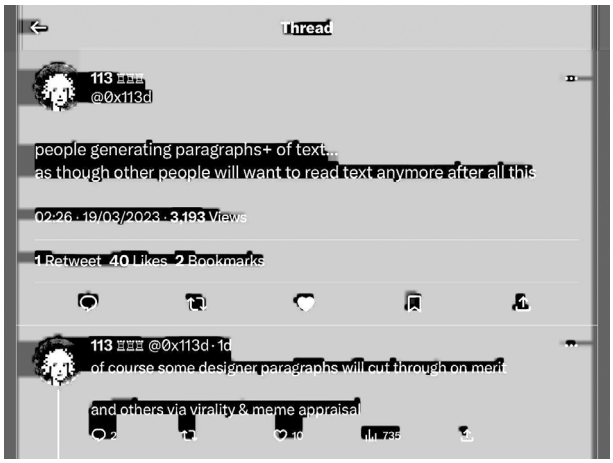
residency practice proposal

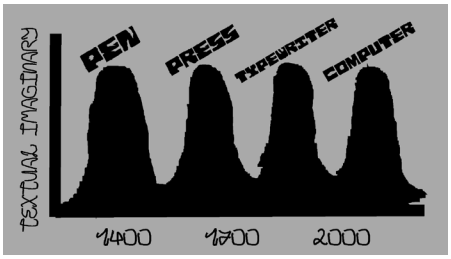
I have been collecting research materials under the heading *folktales of digital typography*. Contained in and around them is a reflection on the interaction of language, technology, and culture that my practice has been converging on for several years. There are archival, theoretical, practical, and technical pieces here. The extraordinary residency that the centre is offering would give me a quite unique opportunity to synthesise these into a new body of work that is at once didactic, speculative, and reflexive.



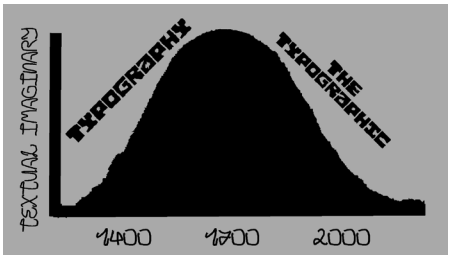
When I first saw this post on X, by a prominent artist in the cryptomedia space, I was deeply confronted. The notion of the **designer paragraph** has stuck with me. The supposition is that in the age of neo-orality and the LLM, nobody will read longform text, nor regard it as having any special credibility, *unless* it has been transformed by *design* (however construed) and imbued with culturally resonant allure.

collapse of textual authority

Typography must reckon with its chronic **path dependency**. The advent of digital typography has created the autonomous, independent designer, but in the process only superficially freed modes of production from the historical constraints of hardware. Designers are under pressure to moderate the laboriousness of the typographic approaches they adopt — at every scale of practice from solo studio to large agency, more laborious approaches are outcompeted by workflows optimised for efficiency. We must admit that the historical obscurity of experimental and non-linear typographies is *reproduced* by computerised modes of production.



We operate and educate as if typography develops according to a familiar sequence of technological paradigms: each new medium implies, or stimulates, or enforces a certain range of technical possibilities, and consequently each medium produces its own distinct textual imaginary.

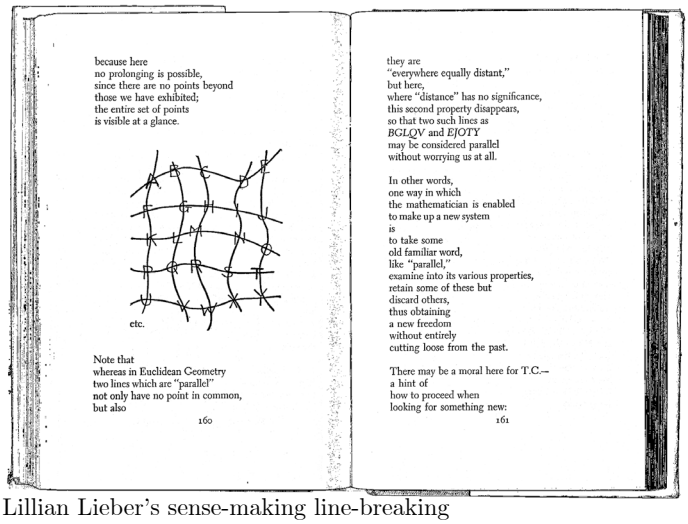


What if, instead of being marked by phases corresponding to distinct technological imaginaries, typography is defined by a single accumulation of practices and products which a succession of after-the-fact technological advancements only serve more economically to automate?

hardware haunts typographic labour



Generative AI imaging techniques embody a probabilistic, rather than deterministic, technological paradigm which may have profound consequences for typography and orthography. As readers we are conditioned to regard repeated, familial, modular typographic forms as signifiers of a consistent, writerly *tone of voice*. Text and image are maintained as categorically separate graphic objects. Under a **probabilistic paradigm**, letter and word forms might instead be stylised and made coherent with subtle, imagistic characteristics.



because here
no prolonging is possible,
since there are no points beyond
those we have exhibited;
the entire set of points
is visible at a glance.

etc.

Note that
whereas in Euclidean Geometry
two lines which are "parallel"
not only have no point in common,
but also

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they are
"everywhere equally distant,"
but here,
where "distance" has no significance,
this second property disappears,
so that two such lines as
BGLQV and *EJOTY*
may be considered parallel
without worrying us at all.

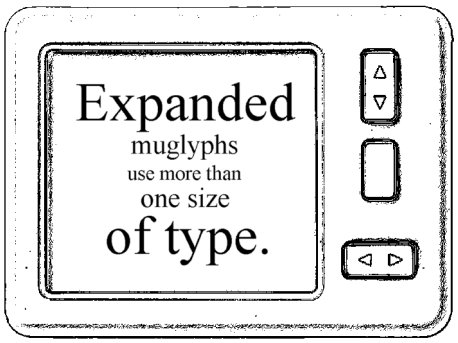
In other words,
one way in which
the mathematician is enabled
to make up a new system
is
to take some
old familiar word,
like "parallel,"
examine into its various properties,
retain some of these but
discard others,
thus obtaining
a new freedom
without entirely
cutting loose from the past.

There may be a moral here for T.C.—
a hint of
how to proceed when
looking for something new:

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Lillian Lieber's sense-making line-breaking

anticipated



Wayne Porter's Telereader Terminal.

For over 50 years the American inventor Wayne 'Read' Porter worked to bring a new writing and reading system, which he called 'Mutypography,' to fruition. Porter's system had many component parts, but at its core was a prototypical markup language with which writers could encode semantic structures into their texts by predefining 'meaning units.' Porter saw Gutenbergian linear typography as suboptimal for extended reading. Anticipating the advent of screens, Porter envisioned a lightweight technical substrate through which writers and readers would negotiate the structure of text without designers.

If this proposed body of work has a provisional thesis, it would adapt Bruno Latour's *we have never been modern*, to claim that *typography has never been digital*. I envisage exploring and reanimating those typo- and orthographic modes which have remained outside the scope of what can be efficiently automated.