

# DIAGRAMMATIC WRITING

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Visual Writing  
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## **DIAGRAMMATIC WRITING**

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By convention, this information pretends to a modesty in appearance it does not possess in effect.

The semantic system of graphical relations  
The graphical expression of semantic relations



The first words placed define the space.



## The first words placed define the space.

This is both too obvious to state and so complex that the full exegesis of the act and its implications could take volumes. Artists will always tell you the first stroke defines everything that follows on a canvas, and formal analyses will detail the relations and effects of each mark and subsequent addition. Thus the very writing of this paragraph, under the initial statement, supporting the line with a whole plinth of prose, distorts the single statement above, which asks, actually, to stand alone, showing, demonstrating dramatically, how the area below differs from that above. The subtle balance hangs on an imagined line through the center of gravity of the statement, which on this page would come just about half-way through the word “words”—if we were making axes on which to balance the asymmetry of that statement. Yet, the very writing makes the first assertion into a different argument entirely, one that is discursive rather than declarative. Move the initial statement and note the change in dimensions of the page, its areas of activation and recession. First exercise: placement and its effects. In a flat space, position organizes relations.

Every decision has an effect on every other. Ragged right breathes differently than justified text. Strict disciplines attend to the habits imposed by quadrature. We expect to see lines aligned, in accord with the longstanding decorum of print. These lines behave slightly differently than those in the paragraph above. No judgement or value attaches to these differences. They simply register and have an effect.

Basic principles of graphic design could articulate the shift from the previous page to this one. The act of division, creating upper and lower zones, determining proportions of what lies below and what lies above, makes an intervention in the potential field that is as profound as any other act of creation. The first move, the initiating gesture, the primary action is utterly—and yet only incidentally—profound. Everything that follows is in relation to this initiating act, and yet, nothing is determined by it.

Look at the proportions of the very first page on which the single phrase stands alone. There the line of text is shifted towards the gutter, slightly left of center. If placed at the mechanical center, it would fly off the page. Lower down and it would be oppressed by the mass of space above. Higher up and it would appear too eager, presumptuous, slightly obnoxious in its immediate and pressing bid for attention.

A dilemma occurs immediately. Place the line in the right relation to the margins for itself, as a stand-alone entity, or let it introduce a system of relations that will be consistent throughout. On the previous page, the line has shifted to the left just slightly from where it sat on the page before. The reason? It has a text block accompanying it. The place of the text block, determined by a standard system, will respect the margins on which it depends for its stability.

The space of an apparently static page is a scene of vectors and forces. Stasis is the illusory effect of choices that bring the elements into balance. Any number of solutions will result in equilibrium. Any number will result in disequilibrium. Neither is to be preferred over the other. No moral value attaches to any particular state. These are not design issues, matters of style and proportion. They are issues of rhetorical force. The vectorial tensions of relations among elements of argument. The effects are distinct, discrete, describable, identifiable and can be assessed according to the explicit parameters according to which the organization of elements is created. The ancients knew the rules of proportion, though cultural preferences also embed themselves in the systems of equilibrium and harmony. Symmetrical harmonies produce stability. Asymmetrical conditions produce dynamic equilibrium. The Western tradition has a preference for closed conditions and resolutions. The Tao of the page requires space for entrance and exit, for motion, as on the page opposite.

Continuities are based on expectations as well as formal properties. No properties are absolute, no properties are essential. All is relational.

The first words placed define the space, here moving out of it.

Here the line re-appears here to fulfill expectations of continuity, though it relies on memory of the page before, no longer in view. Associations are made across, by recollection, probabilistically.

The text block is read in relation to the header, in this case it is already named above and thus claimed within an over-arching theme or discourse frame. Though the header serves a navigational purpose as well, helping a reader find a way through the body of the book, it also creates a reference frame by virtue of where it sits on the page.

If the header here were to say, “Formal logic and layout conventions,” the contents of this page would likely be read as an example of those terms. The header’s assertions direct the reader towards a particular understanding or question, appeal, or protest against that understanding. They are powerful pointers. The text block can push back against the header, contradicting it with its own assertions. This block of text is not about the role of the text block. Or so it would like to claim.

The familiarity of the text block renders its conventions almost invisible. How do the paragraphs serve their rhetorical function as subdivisions within the argument? The white tab is a signal, a simple code term that breaks the argument into chunks.

Page decorum tends to follow established rules. The rules of sequence and proximity relations are so deeply internalized that the compositional act follows their advice without coercion.

