theory. I'm very much a bottom-up sort of person. When I say I'm involved in process, it means I'm not attached to the ideas I'm working with. They are temporary vehicles to get me from point A to point B. If someone wants to develop ideas from them, fine. The artist/practitioner is involved with the act, not enamored with rules. It's meaningless to me to have a conceptual understanding of something only and to call that the experience. When you have the experience, you realize it can't be transferred by words and ideas. It can be implied—a direction to go in. The whole point is to show the underlying ineffable structure, to say, What you're seeing is not the thing itself; it's just an approximation, a signifier. That symbol on the map, we're not really there. In graphic design there's one font that is used for creating map symbols; it's a type of dingbat. One's a compass shape, one's a road shape; they're clearly from the '50s, car culture and such. I'm far removed from them, I don't know what they're signifying, but they're evocative. At the very least, you need to be evocative, point, show the seams. At worst, mistake the symbol for the object, the footnote for the story. This goes into the idea of monsters [Fig. 4] and absurd imagery. The reason why you're given grotesque imagery, imagery that clashes, is to show the limitation of our current understanding of things. It is to say, That which I am depicting is so beyond the aesthetics of the day, the current objects that we have cannot contain it, so we have to show the absolutes of it, side by side. It's supposed to kick you and get you looking past the image. But often people don't get it and get caught up in a convoluted, literalistic interpretation. They get stuck on the surface; they look at the technique of it, the plastic aspect of it, the depth of false space, not the depth of meaning and beyond the depth of meaning. It requires that participation, that willingness to enter, to let go. Let's put ourselves in the student's shoes now. It's really hard to understand that there's something for which only an approximation exists. But that's where you have to start. The novice will look at works like Blake's and say, Where's the "in," where do you turn it on? Is this the Bible, is this . . . ? Sometimes you've just got to throw them into the fire. It's their struggle in understanding, the attempt itself, which is the "in."

AK: *You enjoyed a highly successful career in the professional art business for nine years, then simply walked away from it. At the same time, you will always be an artist. How do you respond to Blake in the light of your own ambivalent relationship to the art world?*

FY: Blake wrote, when engraving work was getting slim, "I am laid by in a corner as if I did not Exist" (Letter to George Cumberland, 26 August 1799; E704). It sounds like publishing nowadays. It made sense that as an engraver Blake started creating his own plates, writing his own texts, getting involved in the entire process, because that was the only way for these things to emerge—if he printed them himself, with his very dutiful wife coloring. I thought, How lucky he was, to have his vision, to have his work and to have love. He was also very lucky to have a circle, a following of people in his later years, that he had what he had, the recognition that he had, that he was allowed to this and the work is here for us. The era of the patron was pretty much dead by then, but there were still individuals who gave him assignments, projects to work on. Most artists would sell their mothers for such things at this point. I'm also surprised that, for somebody who saw visions at nine and continued to see them his entire life (the first vision he saw was angels in a tree—that image appears elsewhere; it's a very striking image), he was still able to function as a human being in the time that he did, that he had technical skills as an engraver and got work. I could easily see these visions consuming him to such a degree that he would not function. I could see him starting to disdain these projects that were meant to sustain his livelihood, because the work he was doing was so compelling that he couldn't get away from it. I can recognize that. Once you recognize the true work that you're supposed to do in this life, anything that gets in the way of it seems like a hindrance. Being an artist is actually a very good proving ground for a step in spirituality. It's you and your own vision. It's not about creating a consensus; it's about the truest relationship you can have to the experience. My meditation practice arose from the process of making art. Now there is no object, no end result, just the process itself, this unfolding. There's a recognition that imagination is its own reason to be, not simply a vehicle to arrive at beautiful things or important ideas.

AK: It seems hard to avoid the tension between Blake's claims about the universality of his system and the sense that this system is available only to the initiate. How is the spiritually oriented artist to reconcile esoteric and exoteric traditions?

FY: Every metaphysical system is the macrocosm described within the microcosm, the universal made manifest through the personal. It is a stepping down from that which is beyond description into a form that is relative, limited. The limitation of meaning is needed to view it, with the understanding that it is only from a specific and relative vantage point. To understand a system like Blake's does one need to be an initiate into secret knowledge? When one is approaching a metaphysical system one needs to remove the habit of imposing meaning and allow one's self to be led to it. As an artist I proceed from "I don't know" and run with it. Most mystical texts have built-in blinds. But they're less about trying to deceive someone than about saying, If you're not at a certain developmental level you're just not going to get it. I recently read *Initiations and Initiates in Tibet* by Alexandra David-Neel, one of the earliest westerners to describe Tibetan mysticism. She was an initiate herself and received secret teachings, oral teachings which were never written down. She asked the lama, "May I print this?" and the lama basically said, "They won't understand it, so go ahead, try, because it's not like there's a secret; it's really about where you're at." I really don't think that there's a secret code; it has a lot to do with one's own development, integration of self, one's willingness to examine every aspect of one's reality. The breakthrough of knowing comes from one's own effort, one's own practice, to pierce the veil as it were. But there are many veils. It's like when you first introduce your students to Blake's works, seeing what their natural processes are to assimilate something alien to them on many levels. As you struggle with the work, you have to start saying, What have I taken on, what am I questioning here? so the very question becomes questioned. When one is successful in any sort of practice one has a mirror for looking back at one's own processes of mind.

