

10/30 Some Quotes & Notes

ENGL 5362

Readings

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Readings

Brooke's (2009) *Lingua Fracta*

Arrangement/Pattern

"According to David Weinberger (2002), the first step in acknowledging the different space(s) of the Web is to shed the metaphor of the container. 'Real-world space is a pre-existing container in which the things of the world exist,' he explains. 'Web space is created by the things in it'" (p. 95).

Note: I would disagree with Weinberger's (2002) distinction between real/digital in terms of the real existing as a sort of a priori, acontextual container that orders the things in it. I'd extend the description of the digital, the "web space," to include the "real world." For some reason, this notion of the noumenalistic (looking at you, Kant) virtual is still pervasive. Why do we continue to conceptualize space that is not immediately recognizable materially in a way that is increasingly instrumental, uncertain, and reduced to teleologically to tool, mode, and end-goal? Attention to telos vs. form/techne (latter as becoming).

"Many weblogs now feature tagclouds, but often the clouds only reflect a portion of the blogger's activity, such as keywords from the last 3 months' worth of entries. Such a cloud, then, would change along with the blog, reflecting changes in its author's priorities over time and introducing new readers to [them]" (p. 112).

"...this practice [word clouds] also can be considered in terms of memory because it allows bloggers to see patterns that they are enacting, whether consciously or not" (p. 112).

I'm not hot on blog clouds, but I do find Brooke's idea of using word clouds on a personal level valuable as a pattern-sensing tool and heuristic device. What if we used tag clouds for our own body of work (either the totality of our undergrad, select texts we've produced in other

coursework, or sources we've been using/visiting) as graduate students? How could our construction of word clouds reveal our own interests or goals, and possibly guide us to make connections or pose questions based on our previous work? What if we made these personal word clouds and compared them to our distant reading clouds, and noticed connections with our own interests/goals? What questions could we pose to ourselves as persons viewing scholarly journals and discourse communities from afar, as well as ourselves as users of writing developing our scholarly identities? Through memory of previous work in connection to current work?

And because I like double-brownies: What if we remixed/rearranged our classmates' word clouds using our own approach(es)? What if we did this to our classmates' sites? What if we as a class detailed our individual approaches and had each other apply our approaches to remix our sites (CSS, HTML) and word clouds?

Style/Perspective

"...one of the things that new media interfaces do stylistically is to help us move from the abstracted, single perspective of the reader of a static text or the viewer of a painting to the multiple and partial perspectives necessary for many forms of new media" (p. 114).

"The ability to pore over a static document ... and identify specific features presumes both a catalog of preexisting rhetorical features that can be isolated, as well as a static object from which one can achieve critical distance" (p. 115).

"Perspective is a method for displaying three-dimensional objects and/or scenes on a two-dimensional space. Much like the technology of writing exteriorizes the reader, perspective presumes a viewer whose physical position mirrors the vanishing point" (p. 120).

"...interfaces position us perceptually and ... our sensual experiences of interfaces are often as customizable as our hermeneutic approaches to them" (p. 140).

Thinking about our HTML/CSS website design experiences here. If we're not careful practitioners of a digital rhetoric that re-envision the classical canons ecologically, then we might perceive our HTML/CSS experiences along the linear movement and definition from HTML as "content" resulting from invention, to CSS as "style/form" resulting from the remaining "lesser" canons. To unravel this dichotomy and consider our website/profile/portfolio design using Brooke's ecology of practice, what can we say about how our choices for HTML affected CSS choices, and vice versa? How did our interactions with HTML and CSS engage us in ways simultaneously inventive (proairetically and hermeneutically) and in terms of pattern/arrangement, style/perspective, memory/persistence, delivery/performance? In terms of style/perspective, in what ways is the design of our sites, understood through the notion of interface rather than page, mediated by our discovery of blindspots/vanishing points, of alternate viewing points and user values beyond our own?

Ridolfo and DeVoss (2009)

“The term *rhetorical velocity*, as we deploy it in this webtext, means a conscious rhetorical concern for distance, travel, speed, and time, pertaining specifically to theorizing instances of strategic appropriation by a third party. In thinking about the concept, we drew from several definitions:

1. Rapidity or speed of motion; swiftness.
2. *Physics*: A vector quantity whose magnitude is a body's speed and whose direction is the body's direction of motion.
3. The rate of speed of action or occurrence.”

What does it mean to theorize velocity as power? Power is simultaneously kinetic and potential. I'm thinking of velocity in terms of electricity, a metaphor Bakhtin uses in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* to suggest, I say, toward a triadic conception of language use in ongoing activity. What about power, as Berthoff says when talking about writing not as a single skill but a complex activity, as allatonce? In terms of electrical, there's voltage (push), ohms (resistance), and amperage (flow). I think the velocity Ridolfo and DeVoss (2009) are advocating describes all three at once, rather than just a reductive view of power=voltage as push. I think this is because reducing power to push (into being) suggests a linear progression toward some fixed end. I think rhetorical velocity can best be described, using the definitions above, as paying attention to movement between time-space through circulation and distribution networks (also in flux); the materiality of exigencies, or the tending-toward of actors/actants in various states of becoming mediated by material contexts which are themselves mediated by these networks of becoming; and experiences of these rhetorical interactions, or the mediating affect (speed) of immediate action itself.

What does this all mean for our word cloud projects? Well, I think considering velocity in my reading of Ridolfo and DeVoss (2009) means that our word clouds can be understood as a) artifacts of the distribution and circulation and remix of previous knowledge practices, both in terms of us as grad students in a course, and in the journals as aggregates of scholarly discourse; b) subject to a further state of becoming through continued direction, in our case further use-value beyond our initial looking; and c) mediators of our experience in grad school, in the discipline, in our research interests, etc.

So then I feel we should be asking some questions about further use, both for our distant reading project and for our CSS/HTML:

How did our word clouds/websites and our various approaches to them mediate our understanding of the journals, the discipline(s), the class, our graduate careers, and our identities as scholars and aspiring professionals? In what ways do/did/will we get a sense through these activities, through continued writing (website, for now) of how our approaches and

our choices--as in velocity--will affect various aspects, including ourselves as users of writing, of future activity?

I also scanned the class notes for today, and I noticed some questions about how, still, we might define digital rhetoric, or hypertext. Might we consider our class activities thus far as conducive to a hypertextual awareness of writing?