- 1) Numbered sections have their own autonomy and not.
- 2) The modularity of these units, though ordered, allows them to operate without clear segues.
- 3) Any statement can be put into a numbered sequence.
- 4) A final line is not a conclusion, just an addition.

Continuous reading and discontinuous reading occur in the same text spaces. Format does not determine reading but does

structure the possible intervention. For instance, here we have two columns juxtaposed to each other. They might be read in sequence, and have an orderly relation to each other set by the left to right convention of reading. But they might also be sitting next to each other as rivals for attention, each introducing its own subject and each vying to outbid the other for the top billing on the page. The left hand column will triumph, but with the idea that some of the text might profit from the neighborly proximity of another text. What do these two texts say to each other? How do they read across the space between the columns? They are not in an explicit dialogue. They are not in an actual competition, and yet, like all elements on a page, they are in an agonistic struggle with each other.

This column wants its independence from the other. But can it manage to assert enough independence to actually mount a new argument? The tendency will be to link whatever is said on the left to whatever appears on the right. The force of proximity is extremely strong. But it is not absolute.

The gap in the column suggests that what has been excised might be the section that is on the opposite page. Graphical arguments make their case by virtue of form, format, and visual features, all part of the dynamic system.

This is a subordinate text. It sits in an inferior position. It cannot claim any authority over the texts above, except by an act of subversion. That act would involve contradicting the text above, stating that the whole argument about juxtaposition has no value, at least, not compared to the way commentary in a subordinate text does. Subordinate texts like to un-

The power of proximity can be demonstrated in the negative by introducing a distant text block whose connection to those on the opposite page has to be carefully calculated. Is this outlier a rogue text? Or is it related to the others? How should it be considered?

dermine their superiors by suggesting alternatives, features of argument that might be considered but were not, or could be. They are the not-so-subtle realm of not-quite-repressed mutterings, or, also, in another mood, play the role of helpful other voice.

*(The nothing that is here produces a certain anxiety, questions about what could, should, might be present. Expectations abound. We are caught up short by the blank space, or would have been, more so, without this aside.)*

The space of a page is finite<sup>1</sup>. We conceive of its capacities according to a limited economy of space. The conventions of book format support multiple functions: presentation or inscription (what is there, literally); representation (that which is presented by the surrogates of inscription); navigation (wayfinding); orientation (within the space of the whole); and reference (the thick world of associations, links, connections). We might also describe internal play, the field of associations structured within the spaces of the work. Argument spaces, commentary, summaries, abstractions of essence and topic--these are all structured in the paratexts.

Finitude is illusory. The physical space limits are measurable, and according to a fixed metric, assured. But the associative field within the text creates endless opportunities for branching or

breaking the line to follow lines of thought.  
breaching the code of compositional conduct.

We might even find that

associations with a single word begin to tunnel through

the field of the text. Our solid

funnel      tumble

print formats refuse to let us

fennel      thimble

indulge in such proliferations

fumble      nimble

of meaning potential. But the

bumble      able

spaces of the screen, with the

burble      babble

capacity for multiple arrays in

mumble      battle

the design, might allow them if we learn to write with the

muddle      blather  
the chain of associations proliferates endlessly from any point

fuller feature set of n-dimensional composition. But before

1. A distinction between practical finitude and conceptual or theoretical infinitude should be kept in mind. But for the purposes of legibility and basic functionality, the physical, literal page is finite.

The practice of subordinating footnotes to the lower position on the page has the virtue of letting them take up as much space as they like. The assertion of the note, when it becomes more than a reference, and begins to structure arguments and counter-arguments, can be quite aggressive.

The performances of the paratext have their own unruly potential and the extent to which this has been played with over many decades is evidence of the purposes served -- serious scholarship, extensive commentary, elaboration, controversy, and play.

getting distracted by the potentialities of the screen space, some discussion of the specifics of diagrammatic relations: Begin with basic principles, the primary moves. These are the moves of position. This paragraph is above.

This statement is below:<sup>2</sup> The first principles involve relative position. All positions are relative.

Next to \_\_\_\_\_ can be far from \_\_\_\_\_  
or close to.

Our associations of value change according to proximity and its affordances. Diagrams optimize the efficiency of proximity. They spatialize semantic values into a legible graphical system.