AK: You've always been aware of the physicality of the different media in which you've worked. Do you see virtuality as the next frontier, raising possibilities that don't exist elsewhere?

FY: A friend of mine who is a video editor has said, "Video games are the new film!" And it's true; they are a very powerful phenomenon. I grew up playing video games, every eight-bit incarnation. You cannot explain a video game to someone who's never played one; they won't see the richness of it. It's important for

individuals who are aware of the implications to influence the direction of this. Video games are already profoundly affecting our culture. Their true symbolism isn't understood yet, because I think it's still emerging. The same is the case with comic books, fantasy movies and science fiction. We don't know why someone had the imagination to think up a person with super powers who dressed up in red and blue tights and flew in the sky, or why one would have a thirty-foot dinosaur breathing radioactive fire, but it taps a very powerful desire in everyone. I've learned not to discredit these desires, these very strange things, as they are stepping stones to something else that we don't yet have a vocabulary to describe. There's something mythic about Godzilla. He destroys cities and fills up the entire landscape. By his unnatural scale I could easily see Godzilla as a tantric deity, a great destroyer of ego, a raging seething god. Pac-Man gobbles around in a maze and is chased by ghosts; when he eats a certain pill he becomes invulnerable and can eat the other ghosts. The Japanese name for Pac-Man is *Baku Baku*; the Baku is a mythological creature that children who have nightmares can call upon to chase away the ghosts. We do not connect these stories to their original impetus, but they're still familiar to us. They are a new manifestation of something that's always been there. Sometimes you see through the cartoonish things a literal attempt to express ineffable qualities.

AK: *Steven Guynup sets up his Virtual Blake project in opposition to the video game, which he says has a closedness that doesn't well serve his—or Blake's—project.*

FY: I once was playing a video game and I jumped out of the world. This was a glitch, a programming bug. You could turn back and see the world behind you, and in front of you there was no horizon line; you just went on to infinity, white emptiness. I did this a few times, once for twenty minutes in one direction. It was scary because you could get lost in infinity and not come back. It was like a Castenada novel. When I did return I was able to walk the entire boundary of the world from the outside looking in. This was a whole other perspective that the programmers did not expect you to see. It made a whole lot of wheels in my head turn: what happens when you break out, what does it mean when you recognize the artifice of a place, the rules of a place? That desire to step behind the façade, it isn't just in the virtual. The whole idea of creating viruses and hacking has to do with this desire to see how far one can go. I heard a fellow on NPR from the [Urban Exploration movement](#) who made a business of going places you're not supposed to go, the interiors of subway stations and such. When he was in these places no one questioned him; the workers assumed he was there because he was supposed to be there. It's how you get into rock shows; you pretend you're with the band or are in the band. You're not actually pretending; in your mind you basically say, I belong here, and that's the reality. You realize how conditioned we are to obey. When a sign says, Do Not Pass, we stop. When you start disregarding those signs, you realize there's a whole world behind those places, and the world does not crash or end when you enter them. What's the most indeterminate element of a game? It's the player himself, herself. We already see that with multiplayer modes, online gaming, people interacting with each other, the complexity of the game becomes much greater when you have individuals on the other end as opposed to preprogrammed artificial-intelligence enemies. All you have to do is give them a goal other than killing each other. Did you ever play Atari's Battlezone? I always wanted to visit the mountains on the horizon.

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Notes

¹ All Blake quotations are from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. ed., ed. David Erdman; hereafter *E. Milton* is abbreviated *M*; Jerusalem, *J*.

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² See Robert Svoboda, *Aghora II: Kundalini* (Albuquerque: Brotherhood of Life, 1993).

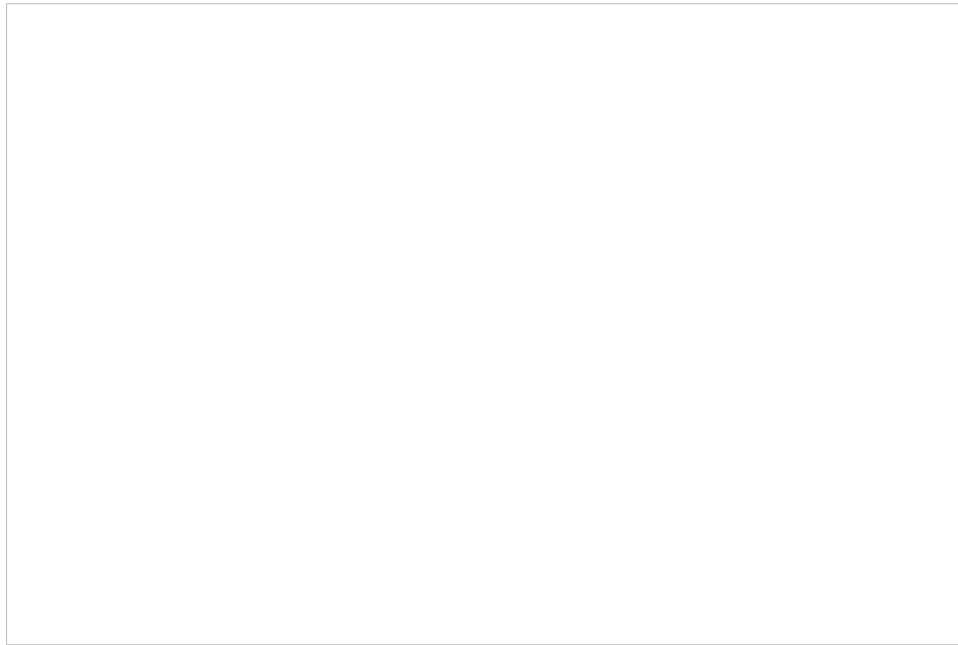
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Digital Designs on Blake

