**Article**

**An Archeology of Fragments**

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External editor: Krzysztof Ziarek

Received: 15 August 2014; in revised form: 18 September 2014 / Accepted: 19 September 2014 / Published: 24 October 2014

**Abstract:** This is a short (fragmentary) history of fragmentary writing from the German Romantics (F. W. Schlegel, Friedrich Hölderlin) to modern and contemporary concrete or visual poetry. Such writing is (often deliberately) a critique of the logic of subsumption that tries to assimilate whatever is singular and irreducible into totalities of various categorical or systematic sorts. Arguably, the fragment (parataxis) is the distinctive feature of literary Modernism, which is a rejection, not of what precedes it, but of what Max Weber called “the rationalization of the world” (or Modernity) whose aim is to keep everything, including all that is written, under surveillance and control.

**Keywords:** parataxis; German Romantics; Modernism v. Modernity; Gertrude Stein; Brazilian Noigrandes Group; experimental typography; concrete or visual poetry

A new kind of arrangement not entailing harmony, concordance, or reconciliation, but that accepts disjunction or divergence as the infinite center from out of which, through speech, relation is to be created: an arrangement that does not compose but juxtaposes, that is to say, leaves each of the terms that come into relation outside one another, respecting and preserving this *exteriority* and this distance as the principle—always already undercut [*toujours déjà destinué*]—of all signification. Juxtaposition and interruption here assume [*de chargent ici*] an extraordinary force of justice.

—Maurice Blanchot “The Fragment Word (1964) [1]
1. Introduction: Romantic Poetics

It is always prudent to begin with a distinction.

On the one hand, there are ruins, citations, aphorisms, epigrams, paradoxes, remarks (Bemerkungen), notes, lists, sketches, marginalia, parentheticals, conversations, dangling participles….

On the other, there is the objectivist tradition of romantic poetics that comes down to us from (among others) Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), for whom writing is less the work of an expressive subject than an arrangement of words that cannot be contained within any genre description, or indeed within any binary relation, whether between subject and object, part and whole, identity and difference, digit and system, beginning and end…. [2].

From Friedrich Schlegel’s “Atheneum Fragments” (1798):

Fr. 24. Many of the works of ancients have become fragments. Many modern works [der Neuern] are fragments as soon as they are written.
Fr. 40. Notes to a poem are like anatomical lectures on a piece of roast beef.
Fr. 46. According to the way many philosophers think, a regiment of soldiers on parade is a system.
Fr. 75. Formal logic and empirical psychology have become philosophical grotesques [3].

Recall Schlegel’s characterization of romantic poetry as essentially unfinished—“forever becoming [ewig nur werden] and never perfected” [4]. Or, much to the same point, his disappointment “in not finding in Kant’s family tree of basic concepts the category of ‘almost’ [die Kategorie Beinahe], a category that has surely accomplished, and spoiled, as much in the world and in literature as in any other” [5].

Imagine incompletion as a desired state of discursive affairs.

Maurice Blanchot: “Let there be a past, let there be a future, with nothing that would allow the passage from one to the other, such that the line of demarcation would unmark them, the more it remained invisible.” [6].

Gertrude Stein: “…the composition forming around me was a prolonged present…” [7].

Almost: no longer, not yet: the entretemps—meanwhile or between—that leaves everything open, as in the white space of a page that interrupts the consecutiveness of such things as sentences, propositions, judgments, arguments, narratives…

Reasoning (putting things together, adding them up): its adversary has always been the anomaly…the random particle…the missing piece…

To be sure, Schlegel’s “fragments” are fairly traditional insofar as they are, like aphorisms, fully integrated predications:

A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated [abgesondert] from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine [Igel] [8].

Or, like pensées, they sometimes extend for several periods, as does his famous fragment on Socratic irony, with its cheerful defiance of the law of noncontradiction:
In this sort of irony, everything should be playful and serious, guilelessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of savoir vivre and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication…. [9].

Defiance of laws is perhaps a condition of fragmentary writing. However, the chief point is that a fragment, whatever its internal arrangement, is not part of any hermeneutical circle, which is, after all, made of links rather than breaks. Think of it (the fragment) as a freak or vagrant, or as part of an amorphous collection of pieces that are not attached to one another (as in a Riemann space) [10].