The other primary moves are inside of and outside of and have to be demonstrated this way:

This is outside of what is inside, this is outside of what is inside, this is outside of what \_\_\_\_\_ is inside, this is outside of what is inside, this \_\_\_\_\_ this is inside \_\_\_\_\_ is outside of what is inside, this is outside of \_\_\_\_\_ what is inside, this is on the outside of what is on the inside and this is the end of what is outside of what is inside and so by definition remains outside.

Presented in this manner the circumstances of inside/outside seem neutral, declarative, presentational, and without any sort of pejorative effect. In the same way, next to, far from, close to, beside, and in parallel seem to be neutral, more or less, even if we acknowledge that above and below carry a charge. Above always

2. The space between is not neutral. It is definitive and functional. So is the space between the header and the line, and between these and the text block. The margins are highly charged spaces since they keep the text on the page, away from the gutter, and from falling into the surrounding worldspace. White space differentiates wordspace from worldspace.

manages to assert a claim of metaphysical superiority, as if it were of a higher order, while below takes the role of support, solid ground, the foundation and/or actuality of a thought form. None of this has any grounding in anything but a relational system, but within the system of relations, all values are produced. This is true whether the system is bounded or unbounded, finite or infinite, since the snapshot of perception collapses the wave form potential of any field in the moment of viewing.

We can refine the simple declarative and descriptive approach to primary moves with a nearly infinite number of attributes. What is the affective quality of a header placed high, what aristocratic disregard does it display in its distance from the mundane texts below? How does the marching steady pace of a text block hold its own against the slithering, sometimes sneering, snarky, or otherwise undercutting character of the footnote?

\* \* \*

**How are the monumental forces of a bold first line** working in the beginning of a new section of text? What proclamation of strength and conviction come through the shift of tone? Attributes indeed. And they are as nuanced and inexhaustible as the inflections of voice and subtleties of gesture. But the refinements of spatialized rhetoric have a gestural and performative specificity that is not limited to the effect of nuance. The agonistic struggles that put each element into a battle on the page, or their alternative, the calming effect of apparent harmonies and equilibriums, these are the results of dramatic actions that are largely effaced, occulted, in the final layout, but might be recovered as surely as shape grammars and geometries recover the history of their graphical expressions.

Juxtaposition pretends to parity. In actuality, the urge to competition belies this illusion. A strong tension between either/or struggles with the equally developed impulse towards both/and.

Juxtaposition pretends to parity. The sheer force of the space between in relation to the condition of alignment creates an unresolvable situation. These are not the same text.

This is a demonstration of a spatial move that creates an elaborate hierarchy. Each of the subsequent lines steps down to suggest an embedded relation to the ones above.<sup>3</sup>

By changing the size the type at the same time as changing the indentation of the line, the sense of subordination increases.

With each indentation, the text appears to be at a more detailed level of argument, as if the overarching spatial reach of the first lines were an embrace within which the finer exposition occurs.

If a bit of extra space is introduced between the chunks of text, paradoxically it increases the effect of dependence and autonomy.

By letting a chunk come into its own, have its own space, it can articulate its relation to the whole more clearly than when too tightly stuck to the sections above. Once this space is present, the impulse is to go back and introduce it into all the previous sections.

Instead, let the process of stair-stepped diminishment continue.

Each subsequent layer of detail appears as part of a tree structure.

If the lines were numbered, their subordination would be mechanical.

Returning to a higher level signals that that the argument is progressing by picking up the earlier issues once again.

Returning to the first level at the end produces a sense of closure, like a final bracket. But in fact, this is ongoing.

3. This is not a graphic design manual. If it were, the crowding effect in these lines and the ones that follow immediately after would be corrected. But the uncomfortable effect of proximity in the first lines is meant to demonstrate just that.

The act of embedment can be put into contrast with that of enframement. The affect of enframement can be read in various ways, as an act of protective custody, one in which the embrace of a text by another is used to hold the secondary text in a position of security, or it can be read as one of the first acts in an move to surround and possess a text, the imperial impulse of one text towards another. Enframement has an opening to it, and the text that is surrounded by the strong arms of the enframing text can still move, if it wants to, back into an autonomous space, or so the the structure suggests. Held in an embrace? Or captured?

Making a change in the size relationship will alter the dynamic force of the frame. Because this type is smaller in point size than that of the text it enframes, it appears as a secondary order. By making use of multiple variables, hierarchy of size combines with relative placement and position to alter the perception of primary and secondary importance. Which text is serving the other in the expression? How did that happen? If this were a manuscript page, the act of enframing would betray a historical process, and the frame would likely appear to have followed after the first text had been written. On the printed page, some degree of planning for the entire event of the space suggests that the enframing text already existed and is being put into a relation of convenience for connections within the content.