William Blake and the Study of Virtual Space: Adapting "The Crystal Cabinet" to a New Medium

Steve Guynup, University of Baltimore

Within the Virtual Crystal Cabinet, Blakean textuality engages our new, computer-driven reality. Poetic text, images, and architectural elements are blended through graphic design techniques, filmic conventions and theories of human computer interaction. This essay appears in *Digital Designs on Blake*, a volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, prepared exclusively for Romantic Circles (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/>), University of Maryland.



A screen shot of the opening stanza of the Virtual Crystal Cabinet

Blake and the Virtual Cabinet

1. The *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* could be described as a series of three-dimensional digital installations, as a work of virtual sculpture that blends and binds poetry with architecture, or as a series of immersively illustrated pages. Regardless of the description, its simple goal is to tell a story and to share wisdom. Like traditional stories it, on the surface, follows a single narrative thread and no amount of mouse clicking changes the outcome. Users typically do find new relationships, new philosophic insights when they revisit the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet*. This ability comes from the conceptual density of the work. Credit for the deeply textural undertones and for the effective merger of multiple modalities goes to the Crystal Cabinet's author, Romantic poet William Blake. This paper addresses the process of adapting Blake's poem "The Crystal Cabinet" into in a virtual environment and the emergent relationship between his work and the multimediated space within the computer screen.
2. More than anyone before him, William Blake merged the written word, the illuminated image and the profound thought into a unified vision of the cosmos. His books, each written, illustrated and published by Blake himself, are harbingers of the dynamic multimedia expressions we, two hundred years later, are just beginning to explore. To view, read and attempt to comprehend one of his works, one must

accept Blake's invitation to see the pages as an immersive environment and be able to process it on many levels simultaneously. Like Stéphane Mallarmé's construct of "The Book: Spiritual Instrument," Blake saw the page as a musical score, poetic vision, artistic image and typographical code (McGann 210). Furthermore, for Blake the separation between these levels was an illusion caused by the rational and reasoned mindset championed by men like Isaac Newton.

3. Upon reading, the multileveled text becomes a machine for executing simultaneous orders upon the senses. Aroused and engaged, the viewer's senses bring life to the page. In re-envisioning virtual space, we would benefit by looking beyond the simplistic recreation of the physical world and grow to understand it in a Mallarméan-Blakean fashion, as a program that executes orders upon the senses. Within the virtual, Blakean multileveled programming becomes multidimensional. From this vantage point, the works of William Blake are a uniquely powerful departure point for the exploration of virtual space. Compared with the conventional works that seek to mirror reality or employ the virtual in support of video game narratives, his works form a beachhead of compelling insight for a new and undiscovered medium.

Blake is not a Game: Illustrated Page & Immersive Space

4. Video games are the starting point for the general public's understanding of virtual space (Grove & Williams 79). Unfortunately, video games are a less than optimal starting point for examining William Blake. Blake had an overwhelming desire to open the doors of perception, "For man has clos'd himself up till he sees all things through the narrow chinks of his cavern" (Blake 391).^[1] Blake's writings and images are a continuous battle against what he saw as the grave shortcomings of the Industrial Revolution (mass production) and the Age of Enlightenment (the dominance of scientific method). Video game narratives and the manner in which they program the senses are the product of mass production and scientific method. The video game player interacts within a "narrow chink" of the possibilities of virtual space. In practice, game narratives, those with theatrical storylines, seek to emulate the physical world and only through pop culture constructs of the superhero and/or the supernatural do they offer any minor variant schema for viewer participation. Beneath the surface of superhero and/or supernatural the functional imperatives of typical narrative video games produce a medium mired in the "same dull round" (Blake 3). Narrative video games are a mechanical reproduction of reality whose underlying story is not meant to be deeply questioned. Open interpretation of the narrative which drives a game leads the user to confront the boundaries of the program. This confrontation breaks the immersion of the virtual space and places the user outside the world. The story is no longer believable. The game programmers, to borrow a phrase from McGann, code "reflexive works of analysis" (109). They assess the beliefs of the user and suspend their disbelief in a faux coded reality. Game programmers seek to create and maintain this immersion, this illusion of the world. In contrast, William Blake sought to break it. Yet within both the game space and the world itself, after the illusion of reality is broken, a reality remains.
5. Beyond the reach of Newtonian time and space, the works of William Blake can be seen as "an imaginative argument—an argument mounted in works of imagination—against all non-performative styles of interpretation. Interpretation of works of imagination called for responsive works of imagination, not reflexive works of analysis." (McGann 109). The new media adaptations of works by William Blake demand that affordances of virtual space be brought to the forefront. The *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* is a celebration of transgressed boundaries, an embrace of poetic truth and vision over texture-mapped surfaces of an assumed reality.

