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# *Visualizing Texts*

How animation can change the way we look at text

*MMEDIA 3H03*  
Prof. Robert Hamilton

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# Visualizing Texts

How animation can change the way we look at text

## PROJECT OUTLINE

Modern animation encompasses much more than frame by frame narration. However, despite the automation allowed by new technology, classical animation techniques are as relevant as ever in bringing an animator's creations to life. Understanding this, **my project will applying animation techniques to dynamic visualizations of text**, exploring their humanizing potential on a very inhuman subject.

### *What is this project all about?*

*Visualizing Texts* is a project in two parts. The **first part is a number of programmed visualization tools**, which will dynamically process an inputted text and represent it visually. This will require imagining characteristic ways of animating text, and then finding ways to distill those methods into mathematical functions. My experience will be coded completely into a single coding library (one that can later be shared with other designers), and a number of example tools will be created (the actual hands-on visualizations). The tool being used will be Adobe Flash, coded in the most recent version of Actionscript.

In addition to the interactive visualizations, **the second part will be a narrative animation made solely of text**, using what was discovered in the first part. I will write a short story and record it being read. Then, I will use the animation techniques from the first part in order to create a Flash animation of the story. This part will show the range of what can be done with my visualizations.

So, to sum it up, the parts of the project will be: 1) visualization 'toys', which can take a text and display it in new ways, 2) a documented library of actionscript functions for achieving the visualizations, and 3) a short flash narrative consisting of animated text.

### *How does this affect animation?*

To receive a better sense of the type of design direction that I am coming from, my portfolio can be found at <http://www.porganized.com>

What about audio? Audio will not be a key component of the project, but in further planning of the project, I will consider how it can be used to support visuals.

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I have already used the word *dynamic* a number of times. This is a necessary component which sets this project out from others. So often, animation is looked at in definitive terms. That is to say, the animator creates a product in their workshop, tweaking it until it is finally ready for release. This project considers a different approach: the animator has much less control over the final product, and must work within the constraints of the variable that they do not know. Also, it is a very meticulous study, as the inability to correct details means that the animation has to be perfectly studied and crafted from the beginning. It is a very mathematical process, and will inform my future art.

Essentially, this project tries to create the recipe rather than bake the cake.

## ***Why am I the right one to do it?***

Text analysis tools, such as TAPoR Tools (<http://portal.tapor.ca/tools/>), already exist: the purpose is to see what I, as a designer and animator, can bring to the table. This project is closely related to a passion of mine, typography, which likewise concerns itself with the visual representation of text. I am also enthusiastic about furthering my programming knowledge, and this excitement will benefit the quality of my project.

Artistically, I am fascinated by the breakdown of structure within such a traditionally linear form. I will be separating words and letters from their contexts, and giving them freedom. They are still text, but individuals, with a collective function of a greater whole. This is also reflected in the socialism-inspired colour scheme.

Individual letters are called characters. Above all else, this is the core of the project's theme: an exploration of the possibilities of "character" in text.

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## DESIGN DRAFTS

### Connected Words



Name: Connected Words

This visualization will show words that occur before and after the main word within the text.

In this example, "the" is the main word, and the words around it are words that tend to be beside it in the text. Notice that "painting", "pillow", and "door" are larger and coloured differently, showing that they occur more often than the other words.

The words will be animated as such:

When a new word is loaded, all the others will bounce out of it, positioning themselves equally distanced in a circle around the center. There will be a certain bounce in their movement: not simple tweening.

When you move your mouse around the screen, the items will pan slightly in the opposite direction (for example, if you move your mouse 600px left, the items will move 100px right). This will feel like the words are anticipating your next click.

An autopilot mode will be available, which will automatically jump from word to word. With little words constantly growing larger while new ones appearing, it will create an animated feeling of going through a tunnel.