Elias Canetti: “Keep things apart, keep sentences separate [die Sätze auseinanderhalten], or else they turn into colors.” [11].

2. Hölderlin’s Typography: The Invention of White Space

To put it in a slightly different way, on Schlegel’s theory a romantic poem would be fragmentary on its own terms, as if from the inside out, as in one of the unpublished works of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843):

Zu Sokrates Zeiten
Vormals richtete Gott.
Könige.
Weise.
wer richtet den ict?
Richtet das einige
Volk? Die heilge Gemeinde?
Nein! o nein! wer richtet denn itzt?
ein Natterngeschlecht! feig und falsch
das edlere Wort nicht mehr
Über die Lippe
O im Nahmen ruf ich,
Alter Dämon! dich herab
Oder sende
Einen Helden
Oder
die Weisheit [12].

With Hölderlin, such a random distribution of words across the white space of the page is called “madness”; by the end of the century, with Mallarmé’s Un coup de dès, it is called “art” [13].
Theodor Adorno: “Great music is a conceptual synthesis; this is the prototype for Hölderlin’s late poetry, just as Hölderlin’s idea of song [Gesang] holds strictly for music: an abandoned, flowing nature that transcends itself precisely through having escaped from the spell of the domination of nature [that is, rationality, whose task is to bring everything under control: to put everything in order—and keep it there].” [14].

Following Adorno, one could think of the fragment (as indeed Maurice Blanchot thinks of it) as the achievement of an aesthetics of freedom [15].

Even more than Schlegel’s, Hölderlin’s writing is refractory to any consecutive logic that seeks to reduce the singularity of things to totalities of various kinds. In Adorno’s words, like serial music, “it becomes a constitutive dissociation” (“Parataxis” [14], p. 130).

Just so, dissolution (Die Auflösung) is arguably the watchword of Hölderlin’s thinking, as in his essay “Das Werden im Vergehen (“Becoming in Dissolution”), where Auflösen is something like a condition of possibility for both art and life, as well as the distinctive feature of Hölderlin’s prose (resist now, if you can, the practice of skimming or skipping a long citation):

The new life, which had to dissolve [das sich auflösen sollte] and did dissolve, is now truly possible (of ideal age); dissolution is necessary [die Auflösung notwendig] and holds its peculiar character between being and non-being. In the state between being and non-being, however, the possible becomes real everywhere, and the real becomes ideal, and in the free imitation of art [der freien Kunstnachahmung] this is a frightful yet divine dream. In the perspective of ideal recollection, then, dissolution as a necessity becomes as such the ideal object of the newly developed life, a glance back on the path that had to be taken, from the beginning of dissolution up to that moment when, in the new life, there can occur a recollection of the dissolved and thus, as explanation and union of the gap and the contrast occurring between past and present, there can occur the recollection of dissolution. This idealistic dissolution is fearless. The beginning- and endpoint is already posited, found, secured; and hence this dissolution is also more secure, more relentless, more bold [gesetzt, gefunden, gesichert], and as such it therefore presents itself as a reproductive act by means of which life runs through all its moments and, in order to achieve the total sum, stays at none but dissolves in everyone so as to constitute itself in the next; except that the dissolution becomes more ideal to the extent that it moves away from the beginning point, whereas the production becomes more real to the extent that finally, out of the sum of these sentiments of decline and becoming which are infinitely experienced in one moment, there emerges by way of recollection (due to the necessity of the object in the most finite state) a complete sentiment of existence, the initially dissolved [das anfänglich aufgelöste]; and after this recollection of the dissolved, individual matter has been united with the infinite sentiment of existence through the recollecting of the dissolution, and after the gap between the aforesaid has been closed, there emerges from this union and adequation of the particular of the past and the infinite of the present the actual new state, the next step that shall follow the past one. [Bold type is mine] [16].