Navigation Without A Path

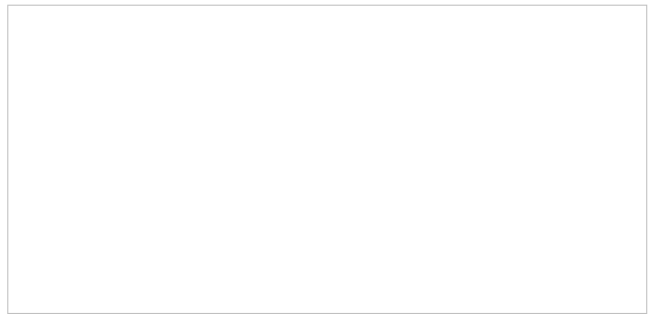
6. Blake pushes us further, beyond realistic looking space and into a visionary landscape of his four-folded space. Creating this effect requires more than a single expansive environment of realistic space can deliver. To break space and guide time we turn to literary tradition. The narrative of Blake's "Crystal Cabinet" is arranged by stanza. Extruding this into the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet*, its seven stanzas operate in parallel as individual conceptually focused environments as well as building blocks within the larger philosophic structure. The navigation structure is two-fold. For ease of reading, a simple set of forward and back buttons appear after the manual navigation mode is selected. The use of forward and back buttons within a three dimensional space opens the door to a unique comparison to modes of navigation in written texts. In the original "Crystal Cabinet", Blake likely acknowledged that the reader might return to re-read parts of the text that were of specific interest to the reader. Thumbing through pages and skimming paragraphs is a simple task for books made of paper. In virtual environments and video games there is no truly corresponding interaction. At best, some games allow you to replay a level which perhaps compares to re-reading a chapter in a book. As for page skimming, the game player/virtual viewer typically has little choice but to move very fast.
7. The default navigation setting operates more like that of a first time reader. They are immersed in the page and read every word one after the other. After they have seen what is needed they can move on. The default navigation is also rooted in Blake's own philosophy that a person's actions shape their environment in ways beyond their own comprehension. The default navigation schema forces the viewer on a crooked, unseen path. The value of this over the secondary navigation schema's much simpler straight-forward use of forward and back buttons also echoes Blake: "Improvement makes straight roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius" (Blake 38). The question of paths arises in many other works by Blake, a fact noted by Dan Miller in the introduction to *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method*. Miller states that "the right way is all too easily taken over and altered, so that the just man must pursue a pathless route." Extending a path to follow into a metaphor of a method to follow, Miller ponders "if there is a truly Blakean methodology . . . it may be best to approach it tangentially. Some paths require detours."
8. To accomplish the "crooked roads," the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* default navigation schema uses a series of sensors and closed spaces which offers navigational freedom, yet ensures the Blakean narration be told. No hidden buttons need to be clicked. No amount of points must be scored. No puzzles need to be solved. The user must simply engage and explore worlds that are beyond their immediate control. The underlying structure is relatively simple. The spaces are surrounded by a circular, artistically image-textured outer wall. Second, the navigation incorporates the viewers "distance from" and "visibility of" the centerpoint positioned narrative elements or installations within the circular walled space. The next stanza/virtual space emerges based upon the viewer's engagement or disengagement with the narrative element(s) of the current stanza/virtual space. This allows the viewer infinite paths which lead to a narrow goal of seeing and contemplating a single multivalent element which includes the text stanza of the poem. The *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* employs a series of sensors that track the viewer's motion and direction of viewpoint. The primary narrative content is located in the center of the virtual space. Typically after the viewer has entered the center, explored the narrative installation or element(s), gained a knowledge of the installation and exited does the next virtual environment emerge and replaces the earlier one. Subtle changes in sensor combinations keep this effect from being obvious.
9. With the philosophy of a "pathless route" as the default setting, the act of realizing it within a virtual space, a space with potentially infinite paths to follow is a difficult task. How does the viewer travel through a series of virtual spaces in complete freedom and still reach the end of the poem? The difficulty of this task demanded the secondary forward and back button schema be implemented. The different methods of navigating the stanzas create different user experiences and relate to different reasons a viewer would be visiting the space. The default, pathless route, setting subjugates the viewer. They must travel the space and unwittingly see what the narrative dictates they must see. They do not

control their environment; in fact the opposite is true. The environment through lures and walls controls them. Surprisingly, this lack of control seems to further the realistic immersive feeling of the space. Perhaps this is because much of the real world and certainly the Blakean world, is equally beyond the control of the viewer. On the other end of the spectrum, the forward and back button navigation schema demotes the space from environment to interface. The world is now much more at the command of the viewer. Traveling through the stanzas can be immediately realized for no reason other than the viewers' individual whims.