This is an enframed text, sitting comfortably within the space carved out from the larger text. This might be a comment on the text which surrounds it, or it might be an aside, an insertion, an illustration of a point, or a detailed note on an idea or issue. Not a footnote, and not a marginal one, but one that is part of the whole.

A larger point size makes a claim for the authority of the statement made, and this chunk of text might even appear to dominate the enframing text. **Might.**

Elegance makes its own contribution to the rhetorical force of any page. No more clumsy pages. From embedment to entanglement is a shift of phase, but also, suggests that the relation of elements to each other is multivalent. An embedded text has a hierarchical structure, making use of the position of the lefthand margin as a ways to organized relations among elements of an argument, or, to signal that a story line is opening within an already existing line.

In this demonstration of embeddedment, a narrative begins to unfold, or an argument is made, within which:

An item or mention in the argument turns into an area of discussion itself, demanding its own definition as a space inside of the first frame. But that frame also opens to:

A discussion of a record or reference that has its own unfolding, and a whole set of points and figures, tropes and images, ideas and points that are made within a fully autonomous zone.

But a detail in that argumenet above suggests another subject, also bidding for attention as a separate conversation, discourse, digression, inquiry, and so this level opens as another self-referential arena.

When a topic comes back into play, the margins and point size return to a previous spot, and might pick up the record or reference that had an unfolding above. Both echo/resonance and continuity are signalled by the alignments.

Another detail or a compelling element of argument or narrative might appear at any moment, extending the engagement with the discussion opened earlier, and making a compelling intervention in the forward momentum of arguments at the higher levels.

Some arguments continue to unfold throughout the work and their arc can be tracked independently, simply by following the sections according to their various alignments. The shell game of telling through discourse structures embeds one layer within another while respecting their relative autonomy. Associations leap levels, connecting virtually, not through graphical expression. Associations are provocations fulfilled.

Entanglement is less hierarchical than embeddment.

*In a condition of entanglement, one text does not have to be smaller than the other, and when it is, then the sense of its secondariness is immediately established. This text might suggest that the role of refutation, objection, agreement, expansion, extension, entanglement is mere commentary, exposition without any relation or any of an infinite number of other positions.*

*to the text into which it is inserted. However, the opposite is true.*  
Entanglement complicates a text.

*This text makes it difficult to read the first text on its own.*  
Other approaches to entanglement might involve the in-

roduction of alternative texts (tasks) or forms of contra-  
*Puns and homonyms entangle the text on the axis of substitution. But their parenthetical placement moots/mutes the impact.*  
diction into the field of textual production (promotion).

## At first glance, the pull quote seems unable to

As the multiple levels of text begin to work into and out

of each other, the concept of entanglement becomes

The terms of entanglement are closely related to  
more and more evident. The relation of one text to an-  
those of associational and permutational operations.

other and each text to many and all others inside a work

The variants proliferate internally, by virtue of sug-  
and outside creates a fully entangled field. If the full ef-  
gestion, as surely as they connect any extant text  
fect of embeddment is to produce tensions from within a  
with the possibilities of other lineages. The interlin-  
field of textual play, then the full effect of entanglement is  
ear entanglement enacts its associations as an over-  
to connect any single text to the matrix of all others.  
lay whose proximity is virtual and literal.

If a text attempts to stand alone, announcing itself merely by appearing on the page, then what are the chances that it will be left without interference? Almost nil. The force of attraction of one text to another practically generates commentary, as if the need to intervene, contravene, make a statement on any other statement were contained within the text.<sup>4</sup> A seed of controversy, or at the least, dialogue, is contained in any statement, merely by virtue of having been made.<sup>6</sup> Its assertions, however mild, are as evident as the shape of the block on the page, which says, I begin here and end there, which has to be a fiction, of sorts, because no boundedness can sustain itself.

The act of indentation, of beginning again with the whole, makes an initial nod towards the indebtedness of engage with entangling propositions.<sup>5</sup>

any element to another. The dependencies of forms upon each other is a principle of the relational nature of the system within which the elements appear on the page.