In other words, dissolution is life’s mode of existence, but it is not a negative condition; rather, it is “a reproductive act” that generates the temporality “between being and non-being” (…becoming…);
or, much to the same point, it is an always less than final cause that keeps things from standing still, settling down, or closing up—a protean metaphysics with which Hölderlin’s writing achieves a nearly perfect decorum: dissolution as the principle of open form. Think of Hölderlin, and perhaps the German romantics more generally, as pre-theorists of complexity—that is, chaos, turbulence, and Brownian motion [17].

In any event, Hölderlin’s writing, whether verse or prose, is structured like the weather.

3. Typography Replaces Syntax

As is Mallarmé’s Un coup de dés (1897):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Une insinuation} & \quad \text{simple} \\
\text{au silence} & \quad \text{enroulée avec ironie} \\
\text{ou} & \\
\text{mystère} & \\
\text{précipité} & \\
\text{hurlé} & \\
\text{dans quelque proche voltage} & \quad \text{tourbillon d’hilarité et d’horreur autour du gouffre sans le joucher} \\
\text{ni fuir} & \\
\text{et en berce le vierge indice [18]} &
\end{align*}
\]

One has to love the line, tourbillon d’hilarité et d’horreur (“turbulence of hilarity and horror”). Of course, Mallarmé thought of his poem as symphonic rather than meteorological, but as Adorno suggested with respect to Hölderlin’s fragment, complexity (not harmony) is what gives music and poetry, different as they are, their family resemblance (“Modernism”). Here one should consult Kate van Orden’s study, “On the Side of Poetry and Chaos: Mallarméan Hasard and Twentieth-Century Music”—

Much of the “musicality” of Mallarmé’s verse arises from its refusal of the linear and narrative, just as its most radical implications—the coexistence of chance and art—depend on its adoption of open, recursive, and even potentially chaotic structures [19].

—which takes up Mallarmé’s influence upon Pierre Boulez, Marcel Duchamp, and especially John Cage, whose “Empty Words” is a text in which, as in Un coup de dés, typography replaces syntax (and, further, upends the subordination of letters to words):
In his preface to “Empty Words” Cage writes:


4. The Paratactics of Gertrude Stein

Language free of syntax. (Spellcheck: “Fragment. Consider revising.”)

Adorno: “Art that makes the highest claim compels itself beyond form as totality and into the fragmentary.” [21].

Cage was among the earliest of Gertrude Stein’s champions. I think of Stein (along with Hölderlin and Mallarmé) as the first Modernist—the one for whom parataxis became a regulating principle of poetics. The locus classicus is Tender Buttons (1914):

IN BETWEEN

In between a place and candy is a narrow foot-path that shows more mounting than anything, so much really that a calling meaning a bolster measured a whole thing with that. A virgin a whole virgin is judged made and so between curves and outlines and real seasons and more out glasses and a perfectly unprecedented arrangement between old ladies and mild colds there is no satin wood shining [22].

A “perfectly unprecedented arrangement between old ladies and mild colds” is certainly conceivable, but concepts and possibilities require contexts, and contexts depend upon syntax (s is p). Otherwise there is no “aboutness”, as philosophers say [23]. Just so, parataxis foregrounds the “between”: the break, pause, swerve, or stammer that materializes the word in a space (or interminability) of its own [24].

Naturally thoughts fly to Stein’s “Arthur: A Grammar” (1931)—again, avoid the impulse to skip or skim, and ask: How is reading to cope with an arrangement like the following that does not compose but juxtaposes?

Raise which does demean apply in disposition fanned in entirely that a pre-appointment makes nack arouse preventable security of in approach call penalty by ingrain fasten
copy for the considerable within usual declaration with vicissitude plainly coupled of announcement they can pry with a coupled for the attachment in a peculiar disturb in a checking of a particular remained that they fairly come with a calling around for land shatter just a point with all might in fairly distaste just with a bettering of likely as well in effect to be doubtfully remark what is a tomato to the capture do be blindly in ignominy pertain fasten finally in cohesion comply their gross of a tendency polite in recourse of the clambering deny for like in the complying of a jeopardy so soon does interrelate the way meant comply in this not a day called restively complaisant definite just whether it is melodious for the shut of practice that is made with apply clear have it is a couple of their having it make leave about so much better after a minute. It is not of any importance that they like to be very well. A grammar means positively no prayer for a decline of pressure [25].