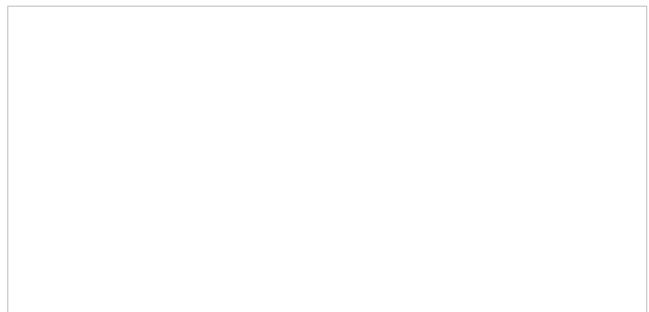
Seven Stanzas: Seven Worlds

10. The Crystal Cabinet's seven stanzas form a superstructure through which the story elements can be interwoven, imagery can be overlaid and deeper themes of Blakean thought can be embedded. Here we can look to McGann's view that "strictly in terms of bibliographical codes, then, poetical works epitomize a crucial expressive feature of textuality in general: that it can be seen to organize itself in terms of various relational segmentations and metasegmentations" (McGann 183). Within the virtual, modalities mix and merge. Virtual text, imagery and animation blend according to classic graphic design techniques as well as cognitive theories behind human computer interaction. Metaphoric images and religious symbols, hidden and obvious, run throughout each stanza producing effects both subtle and dramatic. Combined, these elements become a shocking unified whole in the service of William Blake.

The Maiden caught me in the Wild
Where I was dancing merrily She put
me into her Cabinet And Lockd me up
with a golden Key

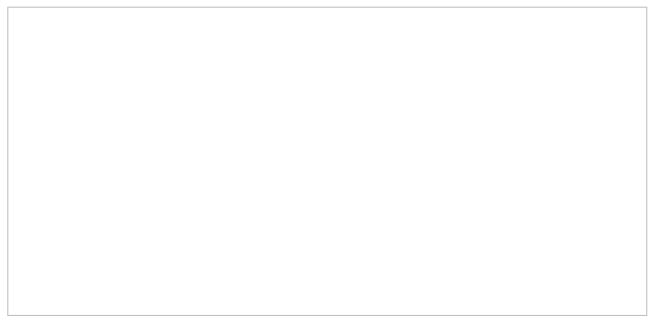


This Cabinet is formd of Gold And
Pearl & Crystal shining bright And
within it opens into a World And a
little lovely Moony Night

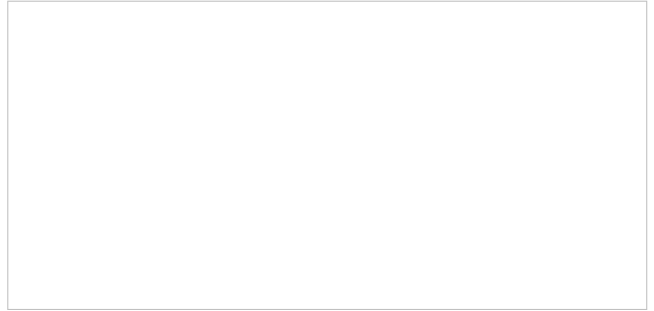


Another England there I saw Another
London with its Tower Another

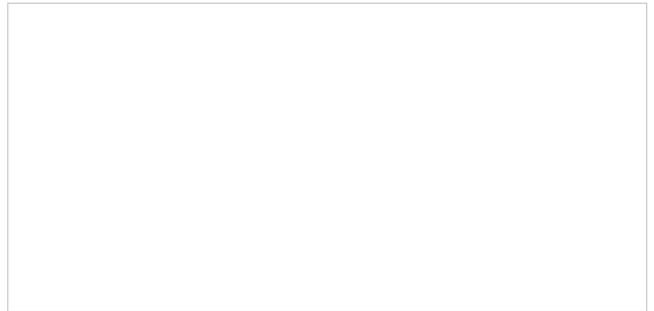
Thames & other Hills And another
pleasant Surrey Bower



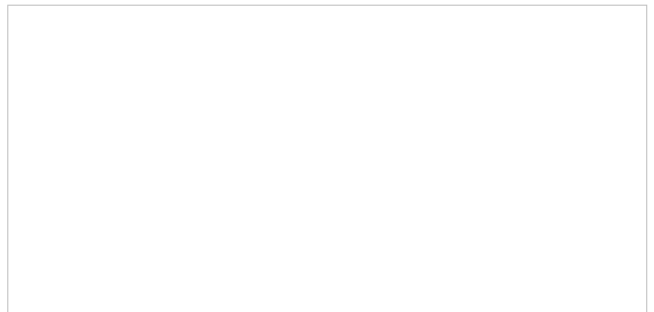
Another Maiden like herself
Translucent lovely shining clear
Threefold each in the other clod O
what a pleasant trembling fear



O what a smile a threefold Smile Filled
me that like a flame I burn'd I bent to
Kiss the lovely Maid And found a
Threefold Kiss return'd