This is another section, and refers itself to the pre-existing sections by conforming to the habits established. The shape of the text respects the need for gutters and margins, but the simple march of lines across the sheet claims space according to regulations disciplined to show their decorum. The single interruption on this page shows that another discourse exists elsewhere with continuities

4. Once again the lower depths, pushing upward, crouching down, doing both simultaneously, register their presence as a counterforce. Easily ignored, in their small scale and lowly place, they are also a site that attracts the eye, as if their diminished scale performed (and it does) an act of relative concealment. The beneath-ness of the space in which notes operate makes them appear insignificant but fraught, full of a pent energy that is compressed into this tight articulation. These lines become too long, too difficult to read, and yet, command a scale change in attention.

5. Introducing a note at a larger scale threatens the consistency of discourse. Where is that number? In what text stream does it belong? Does it rupture the continuity of the text block, again reinforcing the force of the call-out?

announced by size and placement. These are print conventions, unmodified by the infinitudes of screen space, still working within the strictures of aesthetic rules developed for metal forms, solid, justified, locked up, and then

## The disruption introduced by a line of

made into conventions for phototypesetting and digital production.<sup>7</sup> We think along these lines, literally, in part because the lines are so insistent, regular, regulated, and familiar.

But how much space do these large lines take up? What space is it? Are they on top of the text block? Inside of it? Coming in as if running from one sheet to another with no regard for where they land or sit in the midst of the page? They seem imposed, imposing, imperious almost, even if they are meant as an aid to reading, a way to read without reading the bulk of the text. Large size proclaims its own importance, very directly, and the effect of these text is effected by the space it claims. This would appear to be self-evident.

large statements is to render the rest of the text a background statement. What alternatives, if any, can be imagined? How might the text behave otherwise?

7. Other conventions are available, other examples abound. They come from the rich inventory of analogue technologies and the as yet unexplored potentiality of the digital. The force of enfolding, and unfolding, of arrays and axes of entry and organization, the lines of display, calculated and computed, the analytics of large scale processing, all of these are the stuff of digital spaces with their n-dimensionality. The dimensions of page space are more expansive than hot type could manage, now the legacy designs can be informed by new technological possibilities.

What might those alternatives be? How would they stage their presence within the scene of the page? What dynamic force will they bring to bear?

*Marginalia are the gadflies of discourse, the directives, the instructions on reading and the goad to critical thought. They enter the page like darts, small interventions, pebbles on the road.*

They can't be allowed to march into the territory at will, as if they have a right to any opportunity they wish to claim. Or can they? At first it might appear they will go away, but they stay, persist, adding a subtextual dialogue and confusion to the whole. The text begins to fragment, pulled outward from the coherent center, acknowledging the off-centering effect of a counter discourse. How many centers of gravity begin to appear in the work? Where are the pivot points in the graphical space? What are the areas in which the concentration of energy accumulates?

*Outward? Or is the directional emphasis of commentary actually rereading of a text. Look again at what is being said, ask a question of the text, read the terms "dialogue" and "confusion" differently, as if the word "profusion" should have appeared in the place of the second term, making a positive rather than pejorative statement.*

*The act of insertion, or the attempt, is an insidious assault on the edges that keep a text bounded. The marginal note has already pressed into the block, pushing itself against the body of the text. It creates a distinct pressure point, and the threat of breaching the boundary is visibly present in the way the lines position themselves against the outer edge. The amount of charge in the thin space between the marginal note and the text block is intensified way beyond that in other areas of the page. A line of contestation is made at the interstices.*

If we assign a value of pressure to the bits of text that appear in the margins, and then add them together, do they outweigh the specific gravity of the central text block? Not a matter of eye-movements or reading habits, but of the actual impact of elements in a system.<sup>8</sup> What has the most dynamic force? Where is the weight centered? Where would the axis of balance be if it had to be drawn? Or would a series of vectors be necessary to show how the pressures of marginalia are creating their own intervention in the text. In this instance, proximity is intensified by a sensation of insertion, penetration, of text trying to break the boundaries of another text or attach to it. Only the smallest shell of white space protects one zone from another.

8. Mechanics of reading are an after-effect, constitutive of the text as a production, of course, but this discussion is meant to acknowledge the structuring principles of effects in the diagrammatic system of writing.

To suggest that linearity is a tyranny seems naive and unnecessarily melodramatic. Modes of inscription and modes of textual production are not isomorphic. What we do not manage, on account of our techno-inflected habits, is reimagining the inscriptional activity. What is

meant by this is demonstrated by a simple example, the possibility of a branching text, one that follows alternative or at least sprouting routes within the argument. But these thought streams is that a line of inquiry could open at any point within a text, making a subdivision that could, in principle proliferate endlessly, spinning out their own developments.