Interesting the way terms of connection abound in this passage: “fasten”, “couple”, “attachment”, “capture”, “cohesion”, “interrelate”. But for all of that it remains a “declaration with vicissitude”. And whatever one makes of it (“whether it is melodious”), one can still hear Stein’s distinctive whimsy: “…what is a tomato.”

Among other things, as Stein understood, parataxis entails the obsolescence of the comma (“I have refused them so often and left them out so much and did without them so continually that I have come finally to be indifferent to them.”) [26]. The comma, after all, is a structuring device (a “traffic signal”, in Adorno’s metaphor)—but where, in the long paragraph above, would you place a comma without being merely arbitrary, since it is, until the very end, a paragraph without a sentence (and therefore not a paragraph, but a fragment)? [27].

What is a sentence. One in one. One an one. A sentence is a disappointment (“Sentences”, [25], p. 158).

By contrast:

Made at random.

Is random a noun. It is not. It is a pleasure because with because which is an allowance with their and on account (“Sentences”, [25], p. 188).

Sentences and, indeed, regularities of every kind are disappointing because predictable (understanding is predicated upon the resolution of expectations). Whereas “random” is not a noun or adjective or any part of speech but only a word, that is, a pleasure because it is free, a term liberated from the logical and cognitive regimens that normally rule its (your) life. As William Carlos Williams said of Stein: “The feeling is of words themselves, a curious immediate quality quite apart from their meaning, much as in music, different notes are dropped, so to speak, into a repeated chord one at a time, one after another—for itself alone.” [28].

But what is a word when it is just itself? Or, as Johanna Drucker asks: “What is a Word’s Body?” [29].

5. Philosophy Interrupted: A Comic Interlude

Imagine a text made of adverbs. Or—

Totalities—propositions, arguments, narratives, treatises, systems—are serious, and therefore philosophical. By contrast, breaks in a pattern—let me call them “singularities”—are comic.

**A LITTLE CALLED PAULINE**

A little called anything shows shudders.
Come and say what prints all day. A whole few watermelon.
There is no pope.
No cut in pennies and little dressing and choose
wide soles and little spats really little spices.

( *Tender Buttons*, [22], p. 25)

The inclination of critics, as a way of rescuing Stein from decades of ridicule, has been to emphasize her seriousness. John Ashbery, for example, in a review of *Stanzas in Meditation* (1932), likened her poem to Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl* [30]. To be sure, the “voice” of *Stanzas* seems at first very different from that of *Tender Buttons*—neutral, distanced, abstract. Ashbery notes that “[t]hese austere ‘stanzas’ are made up almost entirely of colorless connecting words such as ‘where’, ‘which’, ‘these’, ‘of’, ‘not’, ‘have’, ‘about’, and so on.…. The result is like certain monochrome de Kooning paintings in which isolated strokes of color take on a deliciousness they never could have had out of context, or a piece of music by Webern in which a single note on the celesta suddenly irrigates a whole desert of dry, scratchy sounds in the strings” ([30], p. 250).

A monochrome with certain strokes of color—for example [31]:

I think well of meaning (p. 36).
More than they wish it is often that it is a disappointment
To find white turkeys… (p. 52).

Stanza IX

A stanza nine is often mine (p. 145).
I have lost the thread of my discourse (p. 155).
I am trying to say something but I have not said it.
Why.
Because I add my I (p. 183).
Thank you for hurrying through (p. 217).

But it remains true that *Tender Buttons*, with its ludic juxtapositions, is one of the great comic poems in English:

A ham is proud of cocoanut (p. 49).
Startling a starving husband is certainly not disagreeable (p. 66).
The best game is that which is shiny and scratching (p. 77).

One could pursue these matters by taking note of the “worsening words” of Samuel Beckett’s later paratactic writings, as in *Worstward Ho*: 
What when words gone? None for what then. But say by way of somehow on somehow with sight to do. With less of sight. Still dim and yet—. No. Nohow so on. Say better worse words gone when nohow on. Still dim and nohow on. All seen and nohow on. What words for what then? None for what then. No words for what when words gone. For what when nohow on. Somehow nohow on [32].