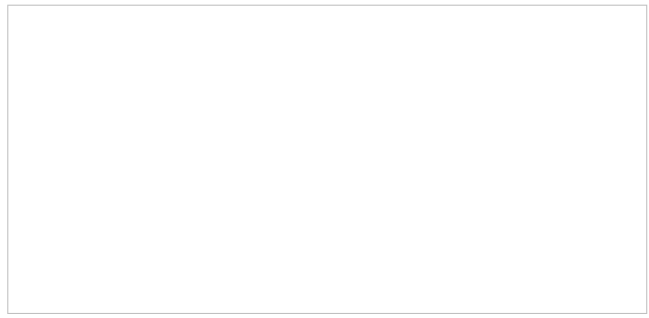


I strove to seize the inmost Form With
ardor fierce & hands of flame But
burst the Crystal Cabinet And like a
Weeping Babe became



A weeping Babe upon the wild And
Weeping Woman pale reclind And in

the outward Air again I filld with woes
the passing Wind



Independent, yet linked through the narrative, color scheme, re-use of objects and the centerpoint positioning of the narrative elements, these spaces produce a uniquely harmonic resonance with the viewer. Shown above through a series of screen captures, the narrative progression into the reality-breaking philosophy of William Blake becomes apparent. The user is thrust out of the "cavern" through a "narrow chink" by the words and images of this Blakean space and into a three-fold vision. When the four-fold vision is sought, the Crystal Cabinet and the space breaks. In the seventh and final stanza, the viewer is returned to the original space in which they entered, the town square in London. This London is exactly the same as the one the viewer first enters, yet with a visionary difference. The viewer's experience has triggered a new philosophically driven perception of London. The city is seen through Blakean eyes.

Structuring, Transitioning and Metaphorical Entrenchment

11. The architecture of the seven environments which demark the seven stanzas of Blake's Crystal Cabinet follows a progression from realistic environment to abstract space. For the viewer, this creates a comfortable introduction to the poem through an easily interpreted space. As the poem continues, the environments steadily grow more abstract, more visionary in nature. The gradual process serves to educate the viewer in stages and enables them to make the cognitive connections needed to interpret the poem despite the growing detachment from the superficial surface qualities of realistic space.
12. The transitions from one space to the next also follow a gradual educational process. The initial realistic space, the town square of London, appears on screen in a dynamic, almost filmic, manner. The town square and the central image of woman with key expands on the x and z axes and then rises up along the y axis. The user is then asked to navigate a realistic appearing space, but, via the filmic introduction, the user understands it to be more than real.
13. The second stanza brings a simple change to the environment: the woman and the key are replaced by the Crystal Cabinet model. Stanza three features the opening of the cabinet. It swallows the user, and there, inside the Crystal Cabinet model, the viewer is placed above and outside of another London. Throughout the remaining stanzas, the transitions grow more abrupt. This is especially true of the transition through the tumultuous fourth, fifth and sixth stanzas. The only element used to ease the viewer's transition from stanza three to four and from stanza six to seven is a grey-toned, stylized image of the horizon that forms the panoramic background graphic in these stanzas.
14. Conceptually, the progressively changing and flexible nature of virtual space matches up well with the text of the Crystal Cabinet and with the thought of William Blake. The viewer enters the space and interprets it through a "narrow chink" of reality. Casting aside reality and exposing the visionary nature of virtual space, the passionate laws that govern human nature are exposed. Floating images, metaphorical objects and dynamic texts are woven within vine-like structures in direct reference to Blake's use of the illustrated page. In the final stanza the viewer returns to realistic space. Yet reality is no longer what it was. The viewer's experience now allows him/her to see a world which naïve eyes

had believed to be stable, entrenched and unyielding, is actually in a state of constant flux. The city moves; the structures of man turn. This motion is powered not by some outside Newtonian force, but by the human spirit and human desire. Beyond the reach of an industrial age, a four-fold vision stands against the science and the notion of progress. This is not to say that science or progress lack value; it is only that which is most important, that which is central to understanding humanity, remains constant. The visual representation of constancy is found in the slowly animating photographic image of our male "stand in" for Blake, which in the first two stanzas is semi-transparently mapped onto the walls of London. His position in the seventh stanza is exactly the same as in the first two stanzas.