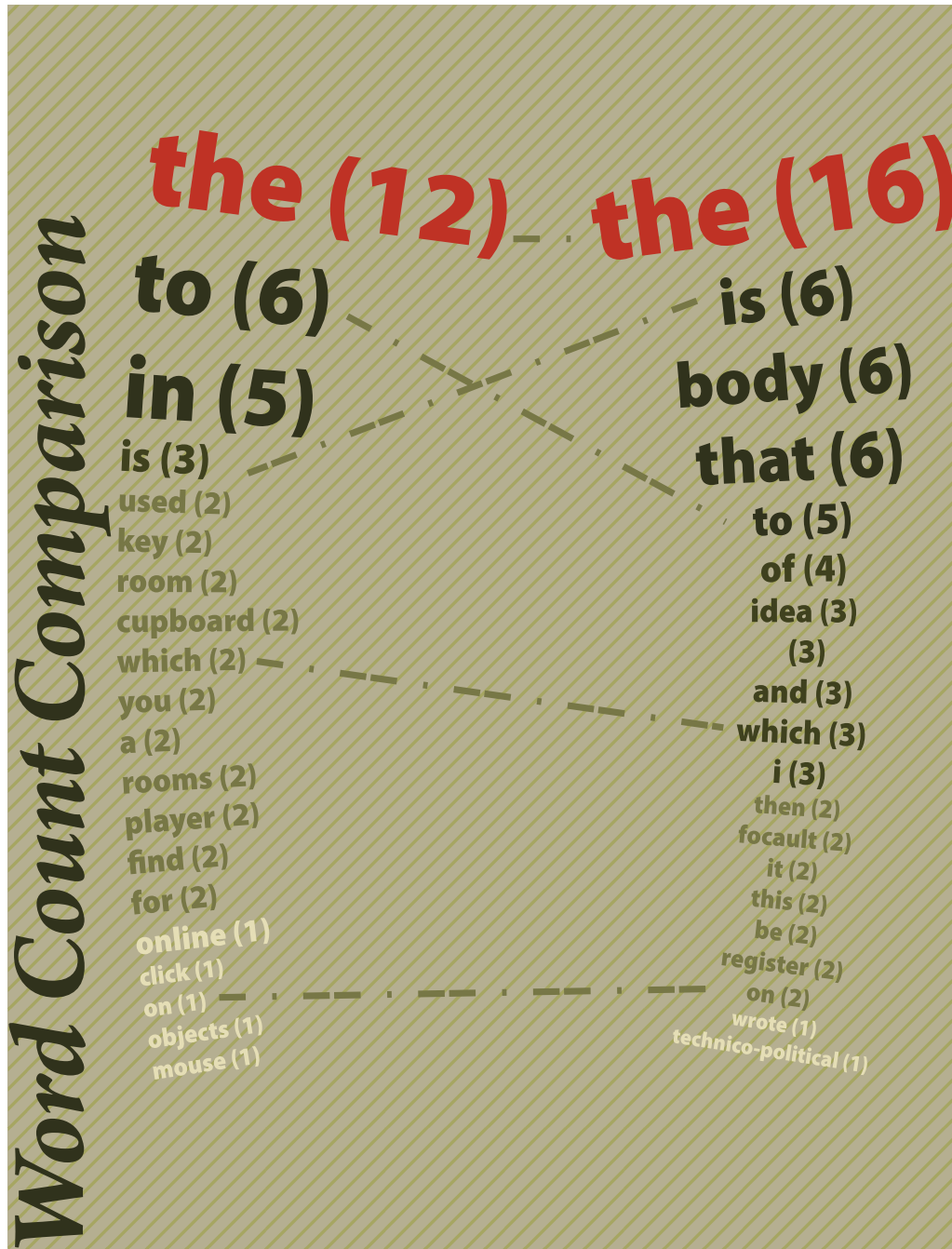
For an example of early work on this tool, go to: [http://www.porganized.com/files/flash/JiTR/Visualizations/Tests1/cloud\\_tests.html](http://www.porganized.com/files/flash/JiTR/Visualizations/Tests1/cloud_tests.html)

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## DESIGN DRAFTS

### Word Count Comparison



Name: Word Count Comparison

This visualization will show a word count of a text, organized by size, colour, and location in the list. If you input a second text, it will put it beside the first, and make connections when words are the same.

The words will be animated as such:

When a list is loaded, the words will fall in from the top of the screen. Once the bottom word stops, the words above it will squish down (like a bouncing ball at the moment it hits the ground) and the bounce back up into their proper location. This will require the items to be fully aware of other items in the space.