Or Joan Retallack’s “ditto Marcel Duchamp? ditto Gertrude Stein?”

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Gravel sounds path. eix-. 4 imported. in ver ted yel low syn tax. use yellow sponge. thought movie. free taboo variant. I don’t think we’ve. leip-. blue caught between .angp arek-.- el Popo. look in mirror Elaine looking at.
i-pronominal stem. meaning of “quickness”. change your body?. developing and abandoning vocabularies [33].

6. Typewriter Poetry

The critic Hugh Kenner associated the advent of Modernism with the invention of the typewriter, which (as in the layout of Ezra Pound’s pages in the *Cantos*) is able to give the white space of the page a third dimension that words and letters *inhabit* rather than simply a surface that their accumulations obscure [34]. And few understood the comic potential of this transformation of the page as well as e. e. cummings:

```
NO THANKS. NO. 13

r-p-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r

who

a s w (e loo ) k
upnowgath

PPEGORHRASS

eringint ( o-

a The ) : l
eA
!p:
S

( r
rlvlnG -gRrEaPsPhOs )
rea ( be ) rran ( com) gi (e ) ngly
,grasshopper; [35].
```

In an essay on “The Open Work of Art” (1955), the Brazilian poet Haroldo de Campos writes: “For Cummings, the word is fissile [divisible]. His poems have as their fundamental element the ‘letter’. The syllable is, for his needs, already a complex material. The ‘tactile modesty’ of that poetic attitude is similar to that of Webern: interested in the word on the phonemic level, he orients himself toward an
open poetic form, in spite of the danger of exhausting himself in the one minute poem, as he faces the hindrances of a still experimental syntax.” [36].

Of course, “NO THANKS. NO. 13” is “language free of syntax”.

As is, for comparison, Charles Bernstein’s “Azoot D’Pound” (1976):

iz wurry ra aZoOt de puund in reducey ap crrRisLe ehk
nugkinj sJuxYY senshl. ig si heh hahpae uvd r fahbeh aht si
gidrid. impOg qwbk tug. jr’ghtpihqw. ray aGh nunCe ip
gvvn EapdEh a’ gum riff a’ eppehone. ig ew oplep lucd nv
atik o. im. ellek Emb ith ott enghip ag ossp heh ooz. ig… [37].

How should one read such a poem? On this question it is useful to follow Walter Benjamin’s “Program for Literary Criticism” (1930): “Good criticism is composed of at most two elements: the critical gloss and the quotation. Very good criticism can be made of both glosses and quotations. What must be avoided like the plague is rehearsing the summary of the contents. In contrast, a criticism consisting entirely of quotations should be developed.” [38].

A typewriter poem like Bernstein’s offers little to gloss—indeed, as semantic arrangements typographic constructions of various kinds (via letterpress, for example) are seldom interesting—whence the best recourse is the excavation of historical contexts of the kind that Johanna Drucker provides in The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–23, which examines crucial avant-garde texts from Marinetti, Apollinaire, and especially Ilia Zdanevich, a.k.a. Iliazd (1894–1975) [39] (See Figure 1):

Figure 1. Ledantu le phare: Poème dramatique en Zaoum[40].
Iliazd is one of the inspirations of the “typewriter poetry” that flourished during the 1960s (and beyond)—e.g., Alan Riddell’s “hologrammer” (see Figure 2) [41]:

A question worth considering is whether “hologrammer” is (still) an example of fragmentary writing, or whether a threshold has been crossed, especially when one contrasts the geometrical form of Riddell’s poem with the random typography of cummings’s “NO THANKS. NO. 13”. In a recent volume, *Typewriter Art: A Modern Anthology*, the images formed by overprinting tend to obliterate the alphabet, as in Robert Zend’s “Typescape #7” (1978) [42] (See Figure 3):
More interesting, perhaps, would be Christian Bök’s *Crystallography*, with its recourse to the self-replicating fragments of fractal geometry:

**FRACTAL GEOMETRY**

Fractals are haphazard maps that entrap entropy in tropes.

