Linguistic Authority and the Visual Text

Language metabolizes quickly without the resistant force of material.\(^1\) Attention to the stuff in the medium is not the fetishization of some theory-based supplement, but the recognition of the fact of the matter.\(^2\) No real record, no hard tree. Language speaks, appears, is seen and heard, not like the good child of some former era repressing its presence out of sight and earshot for the sake of adult decorum. No evidence exists. But the Status of visual poetry is still orphan status, or worse, that of the unwanted to substantiate any theory or the origin of language child at the banquet table celebrating the great works.\(^3\) Writers who used to believe they were just a place in the code\(^4\) — the origin of writing, by con-
are now happy to have their names and faces smeared across the critical tabloids in tasteful headlines linked to material evidence proclaiming their achievements. There is no other term in which it exists. Still visual poetry is scolded for calling attention to itself (too much makeup and overdressed for an occasion) taking up too much space with unseemly behavior and for its historical examination flamboyant display.

Visuality erupts, insists, interrupts and the eye is massaged. But authority continues to seem to reside in transience, a denial of the actual existence in material form of the word—so if the disembodied terms of language could better serve to sublimate the positions of power seized by a fear and a trembling in the face of the face of the

WORD.

Notes

1. That is a bad word for obscenity.

2. Poetry is usually biblical, but point out that text which has been pinpointed rather truth ascribes to their human.

3. The actual substance is the ground taking up too much space with unseemly behavior and for its historical examination flamboyant display.

4. Nothing could feel more common, a present for reasons that are strategic, criminal, literary.

5. Refers to material, of course, the stroke of the word is very important.

6. Writing on the lines of the spatial, the time and space.
Notes:

1. That is a convenience we can ill afford in the present climate of obscurity.

2. Poetry presents itself as text and text aspires to the condition of the biblical, theological we all know that and didn't need Derrida to point out what Gutenberg himself had already demonstrated that the text which is unmarked (the Bible) seems to speak itself, be present, and has always been, uninflected and unchallenged and unable to be pinpointed into place in historical time and social circumstances rather transcending all particulars to be part of the general realm of truth as discourse uttered without any marks of enunciation to betray their human origins.

3. The marked text (the indulgences) by contrast shows it seems, traces of its fabrication, all its positionality traced in the stuff of its appearance like this, made on a computer in what is seeming to be later and later in the century an intimate, available, domestic, means of production which approaches the level of the truly commercial with all its tricks of display.

4. Nothing here refers to the body of the text, as if meaning/mind/spirit were elsewhere. We have to remember that that split was invented for reasons of a legislatable morality, to keep the body from indiscriminate acts of indulgence of appetite and has nothing to do with literature.

5. Reference itself becomes increasingly resonant when the term of material are factored into the linguistic activity. Material is meaning, of course, in spite of the denial tactics which continue to lock it up in the strait jacket of pure poetry pure language as if to strip away the very instrument according to which the linguistic activity occurs.

6. Writing the visual is the continual appearing coming into being of lines of text made on the page as the sometimes linear sometimes spatial and temporal accretion of activity which holds its own across time and space as an artifact of language, not merely an incident.

This piece was produced for an exhibition organized by Craig McDaniel, Matthew Brennan, and Renee Ramsey and held at the Turman Art Gallery at Indiana State University, Terre Haute, from March 21—April 16, 1993; it also appeared in the catalogue printed to accompany that exhibition. Is Poetry A Visual Art?