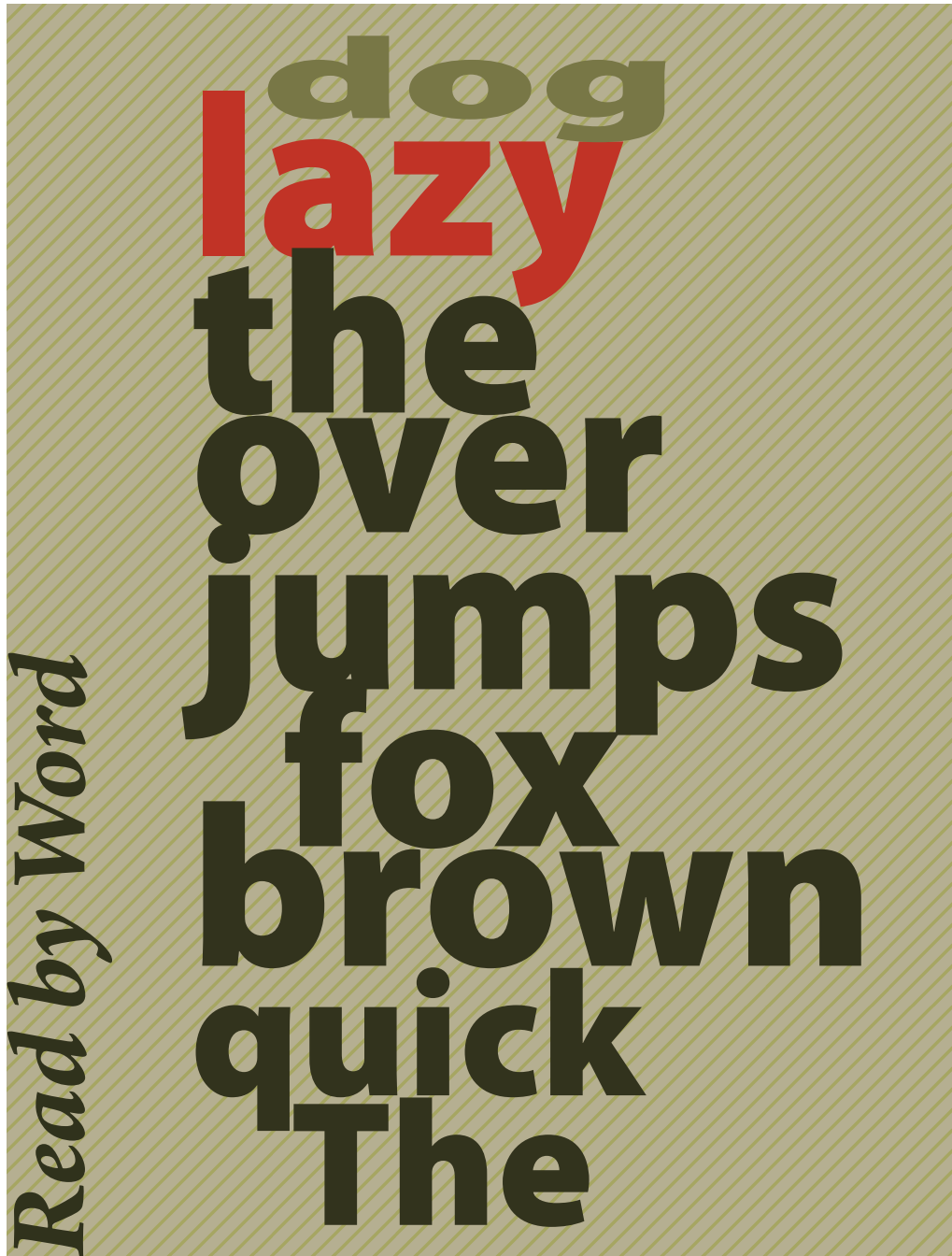
For an example of early work on this tool, go to: [http://www.porganized.com/files/flash/JiTR/Visualizations/Tests1/testing\\_sandbox2.html](http://www.porganized.com/files/flash/JiTR/Visualizations/Tests1/testing_sandbox2.html)

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## DESIGN DRAFTS

### Read by Word



Name: Read by Word

This visualization tells a story, word by word, with the entered text. This is made to mimic the feel of story-telling, which gives a care to words that internal reading simply does not.

The words will be animated as such:

When a new word appears, it will use the concept of squish and stretch to push the rest of the text down. If properly animated, words will appear to be putting in a strong effort to make themselves a place in the list.

Looking at the example to the left, take note of the squished, light-grey word "dog". Imagine in the animation that that word is squished because it is using all its might to push the rest of the blocks down.

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## INSPIRATION

*Human Brain Cloud* (<http://www.humanbraincloud.com/>)



*Digg Labs* (<http://labs.digg.com/>)

How Wii Can Help You Stay Younger 126

More Scientology Secret DOX 630 ?

Massive archive of secret scientology DOX 618 ||

"I Escaped Scientology" An insider gives a brief history. 525

**Hacking group threatens to destroy Scientology 2473**

Raid on London Scientology HQ planned for feb 10 507

*Pulp Fiction in Typography* (<http://www.motionographermedia.com/jarrattmoody/intonation.mov>)



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Gabler, Kyle. “Human Brain Cloud: Play.” Human Brain Cloud. 2007. 23 Jan. 2008 <[www.humanbraincloud.com](http://www.humanbraincloud.com)>.

Moody, Jarratt. “Pulp Fiction in Typography”. <http://www.jarrattmoody.com>. 2007. 23 Jan 2008. < [www.motionographermedia.com/jarrattmoody/intonation.mov](http://www.motionographermedia.com/jarrattmoody/intonation.mov)>