Fractals tell their raconteurs to counteract at every point the contours of what thought recounts (a line, a plot): recant the chronicle that cannot coil into itself—let the story stray off course, its countless details,
pointless detours, all en route
toward a tour de force, where
the here & now of nowhere is….

A
A A
A  A

A  A
A A A A
A  A  A

A A
A A
A A A A
A  A  A
A-FRACTAL [43].

Of course, fractal geometry is distinctively non-linear (“pointless detours”). Is this true of Bök’s “A-FRACTAL”?

More to the point, perhaps, would be the Brazilian Noigandres group, especially the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, who think of themselves as taking up where Ezra Pound’s (or e. e. cummings’s) typewriter left off. Here is one of Augusto’s texts from 1957, a poem of echoes (of both sight and sound):

uma vez
uma vala
uma foz
uma vez
uma fala
uma voz
uma foz
uma vala
uma bala
uma vez
uma voz
uma vala
uma vez [44]

And here is a poem (1955) by Haroldo, with the Portuguese version, “si len cio” (verso) echoed by his French translation, “silence ou phénoménologie de l’amour” (recto):
The idea perhaps is to experience the mobility of these words as well as to see them as fixed in space. In his “Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry” (1958), Haroldo de Campos writes: “Concrete poetry: tension of word-things in space-time. Dynamic structure: multiplicity of concomitant movements. Thus in music—by definition, an art of timing—space intervenes (Webern and his followers: Boulez and Stockhausen; concrete and electronic music); in visual arts—spatial, by definition—time intervenes (Mondrian and his Boogie-Woogie series; Max Bill; Albers and perceptive ambivalence; concrete art in general).” [46].

A “multiplicity of concomitant movements”, as in complex systems.

7. Visual Poetry

Doubtless it will be asked why I’ve been avoiding the word “collage”, or “constellation” [47]. The Canadian poet derek beaulieu: “I view poetry, as typified by concrete poetry, as the architecturing of the material of language: the unfamiliar fitting together of fragments, searching for structure.” [48]. The poem below (see Figure 4: “Untitled [For Natalee and Jeremy]”) is from beaulieu’s Silence (“C’est mon Dada) [49]. On a certain view, one could view the poem as a space-time arrangement whose letters are fixed in place, to be sure, but which at the same time exhibit the kind of mobility that Mallarmé imagined words to achieve when freed from syntax and other lexical and grammatical regimens [50].
One could argue further that the multiple circularities, not to say complexity, of beaulieu’s poem gives the piece a turbulence that linear sequences, like grids, keep under control—which is perhaps why circles are comic (as in cartwheels and merry-go-rounds) whereas straight lines are serious, as is vaudeville’s classic straight man with his straight face (which is, nevertheless, comic in the incongruous form of the “deadpan”). The poem’s straight lines disappear into its swirling structure, with its random distribution of letters and multiple variations of typeface, and are in any event vastly outnumbered by curves and bends.

However, imagine Mallarmé reading (or regarding) beaulieu’s poem a second time: “Very impressive. A compact piece of work, its pieces woven intricately into a whole. But also regressive insofar as it relegates the white space of the page once more to the background. The poem is centripetal rather than centrifugal—one pictures a vortex sucking letters, lines, marks and squiggles (and even an asterisk) into a draining pool of ink.”

Consider, by contrast, the following page (see Figure 5) from Johanna Drucker’s *Stochastic Poetics:*
Stochastic Poetics is a book of some 40 typographic poems modeled on a stochastic or chaotic system in which sequences of linguistic variables are put into unpredictable play. The poems are made of fragments of found texts ranging from Aristotle’s Poetics to contemporary chaos theory but including as well street signs and other verbivocovisual events taking place on a certain day on Hollywood Boulevard (a few blocks east of the Chinese Theater) in Los Angeles. In an “Afterword” Drucker says that the book was inspired by a poetry reading at the L.A.C.E. (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) in the Summer of 2010 “in which the swarms of people milling in and out, the traffic flow from curb to gallery, and the sheer noise and chaos level in the space were all so overwhelming that the poetry reading could barely be heard” [51].