That odd aporia in the text above is profoundly disturbing. Unfamiliar, the odd blank feels like a pressure point from which text has been evacuated, pushed to the edges, made to move aside. The continuities of the branched argument are not immediately clear. Alternative organizational strategies have to be found. Imagine a form called a *bridge line* arches from one position to the next making a space for subsidiary relations to be expressed. Once the different zones are established, they are also free to indulge in their own activities. a new argument branch that complements the first while allowing it to develop independently. In a dynamic folding screen space, the number of bridge line arguments is, in principle, infinite.

Embedment reappears, as a technique of proliferation that opens subsidiary arguments, making refinements or interventions.

Alternative tales make arrangements to be identified by their position

The return of the bridge line will not return the text to an illusory

The power of indentation, like the force of hierarchical organization, is everywhere apparent, working with the calculated measure of its own rules.

*A block of citation, in this case, excised only from air and without a pedigree of any kind, immediately subordinates itself. The position it occupies is secondary, serving a purpose to the first text. No dispute.*

Once the citation is finished, closed, broken off, it still remains visibly conspicuous. Other modes of citation, particularly in-line citation, such

will need to find their own way to claim and use space.

as a reference to *Another Work*, by an author who will be known

to some and not to others, an authority or not, whose *Earlier Work*, like that of a different author, is relevant to the discussion, if you believe that *A Certain Title* should be cited with frequency. But the bibliographical aspects of this exercise are not the point. The spatial field of associations and references to which citations point makes the nodal dynamism of the textual field highly volatile. By the time we are this far down on the page, the chances of significant contributions are diminished.

Introducing the impossibility of parallelism, of texts that run next to each other with equality, shows how complicated spatial relations can be. What would be the structure according to which equity could trump hierarchy? What does “next to” mean? Not juxtaposition.

*Is this text parallel to the one below it? Or does it dominate?*

*Is this text parallel to the one above, or subordinate?*

**Does making a text bold cancel its parallel status?**

What if nothing can ever be parallel in textual practice?

state of completion.

Those gutters, obedient, subservient, essential. Without them the text falls apart, into a state of chaotic disarray. But they are also scenes of intervention, sites that give a glimpse of the continuity of the quires, the basic integrated structure of the book as a form.

Gutters are essential, guarding the text block from disintegration and disappearance. They are part of a physical system, but also, a spatial order in which the gentle tensions of boundaries engage in a constant vigilance. When the space of the gutter is invaded, a fundamental violation of spatial containment occurs. An energy leak, seepage, a drain away from the space of attention, is created.

**Organization and order** designate learned behaviors, not transcendent values. two terms that want to appear interchangeable. Why?

Subdivisions of discourse need not taunt the extant conventions, but they might, just by appearing so close.

become tedious. The mind wants to expand

To expand is to breathe, rethink, the terms of inscription. What expansions happen when the annotating text begins to surround the primary text and take over from the dominant order? Soon we come to understand that

**exercises of free space writing begin to open in the field.**

the dynamic spaces of pages have no particular limits to them, so long as (old fashioned) legibility is maintained. After legibility, who cares? Here the scale change insinuates a voice into a page, making the surface porous. That was the idea. With enough persistence, intervention will come to pass for invention and then be normalized. The idea of rapid scale change and continual irruption/interruption will become a method, a process, in which exterior sources and interior dialogues, external conventions, and internal reflections, cross each other in the virtual space of producing meaning from the text.

**Assertions based on size, like those grounded in duration, are indisputable. However, their value should not be conflated with their effect.<sup>9</sup>**

9. Go back to the very first page. Consider the ways in which effects are the result of basic principles. Placement creates divisions that cannot be refuted, but each addition modifies the weight and force of any spatial property or division. Nothing stands alone. The notion of cross-reference is taken to be textual, but should also be understood as graphical, dynamic, in short, diagrammatic. Keep the terms of diagrammatic operation in mind. A diagram is an image that works. It spatializes semantic value, using the graphic features of spatial organization to express the semantic value of relations. Diagrammatic reasoning argues for graphic organization as a meaning producing system, one in which the organization of elements must be read in relation to each other. The complexities that can multiply inside the system are infinite, and the ways these structure values can either be articulated ad infinitum as well, or reduced to a few key principles: a set of moves that are primary, and the notion of inflections and attributes. Each configuration is specific. That degree of particularity will always escape the reach of a fixed nomenclature. Classification is always partial, incomplete, an open set, expanding by example.