15. The objects, images and animations within *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* are an open-ended invitation for the viewer to make his/her own metaphorical connections to the philosophy of William Blake. While the virtual designer's intended metaphoric meanings may not match with the interpreted meanings produced by the viewer, the overall richness of the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* supports a Blakean perspective on the work. The levels of meaning vary from relatively straight-forward constructs such as the image of the woman as representative of the maiden within Blake's text to more abstract comparisons such as the golden key being the equivalent of the poem's male character's genitalia. The Crystal Cabinet itself can be interpreted as metaphor for a woman's vagina. Given Blake's own admission in *Milton* that the "sexual is threefold," the vagina metaphor seems appropriate. In the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* the cabinet is utilized as sexual object and is subtly texture mapped with elements from a naked woman. In the seventh, final stanza the cabinet is laid on its back and metaphorically becomes a womb from which the "babe" is born. Pushing the boundaries of sexual innuendo is the "Surrey bower" in stanza three. Technically, a bower is a depression in the earth similar to, but smaller than a valley. With the sexual nature of the Crystal Cabinet accepted, the "Surrey bower" may also carry a vaginal interpretation. The *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* responds to the duality by overlaying an image of a valley landscape from Surrey, England and compositing it with a lap of a naked woman.
16. The relationships between the religious and the sexual metaphors are strikingly obvious. For example, the images of the maiden often feature a strategically placed apple. Clearly this becomes a reference to Eve, the first woman, the first mother. As Blake's text of the "Crystal Cabinet" doesn't mention Eve or religion specifically, the use of the apple and its potentially implied meaning, that the Crystal Cabinet poem mirrors Adam's fall, is left in the hands, or mouse of the viewer.
17. In the middle stanzas, a rotating Leaf/Flame/Wave object/element is introduced. This object was taken from Blake's *America* where it is colored as a leaf. Seeing the need to represent the three-fold vision and noting that the shape of the leaf also resembled the shape of Blake's flames, a strategy was concocted. The one object can be seen as three elements: Leaf, Fire, Water. To produce this effect the object is rotated and its colors change Leaf (Green), Fire (Red), Water (Blue). Correspondingly seen as Blake's three-fold philosophy that coincides with the three-fold kiss in the poem. Viewers, when asked about this Leaf/Flame/Wave object typically respond that it is a "dinosaur" or an "aardvark." This misinterpretation may seem to be a serious problem as dinosaurs were not a popular subject for Blake, but it is not for the simplest of reasons. Abstract shapes are not typically interpreted until called into question. The viewer had been pulled from the immersive experience and asked – what is this shape? Confronted by a need to answer they reach outward for the nearest compatible form, in this case a "dinosaur" or an "aardvark." Had they not been asked, the object would have remained abstract and through the general rules of visual design still been elementally supportive of the virtual installation. Perhaps after viewing some Blakean imagery within a help window, the three-folded meaning may become clear.
18. The potential to embed meanings that even the most experienced Blake scholar would miss becomes apparent in the first stanza. The vine-like elements in the black fence are taken directly from Blake's

"Holy Thursday" in *Songs of Experience*. The vine-like element in the gold rings that flow through the maiden are taken from Blake's "Holy Thursday" in *Songs of Innocence*. This sets the stage for a Blakean cyclical construction of a person's innocent birth, the gaining of experience through action and for Blake the end goal of regaining innocence. In the first stanza the viewer enters the world innocent, through action gains experience (traveling past the gates of experience) and perceives a goal of a regained and also maintained innocence. In the seventh stanza the male character presented as Blake is, by virtue of love and lost, reborn a "Weeping Babe" and is ringed by the elements of innocence.

19. Loosely speaking, a generic sender-message-receiver model of communication has been utilized in the creation of this space. The primary break from this model stems from the fact that the receiver via the navigation process through the virtual space becomes self-sending. Furthermore any consistent preferences or styles in movement, such as taking short choppy steps, making long flowing arcs, being stuck on walls or even in how narrative elements are approached, creates a singular, viewer-dependent style of texturalizing the messages being sent. This often causes the act of self-sending to be self-reinforcing in terms of the narrative message. The viewer's actions create a visual narrative, similar to that of watching a film, yet in a virtual space, it is individually tuned by movement and action.

Film Connections and Conventions

20. This movement into the unknown of Blakean space pushes the viewer and also virtual developer into new territory. The shock of the new tends to create gaps in interpretation, gaps that damage the narrative power of the work. Second, philosophies, elements and styles of some other medium must be employed to bridge the interpretive gap between the Blakean page and the virtual space. Third, this common medium also serves as a philosophical and creative ground to structure the elements of the narrative. Because of this, part of the process of adapting Blake's poetry into three dimensions begins with film and film theory. Cinema is a multileveled experience, an experience that sets a world of Blakean principles in motion.
21. Film makers accept the mediated nature of their medium. Through shooting, editing and filmic narrative techniques, laws of time/space and the rules of nature bend to the will of the director. The story takes precedence over preserving the reality. Technology allows the filmmaker considerable power to deliver a narrative story. The filmmaker is, within the boundaries of the screen, in complete control of time and space. In contrast, the designer of virtual space is in complete control of space, but not time. Time is in the hands of the viewer. The viewer, through movement, controls the order and pace of the narrative. In this context, a designer of virtual environments uses space to negotiate time with the user. Because of this, every element within the virtual space has a direct or indirect association with time. In realistic looking spaces, pathways and walls directly imprint the designer's concept of time upon a space. The use of boundaries effectively pushes the viewer, while color, sound and animation can be employed to pull the viewer through space. This use of space to push and pull the viewer is, as previously stated, the process through which narrative time is negotiated. On this level, narrative video games and narrative virtual spaces are quite similar.
22. The break from game theory stems from the fact that underlying game narrative is more often than not a narrow goal of salvation achievable by the correct series of mouse clicks. The generic plot line of three dimensional video games allows for simple, almost filmic, conventions—classical narration schema employ strategies for manipulating the viewer's perspective to fit a limited linear story timeline and story duration featuring unrealistic expanses and compressions of time. Unlike a video game's tightly programmed use of space in support of an excessively obvious plot, Blake's work demands a more open way of thinking about spatializing narrative. Blake deftly jumps through time and space, motivated by the desire to have the viewer discover "the universe in a grain of sand." It is this simple

goal, the act of discovery that all the diverse elements of *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* seek to support. Like Blake's own illustrated pages, the complexity of this act is, in some respects, hidden by the unity of the design.