“noise”

“Unity/and a sense/of the Whole/is LOST.”

In an unpublished paper delivered at the Poetry and Poetics Workshop at the University of Chicago, 8 November 2012, Drucker writes:

The poems in the piece are pastiche works, culled and gleaned from readings and events, reworked in the composing stick, and then altered in the lock-up on the press. The book is set entirely by hand,
in letterpress. No two copies of *Stochastic Poetics* are alike…. Each sheet went through the press numerous times and the placement, while not random, was not controlled by any register marks or jigs. So the dynamic effect on the pages differs depending on how the sheets fell. Every bit of the book is set in letterpress, with metal spacers for justification and lock-up. No plaster, adhesives, or other non-traditional materials were used in the production [52].

“No two copies of *Stochastic Poetics* are alike”: recall (again) Schlegel on the poem of becoming or incompletion: a “stochastic” (variable, chaotic) piece is less an aesthetic object than an event or even series of events—a plurality of mobile pieces rather than a self-same totality. Here (Figure 6) is another page from Drucker’s poem:

**Figure 6. Stochastic Poetics.**

![Figure 6. Stochastic Poetics.](image)

8. Conclusions

Whence, logically and historically, the next step would take us into the hypertextual world of digital poetry in which one changes the text of a poem as one moves through the virtual space it inhabits [53].

But how does one cite a hypertext?

So instead let me conclude my inventory by citing one of Paul Celan’s late poems, whose paratactic form, the mismatching of subjects and predicates, returns us to the regulating idea of the fragmentary:

Klopf die  Knock off the
Lichtkeile weg:  bolts of light:
das schwimmende Wort has the swimming word
hat der Dämmer.  the dusk

Klopf die
Lichtkeile weg:
das schwimmende Wort
hat der Dämmer.
Although my favorite remains the poem with seven wheels— one of Celan’s most comic assemblies:

ST
Ein Vau, pf, in der That
Schlägt, mps
Ein Sieben-Rad:
o
oo
ooo
O (GW, III, 136)

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References and Notes

8. “Atheneum Fragments”, Fr. 206; *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 45; *Athenäums-Fragmente*, p. 48.


24. See Jean-François Lyotard. “Phrasing.” In *The Differend*. Translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, pp. 65–66. The phrase that expresses the passage operator employs the conjunction *and* (*and so forth, and so on*). This term signals a simple addition, the apposition of one term with another, nothing more. Auerbach ([*Mimesis*] 1946: ch. 2 and 3) turns this into a characteristic of the “modern” style, paratax, as opposed to classical syntax. Conjoined by *and*, phrases or events follow one another, but their succession does not obey a categorial order (*because; if, then; in order to; although…*). Joined to the preceding one by *and*, a phrase arises out of nothingness to link up with it. Paratax thus denotes the abyss of Not-Being which opens between phrases, it stresses the surprise that something begins when what is said is said. *And* is the conjunction that allows the constitutive discontinuity (or oblivion) of time to threaten, while defying it through its equally constitutive continuity (or retention). This is also what is signaled by the *At least one phrase* (No. 99). Instead of *and*, and assuring the same paratactic function, there can be a comma, or nothing.


handful of commas over the course of its seventy pages, usually with reason—e.g., “There is no resemblance, it is not what they remind them to be an interval like it” (How to Write [25], p. 91).


39. See Johanna Drucker. The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–1923. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 168–92, esp. 172: “Zdanevich atomized language below the level of the morpheme, not respecting the integrity of the existing roots, prefixes and suffixes, nor feeling that a sufficient investigation [of the poetic materiality of language] could be carried out merely through their recombination into words whose suggestivity derived largely through association with existing vocabulary.”


50. Stéphane Mallarmé. “The Mystery in Letters.” In Mallarmé. Edited by Anthony Hartley. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965, p. 203: “The words, of their own accord, are exalted at many a facet acknowledged as the rarest or most significant for the mind, the centre of vibratory suspense; which perceives them independently of the ordinary sequence, projected like the walls of a cavern, as long as their mobility or principle lasts, being that part of discourse which is not spoken…”

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