Once a line starts a page

*do all the others cower in response? Or compete?*

What if

*a line is not a statement but a point of departure?*

*any single statement is a cover for a larger discourse?*

*every statement made takes up the space of one not made?*

*each selection is a route into the substitutions it enables?*

*every combination is waiting for syntactic rework?*

What if the spaces of the page opened to show all the alternatives and variations, sources and materials, references and combinatoric possibilities latent within it? Not because options are superior to choices, just because exposing the processes of compositional selection would show ways meaning is produced across elements, not just by them. Sources are radiant, not hierarchical, in their arrays.

If the multiplicity of sources is to be displayed, the question of their position in relation to the text becomes pressing. Are they inside of the main text? Or do they actually live out- side of the spaces of the page. We cannot imagine they are already text, or they will ingested into the very strangest the idea of the shapes. Getting the prior” of a text so-called “inter- could be readily facilitated using dimensions of a screen, where a drilling “into” a work might be done by entering into a series of internal frames that open each within the other, or, use links and bridge lines to make connections within the discourse or to its surrounding field. How to distinguish acts of opening from those of surrounding? A gentle from a hostile act?

A text that ingested another text and then was itself ingested. The seriousness of this is not to be avoided.

**m i g h t**  
to have  
of condi-  
and rela-  
**e t h i c s**  
administers justice, redress, or allows for complaint under these circumstances.

A fully surrounded text, with few points of egress, none, really, and a desire to survive, in spite of its circumstances.

**W e**  
need  
a code  
tional  
t h a t

Another attempt.

When a text purports To be in dialogue with  
to be in dialogue with another text, can both be  
something other than themselves or are they an  
itself? other entity?

Two monologues written and put next to each other are not a dialogue, no matter how cleverly they are written, even though they may be *in* dialogue by virtue of their proximity. The stretching reach of this text gives a platform to the pair above without being dominated. How would an actual dialogue be created? Sequential statements are the convention, but in spatial terms, a dialogue is an intertextual move, a play in which any element is in a relation with another. This block references the others on this page by its placement, the point size of the type, its dimensions. It is in more active dialogue with the lines above than those across the gutter. If I add a note, the dialogue will leap to the bottom of the page, jumping over everything in between.<sup>10</sup>

The space leapt over. Not left.

10. Notes are always elements of dialogue, as are marginalia and other commentary. They pull apart the obvious and apparent unity of any text and demonstrate its porousness, the incompleteness of boundaries, the impossibility of finitude. These are textual principles, but in a diagrammatic system, the closed-ness of the whole folds in on itself. The elements of the graphical organization are defined within the limits of the structure in which they participate, even if, as forms and formats, they are dialogic with respect to a larger field of objects and structuring principles.

What hasn't been said? What still could be made explicit? What are the extenuating versions of a text? How are they enabled by diagrammatic operations? If a text is fraught with conditionals, might it display these with proliferating resonance? Grids and table, trees and branches, hierarchies of parent and child relations, node and edges, rays and arrays, the multiplicity of spatial and figural tropes suggests all manner of possibilities. Reading back from effect into semantics offers its own routes into and out of formal imaginings. Closeness and distance are relative conditions.

Look, here, for instance, **at the way this has a life of its own.** Above all the apparently static page must be understood as dynamic. The diagrammatic workings of

relations across elements is crucial the the emergent and contingent identity and operation of any element or feature in the system.

Commentary has a life of its own, as well, and this can be refined, delicate as the nuances that begin to subdivide, or as bold as an actual shout.

Negate the thoughts, or let them be undermined by a **A life? What life?** Let the act of negation, like any act of predation be enacted

secondary text. One statement need not follow another, instead, let them quarrel on the page. Struggles for primacy.

In the evidently dynamic arena of digital display, diagrammatic features latent in the space of a print page can be re-activated. Some of these come from other analogue traditions, such as the flexible scale and What is a life? What is the "this" that claims it has a life within a text. Whose will determines the direction to be followed when we know the genetic life of texts is almost as inevitable as the unfolding of a zygote.

writing spaces of manuscript. Others will be enabled by the refresh, rework, drop-down, scale change, array-enabled displays as yet undeveloped as conventions of compositional practice. We compose largely according to the rules of display we internalize in advance of writing now to be understood differently, not as arrangements, but as movements and forces in a system of relations. Exactly what those relations are and how they

The terms of attachment are readily apparent, but those of ennuui and anxiety, perhaps less so. What makes one text long for another, arrange for an approach, strategize intimacies?