Unifying and Concluding

23. The metaphorical, design and theoretical complexity of the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* is extensive, yet harmonious. The underlying key is simply visual balance and the application of color in accordance with Japanese Color Theory. Impure, unsaturated colors become moderating tones that serve to segment, balance and harmonize the more brilliant colors that run through-out this project. The primary moderating tones used are a simple combination of warm and cool grays. These harmonously colored structures are then organized within a circular boundary and through the consistently centerpointed location of narrative elements. In effect, the x,y,z location of the main elements of the story remain the same. They emerge or vanish from the same general location. The manner of their entrance/exit varies, but these variations are in line with the narrative of each stanza. On the other side of the design spectrum, Blake's three-folded vision harmonizes the virtual adaptation. Like Blake's original work, the overarching theme of innocence, experience and regaining one's innocence lies as a conceptual foundation for the work. Multiple levels of the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* touch upon this point. The ability to envision virtual space through youthful yet experienced eyes is a requirement for its continued advancement.
24. The *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* demonstrates the power of virtual space and the ability to fold meaning and metaphor inside an explorable environment. Finding a philosophical kinship within Blakean perspectives we are able look at the virtual world anew. Finding the future within the past we set a foundation upon an earlier artist, poet, and visionary and set the stage for a greater understanding of the medium. The *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* is not a game; it is poetry that surrounds, a painting become journey, a realization of the philosophy of William Blake.

The work shown is created in VRML, Virtual Reality Modeling Language. A VRML plugin is required, also the RealPlayer plugin.(Experience with VRML is recommended). It is greatly suggested that if you are unfamiliar with VRML that you explore smaller works first. These can be found on Mr. Guynup's website or on the VRML plugin website. Also note that a web3d help menu is accessible on the lower HTML portion of the *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* interface

Audio: RealPlayer - <<http://www.real.com/>>

VRML: Cortona – <<http://www.parallelgraphics.com/products/>>

Virtual Crystal Cabinet (Contact Version) <http://www.pd.org/~thatguy/crystal_blaxxun/index.html> *Virtual Crystal Cabinet* (Cortona Version) <<http://www.pd.org/~thatguy/crystal/index.html>>

Other works by Mr. Guynup <<http://www.pd.org/~thatguy>>

William Blake — Original Author

The majority of credit must be directed towards the continuing power and visionary legacy of William Blake. We are grateful for the ability to use his work and project it forward into the new virtual media.

Steve Guynup — Artist / Programmer

One of the most controversial developers of virtual spaces in the world, Steve's works confront ideas and

issues that represent the bleeding edge of three dimensional design. An eight year veteran in Web3D, he has presented at SIGGRAPH in 1998,1999 and 2000, won awards from Blaxxun and the Contact Consortium, and recently worked with 1996 Ars Electronica winner Andy Best on his Iceberg Project. Currently he is pursuing a PhD in Communication at Georgia State University.

Ron Broglio — Project Advisor

An assistant professor in 18th century literature in Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Communication and Culture, Ron is a boundary breaking scholar who uses new media not to reinvent or reinterpret the past, but to reestablish it. He holds a PhD in Romanticism and Literary Theory from the University of Florida and a Masters in British Literature from Boston College.

Kyle Carlson — Blakean Consultant

Teacher, multimedia artist & poet, Kyle holds degrees in both Physics and English Literature. He has an abiding interest in any aspect of technology that can be used to build community.

Thomas Tulis — Photographer

Painter and photographer, has been living in Atlanta for the past six years. His photographs have been shown and sold from the street corners of New York City to its Museums such as the Museum of Modern Art to the Brooklyn Museum and all places in between, at least on the East coast. His paintings, which are the mainstay of his creative-ness, have garnered him no public, critical, or financial support.

Deidre Lynn Curry — Model

Deidre is a long-time player in Atlanta's art scene. A published poet and respected (and occasionally feared) performance artist she takes her art with her where ever she goes. (Usually to the surprise and delight those around her.)

Jah Wobble — Audio <<http://www.30hertzrecords.com/about/>>

Cast on to the desolate streets of Stepney at 18 and into the nascent Public Image Ltd. (PIL), Jah Wobble was fundamental in shaping the virulent nihilism of punk into sonic and melodic extremes that evoked everything from dub reggae to Stockhausen.

The selections of audio in this project are taken from Wobble's 1996 *The Inspiration of William Blake* CD. It is best described by Paul Johnson's review of the re-released album in March 2001 for Uncut

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Notes

¹ All quotations of William Blake are from David Erdman's edition of *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake*.

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