When a subargument takes up residence within the spaces of an extant text, then the questions of authority and triumph are immediately apparent. Is this a comment or the start of a takeover? A nod to the reader or an assault on a text? Which text? No autonomy no fixed primacy.

work and will work remains to be seen. For now the embrace of operations and return response of operations is acknowledged as fundamental to the basic context / contest within which the work of textual play is produced. In a fully dynamic field, asides move to

the center, the margins may emerge as a main theater of expression, the order of any hierarchy may be rearranged in an instant to suit a new regime, and the structuring activity of relations may alter. The principles of vectorial force within relational systems remain.

through spatial maneuvers.

The final line on the page, another fiction, as if an ending were possible.<sup>11</sup>

11. Finality another obvious illusion.

## Appendix:

After demonstration, exposition.

### The primary moves (gestures, not arrangements):

Placement: position as division, act of distinction

Relation: the relativity of all things, agonistic struggle, vectorial force

Each other element: the system unfolds/enfolds

### Attributes and refinements (not just nuance and inflection, but gestural specificity):

Embedment: hierarchical frames of reference, stepping inward

Entanglement: interlinear or spatially complicated conditions

Embrace: act of protection or aggression

Enframing: partial to full enclosure

Surrounding: higher level of aggression, possession

Subordination: spatial superiority and inferiority

Domination: another power move

Complement: attempt at parity

Parallelism: attempt at dualism and dialogue

Shadow: exposing latent tendencies

Support: providing foundation function

Undermine: undercut

Negation: extreme attempt at undermining

Engagement: exchange

Attach: connect, sometimes drive by desire

Depend: attachment with issues

Overlay: obvious

Obliterate: heavy overlay

Extenuation: some/any conditional refinement

The list could go on. The attributes and refinements of gestures are unlimited, though the spatial moves are limited in type to the set of relative positions possible in the graphical system: above, below, next to, behind, in front of, on the way to, and the various degrees of embrace, surround, support, juxtapose, interlineate, and attach.

The apparently static organization of the page space is always read as a set of vectorial forces in play. We recover the history of events on a page in the same way we recover any generative production of form.

### Bibliographical elements:

- Statement: text block, declarative in its presence
- Note: explanatory
- Commentary: dialogic or antagonistic, rarely indifferent
- Reference: dynamic branching, outward reference, or internal
- Branching alternative: optional text
- Bridge: continual text
- Header / footer: pointers and labels, sometimes frames

In a dynamic frame space, digitally networked, the primary moves are each complemented by secondary moves:

- Opening
- Linking
- Dropping down
- Dripping
- Sliding
- Enlarging
- Diminishing
- Scrolling
- Drilling
- Bridging
- Closing

The features of motion and rate of temporal and spatial change animate the field of graphical expressions in a networked environment. The apparently dynamic space is an extension of the apparently static space, not a different order of graphical expression and not a distinct system, but one that takes the latencies of the apparently static and activates them according to the “real time” illusion of perception or other rates of change. The basic functions/roles of graphical expression remain: presentation, representation, navigation, orientation, reference, association.

The rhetorical force of diagrammatic expression can never be reduced to absolutes, stable entities, or autonomous effects. The relational system of diagrammatic writing is always emergent and conditional, its values relative, its production of effects inexhaustibly variable and specific.

More for analytics than navigation, a way to see the contents of the project in another view.

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- anxiety 10
- argument 3, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 21
- arrays 11, 19, 24, 26
- assault 20
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- association 6, 11, 12, 22, 29
- attachment 27, 2816,
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- authority 15
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- below 4, 12, 28
- branching 21, 26, 29
- bridge line 21, 24, 29
- citation 22
- commentary 11, 18, 20, 26
- complement 28
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- domination 20, 25, 28
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- effect 3, 4, 23, 29
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- hierarchy 14, 15, 24, 26
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support 3, 28  
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value 3, 12, 13, 23  
vectors 4, 20, 27, 28  
wayfinding 11  
wordspace 12  
worldspace 12

This is a book that is as close as possible to being entirely about itself.

Visual Writing: Documents in Concrete and Visual Poetry

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